

SERMON XLI.*

A CHRISTIAN, GOD'S TEMPLE.

For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.—2 Cor. vi. 16—18.

THERE are three things in these words :

First, The privilege of believers, especially as they are the church of God. They 'are the temple of the living God, as God hath said.'

Secondly, The duty, which by virtue of that privilege, is incumbent on all believers. 'Wherefore,' saith he, 'come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing.'

Thirdly, A promise made unto the due performance of the duty by virtue of that privilege. 'And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.'

You may well think I shall not speak at large to these things. I intend only so far to touch upon them, as just to lead me to what I think is the present sin of this nation, and what are the causes of the judgments upon it.

In ver. 16. believers are said to be dedicated, consecrated, and made holy to God, as his peculiar lot and portion. And then the use of it is to shew the twofold sin for which judgment cometh upon this nation. The first is, That the nation deals not with them as God's consecrated lot and portion: that is the sin of the nation. The second is, That they behave not themselves as God's consecrated lot and portion: that is the sin of the people of God.

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I shall spend some time in confirming my foundation. You have it with the ground of it, Rev. v. 9. where the church speaks to Christ, 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests.' Before the purchase of them by Christ, they lay in the common lot of mankind; they were in the people, and tongues, and kindred, and nations of the earth. Christ makes a purchase of them. He did not die to redeem all, but to redeem some out of all the kindreds, and nations, and tongues under heaven. Upon Christ's making a purchase of them, they are no more their own. 'Ye are bought with a price,' saith the apostle, 'ye are not your own.' Whose then are they? They are Christ's; Rom. xiv. 9. 'For this cause he both died and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living;' that is, of the whole church, alive and dead, that they might be his. He took them all into his disposal. And what did he do with them? When they were absolutely his own, and in his power to dispose of them as he saw good, he dedicates them to God: 'He makes us kings and priests unto God,' saith he. Christ might have disposed of his purchase another way; but this course he took, he dedicates them unto God. Kings and priests were so, as I shall shew you afterward. The apostle Peter tells us the same of all believers, 1 Pet. ii. 9. 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar,' or purchased 'people.' The same is expressed again, Tit. ii. 14. and in sundry other places which I shall not insist upon. But there is one expression of it which must be taken notice of, and that is where they are called the 'first-fruits unto God;' James i. 18. 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.' And Rev. xiv. he expresses it again, 'These were they that had not defiled themselves, and they were the first-fruits unto God.' When God gave and sanctified all things unto his church of old, he reserved the first-fruits unto himself; these were all to be dedicated to him; every one in his way whereof he was capable; clean beasts by sacrifice; men by redemption, corn and wine by a meat-offering: but God retained all the first-fruits to himself: he laid it upon the land

as a rent charge, that he might keep up his title to the whole. So he tells them, Lev. xxv. 23. 'The land is mine,' saith he, 'and ye are but strangers and sojourners with me.' All the concernment of the church of God are God's. He entertains us in his house, at his table, and sustains us with his ordinances. God took the first-fruits as an acknowledgment that they held all from him; and when he would take them no more, he destroyed the land.

Now God takes believers that they may be a kind of first-fruits unto himself of the creatures. He satisfies himself with believers throughout the world to be first-fruits of the whole creation. And if God should cease from taking these first-fruits, he would destroy the world. To what end should he maintain this fabric at such an expense of power, patience, forbearance, goodness, wisdom, if there came no revenue to him? Now he never took any revenue but the first-fruits. And if any one (as I shall afterward shew) do put forth their hands to this portion of God, he will be sure sorely to revenge it. For the most part this is the state of things among worldly men, the more they have, the readier they are to lay their hands upon the portion of others: but I am sure the more men have throughout the world, the readier they are to lay their hands upon the portion of God. But, saith he, Jer. ii. 3. 'Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord:' they shall contract guilt, and they shall have punishment fall upon them. 'All that devour them shall offend:' if that were all, they would not much care for it: but 'evil shall come upon them,' saith the Lord.

Let us a little inquire how believers come to be dedicated, consecrated, and made holy unto God, to be his temple, tabernacle, first-fruits, his lot and portion, as they are called.

Why this notion is taken from the Old Testament, and it is spoken of in allusion to what was in use there, when both persons and things were dedicated to God.

By what way then were things dedicated and consecrated to God, made his portion, and became holy?

There were four ways whereby this was done.

I. By special call, and legal constitution.

II. By unction.

III. By inhabitation. And,

IV. By vow, and actual separation thereupon.

There is no other way whereby any thing was ever dedicated to God under the Old Testament. And we shall find all these ways believers are dedicated and consecrated unto God.

I. There was a dedication to God by special call, and law constitution. So Aaron was dedicated to God to be a priest, *Exod. xxviii. 1.* 'Take to thee Aaron and his sons with him from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.' What was this? 'No man,' saith our apostle, 'takes this honour to himself, unless called of God, as was Aaron.' Aaron was called of God to be dedicated a peculiar priest unto him. And this was confirmed by the law of the priesthood: he 'was made a priest after the law of a carnal commandment,' saith he. And, *Numb. i. 50.* God took the Levites to the service of the tabernacle, whereby they became his portion: and, *chap. iii. 3—5.* they are separated upon God's call.

This then is the first way whereby God takes any thing unto himself, and by which any one is separated and dedicated unto God. It is by a solemn call, and legal constitution thereupon.

II. The second way whereby any thing was dedicated unto God, was by unction. So Aaron, after his call, to complete his dedication, *chap. xxix.* was anointed in his consecration; and so were his sons. In like manner Elisha was anointed to be a prophet in the room of Elijah. And David was anointed to be king over Israel. It was the great consummating ordinance whereby any were dedicated unto God. In *Exod. xxx. 22, &c.* you have the institution of the making of this oil. 'Ye shall not,' says God, 'make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, shall be cut off from his people, or putteth any of it upon any stranger.' What is the meaning hereof? Why, this anointing oil, where-with the priests and all the holy utensils of the altar were anointed, was a type of the graces and gifts of the Spirit of God. And where God hath given the gifts and graces of his Spirit for holy ministrations, for praying, for preaching the

word, for administering the ordinances ; for any one to make an oil like it by liturgies, homilies, and the like, is to act contrary to this command. All that is done in the whole liturgical, ceremonial course, is nothing but to make an oil like the oil God hath made for his sanctuary, which he doth so severely prohibit any man to put his hand unto, for this reason, because it was a type of the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost that were to be poured out upon Christ, and believers under him.

This is the second way whereby any thing was consecrated unto God.

III. The third way whereby the temple (as believers are peculiarly said to be 'God's temple' in the text and other places) and tabernacle were consecrated, was by inhabitation. God consecrated them unto himself by a glorious inhabitation, and dwelling in them. He came and dwelt in them, thereby they became peculiarly his own. And this God did two ways: 1. By an extraordinary sign of taking first possession of his house, and entering into it, that all might take notice that this was his house; 2. By ordinary constant pledges of his presence.

1. He did it by an extraordinary sign of his taking possession of his house. When the tabernacle was built, and ready to be set apart for service, the glory of the Lord filled it; *Exod. xl.* It was a dark cloud, for then God dwelt in thick darkness. And, *1 Kings viii. 10.* when the temple was built, God came by a glorious sign, and took possession of it. The glory of the Lord filled the temple: and this also was a cloud. God took possession of those houses, the tabernacle and the temple, by a cloud, to signify those types and veils which the people was under, that they could not see to the end of those houses which were to denote the coming of the Son of God to fix his tabernacle among us, by taking human nature upon him.

2. God did it by a visible pledge of his abode and residence. Now this was the ark and the mercy-seat encompassed with the cherubims, which had the direct form of a throne; the ark being supported to such a height, the mercy-seat placed upon that, and the cherubims shading it as arms, had the direct appearance of a throne. Hence the ark is sometimes called 'the glory of God.' It is called 'the King

of glory,' Psal. xxiv. 'Lift up your heads ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory' (that is, the glorious ark which was the type and representation of God's dwelling gloriously in the tabernacle and temple) 'may come in.' There are these two things required to inhabitation; A glorious entrance by an extraordinary sign; and a constant residence by an ordinary pledge: and both these were in the dedication of the temple and tabernacle. And two things ensued thereon.

(1.) A special manifestation of God's glory. Where he dwells there is a special manifestation of his glory. God is everywhere, but is not said to dwell everywhere. He fills heaven and earth by his omnipresence; but God's dwelling signifies something more; not only his being, his essential, eternal being, but the manifestation of that being also. So heaven is said to be his dwelling-place and throne, because God doth most gloriously manifest himself to those creatures of light, his holy saints and angels, that come to the enjoyment of him. In the tabernacle, and in the temple, there was such a manifestation of God's glorious presence continually: this made them holy. And hence it is, that if all the men in this world should agree together to build a glorious fabric for the worship of God, suppose at Jerusalem; and when they had done, dedicate it to God with all the power they have, they cannot make it holy, unless God come to take possession of it by a visible pledge of his presence, and appoint a token of his presence to be in the place. The very notion that some men have, though you may think there is little in it, that they can dedicate any thing to God, hath been the greatest ruin that ever befell religion in this world. It hath wholly cast out all apprehensions of God's portion from the minds of men, and erected another portion for God which was never called, never anointed, never inhabited by God himself. And that hath occasioned men who contract the guilt of persecuting God's only dedicated portion, to put the notion of sacrilege upon tithes and titles, and I know not what, that God never dedicated, nor put his name upon, nor ever took possession of. There is no dedication to God, but it must be by these means. And,

(2.) The special worship of God must by God himself be confined unto it. And truly we have great reason, considering what conflicts and contests are befallen us in these latter

days, which only divine wisdom could foresee, to bless our dear Lord Jesus Christ for that good word of liberty he gave us: 'The day cometh that neither at Jerusalem, nor in this nor that mountain, men shall worship God; but he that worships God, let him worship him in spirit and in truth.' This sets us at liberty from all ways, places, and forms of men's finding out, and dedication.

That is the third way.

IV. There is one way more, and that is, by special vow of things that are in our power, giving them up to God according to his mind. So did Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 22. 'Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.' Men are usually very tenacious of what they have got, they are loath to part with any portion of it, no not to God himself; therefore doth Jacob so well express it here, 'Of all that thou shalt give me, I will give the tithes to thee.' If ever Jacob had any thing God did not give him, that was all his own, and so he knew full well; for when he comes to call over this business again, he remembers, that 'with his staff he went over Jordan, but God had now made him two bands.' When men gave to God according to his mind, of things in their own power, they were under the law, made holy unto the Lord.

Now, I say, believers are dedicated, consecrated to God, and become his portion by all these several ways.

First, They are so by calling, which was the first way God calls them out of the world to be a peculiar portion unto himself. Rom. i. 7. They are 'called to be saints,' and separated unto God. So likewise, 1 Cor. i. 2. Now though this calling doth also imply effectual, internal vocation, whereby the heart and nature is really sanctified; yet it also includes an external separation and dedication unto God. Christ redeems us out of the world, and he calls us out of the world. An obediential compliance with that call of God for separation from the world, makes us to be God's dedicated portion. 'Come out from among them and be separate,' saith God. If we live in the world, after the manner of the world; if we are like the world in our ways and walk, in our affections and conversation, we have no reason to look upon ourselves as the dedicated portion of God. He that is so, brethren, that is thus called to be God's, he endures the world, and doth his own duty in it,

and that is all his concern. I say, he endures the world. That which is the world, and properly so, hath nothing pleasing to him, only he doth his own duty in it. If we intend to be at all interested in this great privilege here, let us secure ourselves that we are God's portion by calling, that we have complied with his call to separate ourselves from the world. The people of God dwelt alone of old, and were not reckoned amongst the nations. Our mixtures in the world, our conformity to the world, our touching of the unclean thing, is the sin of professors at this day, whereby they are concerned in procuring all the judgments that God is pouring out upon the land.

Secondly, Believers are made God's peculiar portion, and are dedicated to him by unction. I will first shew that they are anointed, and then how they are anointed.

1. The apostle says, 2 Cor. i. 21. 'He that hath established us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.' And you know that place, 1 John ii. 20. 27. 'We have an unction from the Holy One; and the anointing which ye received of him, abideth in you.' It is plain, therefore, that believers are anointed. God in his providence did suffer that name to go upon us, that we should be called Christians, which is in English, 'anointed ones.' That is the name of God's people in the world. How well we answer that name, many of us may do well to consider.

2. We cannot know how we were anointed, how we became Christians, but by considering how our head was anointed, how Jesus became Christ. Christ was anointed: Isa. lxi. 1. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for the Lord hath anointed me.' Heb. i. 9. 'God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Wherein consisted the unction of the Messiah? the anointing of the Most Holy? which was prophesied of, Dan. ix. 24. How did Jesus become Christ? Truly I have elsewhere so largely insisted upon the communication of the Spirit of God to the human nature of Christ, how, and for what end, that I shall not here speak to it again. In a word, it was the gift of the Spirit of God, with his gifts and graces in an immeasurable manner to the human nature of Christ: 'For God giveth not the Spirit unto him by measure;' John iii. 34. So he is therefore said to be 'anointed with the oil of glad-

ness above his fellows.' How to his fellows? Eph. iv. 7. 'To every one of us is grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' All believers have their measure. He had no measure. This anointing consists in the communication of the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost to all believers. This is our unction, thence we are called Christians. And those who despise the Spirit of God, and his graces and gifts, will find little relief in calling themselves Christians, another day.

But how doth this anointing dedicate believers unto God? It doth it two ways.

(1.) It gives a peculiar interest unto God in them, which is not in any others. Where there are the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, there God hath something that is not in any part of the world beside: it is indeed the way whereby God takes possession of any soul; he comes and deposits this treasure there. There is my treasure, saith God, I lay it up there, and thereby I take possession of this soul to be mine.

(2.) Every thing dedicated to God, was to be employed in the service of God. And this anointing makes us able to serve God according to his mind and will, when we can do so no otherwise. There is no serving of God without the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost. God abhors all service proceeding from any thing else.

Thirdly, By inhabitation: the Spirit of God dwells in believers. I must say of this also, as I did of what went before; I have shewn so at large how the Spirit of God dwells in, and inhabits in believers, and how they are his temple and tabernacle, that I shall not speak more to it now, but only apply to the case of believers what was said before, that wherever God inhabits, he first takes possession in a cloud, and dwells in a visible pledge of his presence.

1. When God converts a soul, he comes into it with a cloud. I know nothing in this world that I would be more jealous of in my ministry, than of speaking any thing in conversion or regeneration, that I had not experience of myself. I would not bind others by any experience of my own, unless it be confirmed by a general rule. For one man may have an experience that another hath not. And we ought to be wonderful tender in giving out any thing that should be

found in persons as to conversion, and regeneration, if we have not a general rule for it, as well as our own experience. But yet, I think, this I can say, that God generally takes possession of souls in a cloud; that is, there is some darkness upon them, they cannot tell what their state is, sometimes they have hopes, and sometimes fears; sometimes they think things are well, and sometimes they are cast down again. This is the way whereby God generally enters into all souls. These things may be in part where God doth not come; but seldom have I heard of any that have come unto God, but that God first took possession of them in a cloud.

2. God doth it by some visible pledge of his presence, when the cloud is over; for the cloud is but for a season, though it may continue upon some longer than upon others. I have shewn before, that the pledge of God's visible presence in the temple and tabernacle, was the ark and the mercy-seat, formed into the fashion of a throne, with cherubims; which was a type of Jesus Christ. The ark had the law, and the mercy-seat was propitiatory, covering the law from the eye of justice, and so atonement was made. And this was a type of Christ.

How then doth God dwell in the hearts of believers by constant residence? When Christ is enthroned in the heart; and we can have no farther pledge of it. There may be a great deal of duty, careful and wary walking, and a great deal of profession; but if Christ be not upon the throne in the heart, there is no pledge of God's dwelling there. So God dedicates his people by inhabitation.

Fourthly, The last way whereby any thing was dedicated unto God, was by vow and covenant. Now we are all of us under a twofold dedication to God by vow and covenant. The one in general, whereof the token is baptism. And we are likewise under a particular vow and dedication as we are a church. What, I pray, is our engagement to walk with God in professed subjection to all the ordinances of Christ, but to give up ourselves to God by vow and covenant to be his, by a dedication of ourselves according to God's appointment and mind? God help us to look unto it, every one of us in our several places and stations. There is more in these things than we are aware of.

Now as there was never any other way whereby any

thing could be dedicated to God, and believers being all these ways dedicated unto him, they become his peculiar portion. They shall be mine, saith God. They are God's kings, priests, tabernacle, temple, sacrifice; 'yield your bodies a living sacrifice.' And they are God's first-fruits, called so expressly.

There are two uses follow necessarily from hence.

Use 1. If believers, especially as they are in church relation, which adds the last hand of dedication by particular church vow and covenant to be God's; if believers, I say, are thus God's peculiar portion, dedicated unto him, it is not in my power to give warning unto the world, to take heed how they meddle with this portion of God. They do not, they will not hear me; and if I could speak unto them, it would rather provoke them, than cure them. But give me leave to say this, and to give glory and honour unto God therein, that among all the sins that so reign in the nation at this day, and have done so for a long season, that which hath peculiarly stirred up the displeasure of God against the nation, so as to threaten us with spiritual judgments, the giving us up to popery, which men are afraid of, and with temporal judgments of all sorts whatever, hath been the violence that hath been done to God's portion all this nation over. Other sins are great and provoking, but God hath given the earth to the children of men; 'He endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.' He will bear with men in all their abominations, leave them for many ages, in many places of the world, to sport themselves in the earth, like the leviathan in the waters. But when a nation comes (as it hath been the sin of this whole nation, from one end to the other) to put forth its hand against God's portion, tearing, rending, destroying, imprisoning, banishing, starving the remainder of God's heritage, it is the cause (let it be spoke to the glory of God, and that which God will own at the last day) why wrath is gone out against us. This hath not been done in a corner by some few, at some certain time. We have known the day when the whole nation, as one man, was on fire to consume the residue of God's heritage, it was the sin of the nation, from one end of it unto the other; saith God, 'All that devour her shall offend, evil shall come upon them.' There hath

been a great devouring of God's first-fruits, and truly in such a manner that we have no greater cause to mourn this day, than that we have not been sensible of it as we ought to be, how these first-fruits of God have been devoured. But they shall offend, and evil shall come upon them. It is the very word that God speaks to the nation this day, if I understand any thing of the will of God in these matters. He speaks so again, Jer. xii. 14. 'Thus saith the Lord against all my evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit, Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.' What is the inheritance God hath caused us to inherit? It is his ordinances, his ways and worship; it is not the great things of this world; let all take their portion and lot, as God in his providence directs. The inheritance which God causeth Israel to inherit, is his ways and worship, the purity of his ordinances, and their serving Christ in them. This is our inheritance. Saith God, 'I will pluck up my evil neighbours, that will not leave my inheritance.' Let them take what is their own; but they will not leave my inheritance. That generation of vipers, those evil neighbours of God's inheritance everywhere, that have been devouring it, and taking of it away, their doom is read in the prophet, and will come upon them in God's appointed time. The great sin that is upon the nation, and which we ought to bewail, and be humbled for, is the violence they have done to God's portion. It hath not been done by this and that person; no man hath cared for Zion, none hath pitied her, there have been none to plead her cause, none to relieve her, while her friends have died in prisons, been impoverished, banished, &c.

Use 2. There are sins with us, even with us also against the Lord our God. And our great sin is this, that notwithstanding all the violence that hath been shewed us, all the fears, troubles, perplexities that we have undergone, yet we have not been willing to come out from among them, and be separate, but we have cleaved greatly to the unclean thing. There may be a time, and there hath been, when God calls his people to a local separation. So he did to his people in Babylon; 'Come out of her, my people.' And we can remember the day when God carried many of his people out of this nation into a wilderness, and there hid them for a

season. They were under the call of God to a local separation. I see no ground for that now. God binds men down by his providence to their stations; relation and duty bind them down to bear a testimony to the ways of Christ, against all those wicked oppositions that are made unto them. But to separate more in the holiness of our lives and conversations, to keep more from the uncleannesses and vanities of the world, all the abominations of it; God's call is upon us all for this. These two things being thus met together, viz. violence upon the portion of Christ, upon God's separate ones; and neglect of duty in those separate ones, to separate themselves more and more from the world. Who can save? Who can deliver? and what can be our expectation while this frame doth abide? I wish I had a little more time to press this upon us, that if we intend to be made partakers of the last thing in my text, which is the promise that God will 'receive us, and be a Father to us,' and use us as his sons and daughters; if we would be made partakers of it, when an apprehension of an interest in it, will be worth ten thousand times more than all this world can afford; then let us stir up ourselves to this great duty of farther and daily separation from the world in things moral and spiritual, in our minds, in our spirits, in our ways, in our whole course; that if it be the will of God, there may be some interposition for the saving of the land.