

SERMON XXIII.

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.—1 JOHN iii. 17, 18.

IN the former verse he hath urged the example of Christ, which is both a reason and a pattern of our love to our brethren, 'We must love others because he loved us, and we must love others as he loved us.' The pattern is urged not only for the duty itself, but the degree of it. We must imitate Christ in that eminent act of self-denial, his laying down his life for us. Surely that love is best which is most like Christ's. Now Christ spared not his life, nor anything to do us good; so should our love express itself in the highest instances of love. Well, then, if we are bound to the greater, we are much more bound to the lesser; if to lay down our lives for those that are in danger, much more to give our goods to them. Surely those are not to be accounted lovers of the brethren that will not part with a little of their substance on these occasions, and are guilty of gross hypocrisy if they should pretend either to the love of God or our neighbour, 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need,' &c.

In the words there is—

1. An argument implied, *a majori ad minus*; and there is expressly contained in it—(1.) A supposition of a duty neglected; (2.) A censure or charge of a heinous crime imputed to such; the 'love of God doth not dwell' in them.

2. An exhortation to sincerity.

First, In the argument we have three things—

[1.] The ability of the party to exercise charity, 'Whoso hath this world's good.'

[2.] The necessity of the party upon whom it is exercised, 'And seeth his brother have need.'

[3.] The neglect itself, 'Shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him.'

(1.) The ability of the party, 'Whoso hath this world's good;' the meaning is, wherewith to support this worldly life; as the woman is said to cast in all her living, Mark xii. 44; and in other places *bios* is put for the support of life. Those that have but from hand to mouth are bound to distribute to them that need, Eph. iv. 28; but much more the rich, that have not only to sustain and support this life, but to spare for others. What we have we are to give; out of a little, a little; out of more, more: Luke xii. 33, 'Sell what you have.' So Luke xi. 41, 'Give alms of such things as you have, and all things shall be clean to you.' So Luke viii. 3, 'They ministered to him of their substance.' So much of this world's goods as every man hath, so far his bounty must extend.

(2.) The next thing supposed is others' necessity. By our own estate God giveth us matter to exercise charity; by others' necessity he giveth us occasion: his providence furnisheth us, and straiteneth them;

if they need bread to sustain life, or raiment to clothe the body; and those that need be brethren, the Lord calleth upon us for some supply.

(3.) The act omitted, 'Shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him.' Here the next inward cause is mentioned, and that is, 'bowels of compassion from him;' but the effect also is intended. If he doth not assist him in his needs, his heart must be first opened; there must be a willing and ready mind, and then his hand opened; there must be a liberal and bountiful relief. 'Bowels,' no duty in this kind is accepted with God but what is joined with bowels of compassion and sympathy. What we translate, Luke i. 78, 'Through the tender mercy of our God,' is in the margin, 'Bowels of mercy.' So 2 Cor. vii. 15, 'His inward affection is more abundant towards you.' It is bowels. So Col. iii. 12, 'Put on bowels of mercy.' It noteth an inward sense and sympathy with the misery of others; such an intense motion of the heart, that the very bowels are moved by it; so that it is, if he shut up his bowels, if he show himself hard-hearted and merciless, is not moved with any pity of another's wants. The meaning is fully expressed by Moses, Dent. xv. 7, 'Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother.'

2dly. The censure and charge pronounced on us, 'Whosoever they be;' where mark—

(1.) The form of proposal; it is by way of question or appeal to common reason. Can any man be so absurd as to imagine that this man can have the love of God in him?

(2.) The heinousness of the crime or matter charged, 'The love of God dwelleth not in him;' that is, is not rooted in his heart, and so he must go for a hypocrite; though not grossly dissembling christianity, yet guilty of partial obedience. Mark, it is not said, How dwelleth the love of the brethren in him? but 'How dwelleth the love of God in him?' Though they pretend to love God, yet indeed they neither love the brethren nor God.

Secondly, The exhortation to sincerity, 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' In this exhortation there is—

1. The compellation, 'My little children,' pressing love; he showeth love and tenderness towards them.

2. The matter of the exhortation, to sincerity of love, expressed—

First, Negatively, 'Not in word and in tongue.' To show love in word and tongue is not simply forbidden, but respectively; not simply, for good words are useful in two cases—

[1.] To comfort the miserable, they have their use.

[2.] To maintain their innocency. Some cannot afford their brother a good word, either of him or to him. Others, their hands are withered, have not a heart to help him. But comparatively or respectively the meaning is, when it is in word and tongue only; and real and actual doing good is neglected or excluded when we rest in good words.

Secondly, Positively, 'But in deed and in truth;' that is, so as the uprightness of our hearts may be manifested by real deeds, or doing good, when the needs of others require it. To love in 'deed and in truth,' is to love sincerely: 1 Peter i. 22. 'Seeing ye have purified

your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.' Which must be understood of ends and effects.

1. Ends, spoken of Mat. vi. 1, 2, 'Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, to be seen of men.' All they did was hypocrisy, 'to be seen of men.'

2. Effects, when words are dissembled: Prov. xxiii. 7, 'Eat and drink, saith he, but his heart is not with thee.' When not seconded and verified with suitable acts, 'Be warmed and clothed;' as here many foolishly and causelessly boasted they loved the brethren, but they would do nothing for them. They boasted of love with their mouths, but would not show it by the effects.

Doct. That want of bowels of compassion, or denying relief to the needy and indigent, is the note of a man that loveth not God.

I shall make good the point by these considerations—

1. That it is the will of God that there should be a difference among men, that some should be rich, others poor, some high, some low: Deut. xv. 11, 'For the poor shall never cease out of the land: Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to the poor and needy in the land.' Though God is able abundantly to supply all men's wants, yet he hath by his providence so appointed and ordered men's outward condition in the world, that all should not be rich and wealthy, but some poor and of mean estate; as here in the text, one brother is supposed to have this world's goods, and the other to have want and need. So also Mark xiv. 7, 'Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do good to them.' God's wisdom doth appear most in the different degrees and estates of men. As it is with respect to the world, for the beauty and service of the universe, that there should be in the world hills and valleys, so in the world of mankind there are superiors and inferiors, masters and servants, rich and poor, nobles and craftsmen. First, It is for the good of human society, the more firmly to tie men together. The poor need support, succour, and relief from the rich, and the rich need the labours and industry of the poor. Different degrees fit men for different callings, for service and command; some things would be wanting to the good of mankind, if all were poor or all rich. Therefore God's way is not parity and levelling, but diversity of ranks and degrees. Secondly, Besides the necessities of man, God doth it with respect to his own government, in order to the world to come; for the trial of men's obedience is better made thereby.

[1.] The trial of the rich.

(1.) Their thankfulness to God. God might have laid them low as well as others. If they abuse their high estate to pride and oppression, they tax the wisdom of the great governor of the world, and are unthankful to him: Prov. xxii. 2, 'The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them both;' that is, God is the moderator and disposer of each man's estate. One by God is largely furnished with temporal good things, whether they come to him by right of inheritance, or free gift, or honest labour, it is all from God; the other

is kept bare, and under pressing necessities, either by the calamities of the times, or defect of means, or miscarriage of instruments, or by some sudden blast and disappointment of God's providence. Now these meet together in the same world, in the same kingdom, and the same town or city, and they have often business to do one with another, and have need one of another. If the rich carry it imperiously to the poor, or the poor enviously to the rich, they pervert God's government, do not observe the duties which God expecteth from them in their several conditions of life. Well, then, it is but in poor perishing riches that we differ one from another, and we must all stand before our judge to give an account how we have behaved ourselves in either state: Prov. xvii. 5, 'Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his maker.' He that despiseth the poor carrieth himself haughtily, contemptuously, he forgetteth who maketh him to differ, and who it is that casteth the world into this order, lifting you up and keeping down others; he might have laid you low as well as others, you might have been born of mean parents as well as rich.

(2.) To try their sympathy and humanity. Poverty and other miseries will not be wanting among the children of men, that the rich may have occasion to exercise their charity, and love, and compassion to their poor brethren; as the great veins are filled with blood to supply the lesser. And indeed human nature hath nothing better nor greater than a heart and power to help the miserable: Acts xx. 35, as our Lord said, 'It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive.' Where did our Lord say so? Christ in all his sayings hath often commended giving, but never receiving. But it is blessed because it comes nearer to the nature of God, who giveth to all, but receiveth of none; it cometh nearer to the goodness of God to have a heart to give, and the happiness of God to have a power to give. Now thus will God try the duty of the rich and opulent.

[2.] For the poor, they are upon their trial too, for the trial of their patience, humility, self-denial, dependence upon God. In the meanest station we may do service to Christ. In a concert of voices it is no matter what part a man sings, provided he sings well, treble, mean, or bass. God appointeth to every man his condition; if he carry it well, he is accepted with God. Grace puts both upon the same level: James i. 9, 10, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low.' The poor man is not to be sad and dejected if God hath put him into a low condition; but to be well pleased with it, as it giveth him advantages of submission to and trust in God more explicit; and living by faith, which in a more plentiful condition is obscure and hard to be found. Thus God hath called him to a glorious estate of grace, though mean and low in the world; and he who hath riches and honour, and all commodities in this life, is to rejoice that he hath a humble heart, doth not lift up himself above others, being mindful of the changeableness of the things of this world; so that grace cureth the inordinacies of either condition: 'Poor in spirit,' Mat. v. 3; reconcilable to a low estate.

2. That when others' necessities are presented to us, it is a call from God to exercise our love and charity towards them. If he seeth his brother hath need. *Affirmativa non ligant ad semper*; positive duties

have their proper season, and in their season they bind: 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men,' Gal. vi. 10. Now one season is when God layeth the object before us, and their case is brought to us by sight or hearing: Isa. lviii. 7, 'When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.' We are to search out the hungry and needy; but more especially when God presenteth them to us, we must not turn away the face, as refusing to see or own or to take notice of him: Job xxxi. 19, 'If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering;' ready to starve for want of meat, or perish for want of clothing. When God layeth them in our view, or bringeth the notice of them to our hearing, surely then their necessity calleth for our charity, and it is hardness of heart and mercilessness not to be affected with it. The contrary is represented in the rich man, when the poor man lay at his gate, Luke xvi. 20; though he fared deliciously every day, yet the crumbs of the table were not given him. Therefore consider we live in a time of wants, and distresses are multiplied, war, fire, decay of trade; many feel the sad effects of it. If you be not ready to relieve and help them to your power, how will you answer it to God in the day of your accounts? It is made a heavy charge, Job xxii. 7, 'Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.' Eliphaz falsely accused Job of unmercifulness and sinful parsimony; but when God doth justly accuse of these things, what shall we answer? God doth try us by daily objects of charity and compassion. If we do not help them, we omit a duty in its season; when we meet with convenient objects, this grace must be exercised.

3. This ought the more to move us, if the necessitous be our christian brethren, for it is in the text, 'seeth his brother hath need.' We ought to do good to all sorts who are real objects of our charity. The necessitous in general should be more welcome to us than the rich who may requite us; for then we make a market of our kindness and courtesy, if kind only to the opulent and the wealthy. No; our sweetest influences should fall on the lower grounds. The fashion of the world is to be obsequious to a degree of servitude, to the mighty, the noble, the rich; as all waters run into the sea, where there is enough already. We must do good to all that need, but chiefly to the brethren our fellow-christians: Rom. xii. 13, 'Distributing to the necessities of the saints.' There are *pauperes diaboli*, the devil's poor, those that have wasted their estates by luxury and prodigality; and *pauperes mundi*, the world's poor, those that are reduced to poverty by the accidents of the present life; and *pauperes Christi*, such as fear God, who are in a straitened condition. The rule is, Gal. vi. 10, 'Do good to all, especially to the household of faith.' To all the wicked, our enemies not excepted, in their necessities. But then the members of God's family and household are in an especial manner obliged to love one another, and to be beneficial to one another under their necessities and straits, into which God doth often suffer those of his family to fall for their good, if they profess the same faith with us, and do evidence the reality of the same faith by a holy life and conversation; for this is a closer relation than to be fellow-citizens of the world, fellow-servants, or brethren in the family.

4. That we should show bowels of compassion and tenderness towards others in their distress, for in the text it is, 'If he shut up his bowels of compassion from him.' There must be an inward affection and disposition accompanying and going along with the outward act of beneficence, and whatsoever is done must be done cordially and compassionately, that the heart may ever accompany the gift: Ps. xxxvii. 21, 'The righteous showeth mercy and giveth.' To be spectators of the miseries of others, and not to be affected with them, argueth a marble heart and iron sinews: Isa. lviii. 10, 'If thou draw out thy heart to the hungry.' It must be done freely, liberally, and compassionately: Eph. iv. 32, 'Be kind to one another, tender-hearted.' Tender-heartedness, that is, commiseration, must go along with our kindness, as really pitying their misery as if it were our own.

5. Though charity begin in the heart, it must not cease there. God requireth the heart, but not for the heart, that it may terminate there. But with respect to these acts of mercy wherewith God is delighted, three things are required—(1.) Love and pity on their wants; that must be in the heart; (2.) Kind expressions on the tongue; (3.) Then bountiful acts for their relief. So that there are these three things, the motion of the heart, the expression by the words, and effectual performance. Without the last all else is but counterfeit. The root of charity is a proneness or good-will to help others, but that lieth underground and out of sight. Unless it appear in visible fruits, we cannot tell whether we have it, yea or no. Suppose it appear in good words, they are but as leaves, and we count that a barren tree that bringeth forth nothing but leaves. Not in word and tongue only, but the fruit abounding to our account is the work itself. Therefore though God expecteth bowels, yet bowels must put us upon some further act, but that act is not words. God will not be paid with words instead of things; but God expecteth that we should freely impart what we have and can do for our neighbours' good, as well as wish well and speak well to them. Love must show itself forth, and that not in speech only but in deed; otherwise we only seek to cover a false heart.

6. To withhold and deny this relief argueth a defect and want, not only of love to our neighbour, but to God, 'How dwelleth the love of God in him?'

[1.] Because the love of God and his children are inseparable, they are necessary branches of the same law: Mat. xxii. 38, 39, 'This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' 1 John v. 1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.' Therefore we cannot love God if we do not love our brother. The same law that requireth the one requireth the other; the same grace that inclineth to the one inclineth to the other; the same reason that enforceth the one enforces the other. God for his own sake, and his children for God's sake, because somewhat of the divine nature and excellency of God is in them; they are 'the excellent of the earth,' Ps. xvi. 3. A deep sense of God's love to us begets love in us to God again; therefore we love God, and everything that belongeth to God.

[2.] It must needs be so, for love to God doth formally contain or naturally produce this love to our brethren.

(1.) It doth formally contain it; for our love to God is not a fond affection or fellow-like familiarity, but is seen in our profession of real respect; which is manifested in imitation, obedience and esteem.

(1st.) Imitation; for love doth imply such a value and esteem of God, that we count it our happiness to be like him, and the truest respect and affection which we can have to him is to write after his copy, and to study to resemble our Father. Surely they cannot be said to love God who do not imitate him, are not merciful as their heavenly Father is merciful, Luke vi. 36. Now God openeth his hand, and satisfieth the wants and desires of the needy and indigent. Do we love God, and count this a perfection in God? Surely then the impression of it should be on our hearts. I would not have you pass over this lightly, that the truest love of God lieth in imitation of him. If the great demonstration of God's love to us be to make us like himself, surely then the more like him the more we love him, 1 John iii. 2; for our love answereth his love to us, as the impression doth the stamp or seal. Or if the greatest aim of the creature and the highest expression of our love to God be conformity to him now, so it is when love is most perfect; it doth most delight itself in likeness to God: Ps. xvii. 15, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.'

(2d.) Obedience to him, for his love is a love of bounty, ours is a love of duty: 1 John v. 3, 'This is love, that we keep his commandments;' John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' Surely he doth not love God that doth not obey him, and acteth so contrary to his commands, which call everywhere for charity and mercy to the bodies and souls of men, which is so pleasing to God: Heb. xiii. 16, 'But to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'

(3d.) Love is seen in an esteem or transcendental respect of God, a respect to God above all other things. Now he that shutteth up his bowels from his brother in necessity doth not love God above all, for there is something he valueth above him, and is loath to part with for his sake, and that is this world's goods: 1 John ii. 19, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' Now it is gross love of the world not to part with this world's goods when God calleth for them. Whosoever loves God valueth God's favour above all other things, and counts himself happy enough in the enjoyment of God, whatever he loseth for it or parts with for it: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'Who will show us any good? 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;' Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.' He that will not, at God's instance and command, part with these things, the poor inconsiderable trifles of this world, he preferreth the world before the enjoyment of God and the favour of God.

(2.) It doth naturally produce it, partly by looking to what is past,

and partly to what is to come. The one is gratitude, the other is trust.

(1st.) Thankfulness for what is past ; he hath done so much for us, that we should be willing to part with anything for his sake. Therefore when the apostle would have them prove the sincerity of their love, 2 Cor. viii. 9, he argueth, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that when he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty you may be rich.' If we have a grateful sense of his wonderful mercy, we will be ready to make some return of affection to God. But you will say, How is charity to the poor any return of love to God? *Ans.* What you do at his instance and command, you do to God and for God's sake. Now God commandeth this, and he hath devolved our respects to him on the poor and indigent. God taketh it as done to himself if done to them : Mat. xxv. 40, 45, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.' And the apostle teacheth us that we show love to his name when we minister to the saints, Heb. vi. 10. He taketh it as an expression of kindness and thankfulness to himself, which is given to his servants.

(2d.) Trust. Love looketh to what is to come. Surely he that loveth God trusts him, for the graces are connected. Now none trust God that count their estates safer in their own hands than God's, that will venture nothing on his promises : Prov. xix. 17, 'He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him back again.' God will be our paymaster : Eccles. xi. 1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and after many days thou shalt receive it ;' Ps. xxxvii. 26, 'He is merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed.' God will return it to us or ours, in this life or the next. We have a friendly confidence and good opinion of God ; we dare take his word, being persuaded that he is able and willing to requite us ; but they that shut up their bowels show they have little value for God's word, and do suspect his goodness and truth, which is not consistent with love. You will adventure nothing in his hands, and then can you say you love him ?

Use 1. Information.

1. That if we would get readiness of mind to help and relieve others in their necessities, we should increase our love to God ; for the shutting up of our bowels is made not so much a defect or want of love to our neighbour, as want of love to God. If you did love God more, you would love the poorest of God's children, and the meanest of your brethren for his sake ; and love will easily persuade you to do them good. If there were less of the love of the world, and more of the love of God, then it were no great matter to part with this world's goods for another's benefit and relief. We have lessening thoughts of God, and too high thoughts of the world, when we shut up our bowels from the necessities of our poor brethren.

2. That we should not reckon our love to God by deceitful evidences, not by bare outward profession of the true religion : James i. 27, 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' All other religion hath an evil that is in it, a spot of the

world on it; but Christ's religion is purity and charity, not by gifts and utterance: 2 Cor. viii. 7, 'Therefore as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.' Again, you must not only mind acts of piety, but charity: Mat. ix. 13, 'Go learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' To sacrifice is to serve God, but to show mercy is to be like God. Now conformity to God is more than any particular act of external obedience to him; as mercy is preferred before sacrifice, so before the external observation of the sabbath. Yea, mercy not only to the souls, but bodies of men; yea, not to men only, but to beasts, as to help a beast out of the pit: Mat. xii. 11, 12, 'What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-day.' It is more than gospel externals of worship, as hearing the word and prayer, comparing external acts with external acts: Luke xiii. 26, 'We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and have been taught in our streets; but he shall say unto you, I know you not.' More excellent than gifts of the gospel; the gifts of tongues and healing were glorious things: 1 Cor. xii. 28-31, 'After that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all prophets? are all workers? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts; but I show you a more excellent way.' I cannot say it is above the graces of the gospel, faith, and hope, and love to God, yet these are but pretended without it: 1 John iv. 20, 'If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' 1 Tim. v. 8, 'If any man provide not for his own, especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.'

3. It showeth us the compassionate nature of God, since he so strictly enforceth compassion in others. We know God's nature by his laws as well as his works. Now when he that placed so much weight on this, that he will not own any love in them to himself without it, surely our God will not shut up his bowels in our destitute and low condition. It is one of his names, 2 Cor. vii. 6, 'God that comforteth those that are cast down.'

Use 2. Is to exhort us—

1. To show compassion to those in necessity.

2. To show it not in word or tongue only, but in real kindness.

1. To persuade you to mercifulness and charity. A cheap profession of the name of Christ will do you no good; that which costs nothing is worth nothing. To quicken you—

[1.] Without it you cannot show your thankfulness to God. Alms is your thank-offering: Heb. xiii. 16, 'But to do good and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' God showeth his love to us in the great sin-offering, we to God in this thank-offering.

[2.] Consider the many promises made to it: Mat. v. 7, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Compassion to others giveth us hope and confidence of the Lord's mercy to us, which is a

great encouragement; for we stand in need of the daily mercy of God: Prov. xxi. 18, 'Whoso stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and shall not be heard;' if not by men, not by God.

[3.] Consider what mercy Christ hath showed to you. Christ's kindness should enkindle the bowels of compassion in us; he showed compassion to you at the dearest rates, and loved us unto death; and will you not be at some expense in your love to the brethren?

[4.] How comfortable it is for the present: Prov. xi. 17, 'The merciful man doeth good to his own soul; he also refresheth the souls of others.' See the verse next the text, 'And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' This will yield you a great deal of comfort, as any other fruit of faith or act of piety.

[5.] This will make your reckoning more comfortable hereafter: Luke xi. 41, 'Give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things shall be clean;' Mat. xxv. 35-40, 'For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' These will be the inquiries at the day of judgment; acts of self-denying obedience must justify and evidence our qualification when it cometh to be judged.

2. To press you to real kindness. To quicken you consider—

[1.] God's love towards christians is a hearty real love; he not only loved us, but gave us the proof in the fruits and effects of it: Rom. v. 8, 'Herein God commended his love, in that, when we were sinners, Christ died for us.'

[2.] At the last day we shall be judged, not for our words only, but by our works: Rev. xx. 12, 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' These will be the questions at the last day, Have you visited? have you fed? have you clothed?

[3.] Lip-love will neither do thee good, nor thy brother good. Not thee good; in no other grace and duty are words taken for performance, so not in this. Not in the general: many say they have a love to the brethren, but when it cometh to the trial wherein it is evidenced, there is no such thing. There is a great deal of tongue-kindness abroad; men seem to be all made up of love; they boast they love the brethren, but never demonstrate it by any real effect; like the carbuncle, which at a distance seemeth to be all afire, but come to touch it, and it is key-cold. In this particular expression of love, mouth-mercy, or giving good words to him that needeth, The Lord help you, without

actual relief, is nothing worth; so doth not thy brother any good: James ii. 15, 16, 'If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and be you filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?'

[4.] To dissemble in anything maketh our sincerity in the main questionable; the man that contents himself with words in charity will content himself with a cold dead assent in point of faith, and a cold profession instead of thorough obedience; with the talk of virtue and godliness when he hath it not. A fruitless love and a cold assent that produce no obedience are near akin, and both are little worth. Many would not dissemble with God, but do they love men, not in word or tongue only, but in deed and in truth?

SERMON XXIV.

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.—1 JOHN iii. 19.

THE words contain a motive to quicken us to love the brethren, not in word or tongue only, but in deed and in truth. The motive is taken from the fruit and benefit, which is—(1.) Propounded; (2.) Amplified.

First, Propounded, 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth.' To be of the truth hath a double notion in scripture.

1. To profess the true religion: John xviii. 37, 'Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice;' that is, owneth the true religion; he rightly understands and believes the truth of the gospel.

2. To be sincere and true in that religion, and to live accordingly. There are some christians that are only so in show and semblance, or count themselves christians, but are not; but these are truly born of God, and such as they profess themselves to be, 'disciples indeed,' John viii. 31; sincere, and not hypocrites.

Secondly, Amplified, 'And shall assure our hearts before him.' Where—

1. The effect and fruit of knowing that we are of the truth; we 'shall assure our hearts.'

2. The strength of this confidence, 'Before him.'

1. For the effect itself, 'persuade our hearts;' so the margin and other translations. By confidence in God we shall quiet and still our consciences; so that the notion here is, we shall have our hearts secure and confident. A soul conscious of sin raiseth doubts and fears, that when our qualification is evident, we are perfect as to the conscience, Heb. ix. 9. The word is so taken elsewhere: Mat. xxviii. 14, 'We will persuade him, and secure you;' that is, pacify the governor, and keep you from punishment. So here it signifieth to render our hearts peaceable and quiet.

2. The strength of this confidence, 'Before him.' We are said to be before him three ways—