



SERMON XIII.*

The Lamb's Marriage.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready,” &c.—Revelation xix. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

THIS text has three parts. 1. The Kirk's triumph under the Antichrist's persecution, in the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses. 2. John's fall in worshipping the Angel. 3. A new revelation, wherein Christ and His members are seen triumphing, which contains a glorious description of Christ. I take not this absolutely to be the victory and triumph of the kirk triumphant in heaven, but it is the joy of the kirk on earth, groaning and longing for the marriage day.

In the 7th verse is contained an exhortation *to be glad and rejoice,* with thanksgiving and two reasons of it, “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.” Here is a question in the entry: Is there not a time to rejoice, and a time to mourn? It is not rather a time for the church to mourn and be sad (chap. xii.) The Kirk, the poor woman with child, hard at the down-lying (travailing),

* A Sermon preached before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, at Kirkcudbright, June 20, 1634.

and has not an hour's reckoning, is chased by the dragon to the wilderness. But in chap. xiv., a judgment is denounced; chap. xvi., the arrows of God's wrath are going through all the earth, a great din and hurly-burlie in the Kirk. But in chap. xix. 7, the Kirk is brought in singing and rejoicing. Hence let the world turn upside down, and come as it will, the saints will get a life of it. They are God's birds that sing in the winter, for the time is come. Isaiah liv. 1, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing," &c. And yet they are captives and banished people in the meantime. Zechariah ix. 9, "Rejoice greatly, O Jerusalem, shout, behold thy king cometh," and yet they had not a king at all, but were "in the pit where was no water;" they were in bondage. So in Isaiah xl. 1, when the people were under the water, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, says the Lord. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem." When the day is fair, and the spirit flows, and the wind is in the west, we can all then sing and rejoice, and believe. If God would each hour of the day come, and take His children on His knees, and lay their head in His bosom, saying, "Weep not, hold your tongue," we could all then sing and rejoice, and believe. But we must make a window in our prison, and look out and see daylight, and the Bridegroom coming, and rejoice beforehand. We are like fools and spilt^a bairns, taking offence at our Lord, and, like Jacob, † will not be comforted. Our Lord cannot get us drawn to the house of wine to take a cup of consolation. But we must learn to sing when God bids us. If the winter night were never so dark, believers must aye rejoice. Therefore rejoice, my dearly beloved, for we will get day about ‡ yet when the

* Spoilt. † Genesis xxxvii. 35. ‡ It will be our turn next.

marriage day is come. Luke vi. 23, "Rejoice for that day," and leap for joy every day, (verse 25), even when they hate you and separate you from their company. "When these things shall come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth near" (Luke xxi. 28). They were casting down their heads; but faith must rejoice in the hope of an out-get.*

"*Let us give honour to Him.*"—Joy should not want praise. Alas! we rejoice in ourselves and not in God. It is a bastard joy that is enjoyed without praise, Psalm xxxiii. 1, 2, "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; praise the Lord with harp." In 1 Thess. v. 16, the apostle couples these together, "Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in all things give thanks." It is double music in heaven that wants † praising of Him who sits on the throne. Our Lord gets often deaf nuts from us in our spiritual joy. We take joy as a breakfast to cheer up our foolish sense, and sit down upon our joy, and whine as we do. So we wrong our Lord when our joy bringeth not forth thanksgiving. It is not enough to rejoice that ye hope to get a kiss of Christ in ordinances, except ye come to this, to give Him a *sacrifice of praise*. We often draw our joy home to ourselves, and make Christ a babe to play ourselves with, and feed our foolish sense. Were we thankful, and did refer all our sense to praising, we would not get so many hungry meals.

But what is the matter? Wherefore are we bidden rejoice and be glad? The Kirk speaks her words with a warrant, "Know ye no better nor so? Have we not good cause to rejoice? Is not the Lamb's marriage

* An out-gate—a coming out in triumph.

† That aims at the praise of Him.

come?" Then nothing more feeds the soul of the godly with delight than this, that the marriage day is come, and is at hand. It is something worth indeed, that the poor widow, the Kirk, has married so rich a husband; "for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm xxiv). Ye need not fear scant,* nor that Christ will scale † house.

"*The marriage is come.*"—It is not simply the glorified in heaven, but the time when God will make good all His promises to His Kirk in Christ. Say ye, was not this marriage of the Lamb before? Yea, was not Christ His Kirk's husband, and her well-beloved from the beginning? *Answer.* In God's purpose, He was from eternity the King, Lord, and Husband of His Kirk; but for the going out of the marriage, we are to know that the Kirk was suited ‡ and wooed long before the marriage. Christ takes not His wife at the first blink, as Samson fell in love with his wife. But He married with advisement so to speak. He and His Kirk are thrice lawfully proclaimed in the preached gospel; there are meetings and communings about the heads of the contract, wherein Christ tells of His own excellencies, and the worth of His Father's glory, and what mansions are above. As long as the first husband lives (the law our first husband) Christ does not marry (Rom. vii. 1). If ye and the world be hand-fastened § together, that marriage must be divorced, or else He will not look on that side of the house that ye are in. Before it came to this, "Even so I take her," Christ made three journies to His wife: 1. When He came in the flesh He wooed sinners and offered Himself to the

* Want. † Skail; leave the house He has once occupied.

‡ Sought in marriage.

§ Contracted in marriage.

world. 2. After His Ascension to heaven He comes another journey, by His Spirit, in His ministers who preach the gospel. So Paul betrothed to a new husband.* 3. He will come again at the last day, and complete the marriage. I suspect a hasty marriage to be a sudden vengeance; men and women fly to Christ, and flock to ordinances, to eat and drink with Him, or † ever He woo them. Many come to take Christ, and have another husband at home, the world and your lusts. That is foul play: you must be single, or else ye cannot marry Him. I will ask at all of you that are come here this day, if your husband, the world, be dead? Try if your lusts be dead, and sin mortified; otherwise look for no match with Christ. If the world and you are as great ‡ as ever you were, I shall not believe that Christ and you are in the way of marriage. They that are married to Christ have been cast down, wintered and summered, burnt and scalded, and can tell you what God's anger is, and what a strange put§ the love of Christ has to make. Loathe at sin and all other things.

"His wife hath made herself ready."—How makes the Kirk, the Lamb's wife, *herself ready*? In Col. i. 12, it is said, "Giving of thanks to the *Father, who hath made us meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Doth not God here readily answer both as true? God draws and we run; for God and we meet not against our will, as Simon carried Christ's cross; nor as Balaam's ass spake that knew not what he spake; nor as the lilies grow and labour not, and yet are better clothed than Solomon

* 2 Cor. xi. 2.

† Ere ever.

‡ Great friends.

§ *"Put;"* a thrust, and sometimes a jettee of stones set to alter the course of a stream.

was. Our Lord has our heart in His hand, as man's way is with wax before the fire, * to wring and work it as he pleaseth, and to set the stamp on the man's heart. He puts on the stamp as the wax receiveth it; a stone would not receive it. The man blows the trumpet, but all the sound comes from the man's breath. The ship sails; the pilot fills not the sails, but it is the wind that fills the sails. Our Lord begins and works upon the will and the heart, and changes it, and lets us see the excellency of our new husband and lord. And when we "*make ourselves ready*," we follow on to the smell of His garments. If God draw and ye stand still, if God blow upon you, and strive and work and cast you down, and ye are as hard as a rock or a stone under His hand, you have not "*made yourselves ready*;" so ye are not at all married to Christ. O, my dearly beloved, make some preparation, less or more, for Him. Ye must be changed and manswear † your old Adam, and forget your father's house, cast off your ilk-day ‡ garment and get a wedding garment. And think not that Christ and your old ragged garments, your lusts, will agree together.

Many on the other hand, hearing that there must be a preparation for *the marriage*, and that they must not come to Christ in their sin and guilt, and not knowing that He is angry, especially after a great out-cast, § will stand far off from Christ and not seek after Him, because not prepared. "*The Lamb's Wife doth make herself ready*."—But I have not made myself ready; (say ye) nay, I know not but if I go in my

* The old copy has, "as a man's way," omitting "with wax."
† Renounce by oath.

‡ Clothes worn on ordinary days. § Quarrel.

guilt, I shall be put away in His anger. And there ye stick, like a ship, on the sand-bed of fears and doubtings, lest God be angry; and not a foot can ye win nearer to Christ.

What, then, shall unprepared souls do under these doubtings, especially under challenges for unrepented of sins that anger Christ? I shall labour to answer what troubles such and hinders their humble setting to,* and coming away. 1. They are troubled about Christ's nature. 2. About their warrant to come unprepared. And 3. They are troubled with Satan and the Law of God. "As for Christ" (say they) "it is a needless errand; I will not amend myself, such an unprepared soul as I am." *Answer.* Go forward till † locked doors hold you again. You can have no less than you have; it is but that much lost travel. Say ye, "It is a needless errand; I will not mind myself." *Answer.* The sluggard tells aye his answer before he goes his errand. The knavish servant's excuse is aye, when he is sent an errand, "There is a lion in the way." What if ye find an open door, and Christ coming out to meet you mid-way? Christ played as merciful a sport to the forlorn son. "Ay, but I see fire and sword when I come to the door, how shall I go in?" *Answer.* What if it be a false glass wherein ye see? When sinners would be at Christ, He never holds out fire and sword to chase them away: that is but Satan's fire and sword that fears you. I love that (warrant) yet the better that the devil opposes it; but I say, though Christ gloom ‡ on you, as on the woman of

* Making an effort.

† In old copy, "Will." But evidently the sense is, "Go on till you are shut out—till locked doors hold against you."

‡ Frown.

Canaan, yet go forward; they are sweet coals that burn a soul flightering* to be at Christ. That fire will never be your death. When want of preparation holds a man from Christ, it is of the devil. Men take Christ to be proud, when it is themselves; they are proud and will not go to Christ till they can give Him a meeting, and buy mercy. Nay, you are to go without money; that is a better market. O! think ye shame to be in Christ's common? †

2nd. Oh, says the soul, "I want a warrant; it is presumption to go to Christ with such a backful of guilt as I have." *Answer.* I say it is both pride and presumption to bide away. I hope you will not trust in yourselves or your own strength; you are doing so, or else you would not complain of your being unprepared as ye do. Lean but to Christ, and then complain not, but presume your fill on Him, providing you think yourself unworthy of Him. It is not presumption to take a grip of Christ's naked sword, though it should cut your hand. "Oh," says the soul, "you have not told me of a warrant to rush in unprepared to an angry Christ." Would ye have a warrant? there it is; the beggars warrant is as good as I would wish. His warrant and testimonial to a beggar is a lame leg, a cripple hand, a hungry belly, a bare back, that is good reason and cause for him. So I say, have ye a hungering and longing desire after Him? Or know ye that ye are unprepared, that is, a cripple both of legs and arms? That is a notable warrant to go to Christ. "Oh, but," says the soul, "I have not a promise, I have not the Covenant to take with me, and for want of faith I have lost the promise." *Answer.* The Covenant is twice written, God has a

* Fluttering.

† To be under obligation to Christ.

copy, the principal is in His hand and mind, and ye have a copy in your heart. If ye have lost your double,* what then? Says Christ, My copy is to the fore.† The Covenant stability is to the fore, it stands; not in this that ye shall evermore‡ believe; there is no such covenant as that, yourselves have made that covenant and not Christ. Let me see such a covenant as this, that all that doubt and say, they are unprepared for Christ should bide away, and never come to Christ, till they be prepared to come, and are ready as the Lamb's wife is for her marriage. Yet, says the soul, "the warrant is not sure. It is hell and utter darkness to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb without a wedding garment (Matt. xxii. 12), and so unprepared as I am." *Answer.* That man cared not how he came; he took no care of a wedding garment; he had not so much as a hungering for Christ, which is the beggar's warrant, as you have heard. But let us reason thus; if that ye grant ye are unprepared, and that ye want much that ye should have, ye think it is death to go to Christ? I say, it is death to bide away, and the greatest death of the two. A man chased by his enemies on death and life has but two ways to flee to; either to the fire or to the water. If he be wise he will take himself to the water, and not to the fire, where he may swim; the water may cast him out. The water is the little death, fire is the meikle death. To abide still in sin, and never to come to Christ is fire; choose it not. To come to Christ with a hungering heart is the little death. There is hope of mercy in dying in the presuming

* Your copy of it.

† Is still remaining.

‡ Have a faith that never wavers.

hand, upon the point of Christ's sword. When ye come to Christ, it is life if ye long for Him.

3rd. When the devil and the law challenge you, then show Christ's blood; that is, God's great seal, against the which, to speak so, is treason. If they say ye believe not, answer ye them; despair not.

Verse 8.—“*To her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen.*”—Wherefrom comes this preparation? It is God's free gift in Christ; all is on Christ's charges and expenses. The fine linen is Christ's righteousness imputed to saints, a web of Christ's own making. It cost Him dear or ever it came on our backs; velvets, silks, king's parliament robes, clothes of gold, are nothing in comparison to this web, woven out of Christ's own bowels and heart-blood. We are unworthy of Him; all that we can do or say here is with a borrowed tongue. When we say, “Even so I take Him,” it was with a borrowed hand; for faith is not ours, it is the gift of God, to put on the fine linen. All this says that we are unworthy of Christ; if ye were worthy, slain Christ would not be your husband. Christ is a Saviour and Redeemer from head to foot, all made up of free grace, giving His blood, merits, and righteousness to His Kirk for stark nought. Men shape a sort of a Christ of their own making; not Christ but an idol; a Christ that will not ken * a man, except he get a meeting of holiness and righteousness in him, that is a Christ of your own making; but the true Christ that God gave unto the world will either marry with a beggar or none. It is His honour to match with “captives and prisoners” (Isa. lxi. 1); “the sick that need the physician” (Matt. ix. 12); “sinners that are lost”

* Own; acknowledge as His.

(Luke xix. 10); "the poor, the maimed, the halt and blind" (xiv. 21); "the beggars and dyvers* of the world;" "the weary laden" (Matt. xi. 28); "the thirsty, and those that have no money" (Isa. lv. 1); "the wretched, blind, poor, and miserable, and naked" (Rev. iii. 17); "the silly, halting, cripple kirk" (Micah iv. 7).

The fine linen white and clean, the righteousness of saints."—These are the properties of the linen which is Christ's righteousness, His perfect obedience, and sufferings. It is not gross and round spun; there is not a spot in it. I. Christ gave as much to God as He desired. The law cries, "With all the heart, soul, and strength." Christ answers, Psalm xl. 8, "*I delight to do Thy will, O God! Thy law is within My heart.*" Christ gives God lucky† heaped measure; not a penny that sinners took from God, but Christ restored a pound for it again. Nay, I say, if man had never sinned, God would never have given such a market.‡ Our righteousness would aye have been but MAN'S righteousness, which is gross and rund-spun§ in comparison of this. II. As for Christ's sufferings there was not a crack|| in them. Christ stood still; He never winked or minted¶ to take away His head; He did never jouk,** or lout,†† to miss a cuff.‡‡ He would not ware§§ a stroke off Himself. Isaiah l. 6, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." Our dear Redeemer was like no others. Few lose a cause with their will.

* Bankrupt debtors. † *Lucky* is plentiful; abundant.

‡ In the old copy this sentence is confused; but the correction of two words has made it plain.

§ A *rund* is a shred or selvage cloth spun out of mere shreds.

|| No flaw. ¶ Attempted. ** Shrink, by turning aside.

†† Bend down. ‡‡ A blow with the fist. §§ Ward off.

But Christ was content that a decret went against Him, and that the law should seize on Him. He purposed to pay, and not miscount; He took the strokes till God said it was enough, "it is finished." So His righteousness will do our turn, being clean, white, and fine. Then, when ye have put on this clean fine linen, keep it clean and white; spark^o no dirt on Christ's righteousness. "Be ye as holy as He is holy." We are all ready to file† our new clothes after we have put them on. Ezekiel must have a watchword, Ezekiel ii. 8, "Son of man, be not rebellious like the rebellious house." Isaiah viii. 11, "The Lord instructed me, that I should not walk in the way of this people." When we have put on this fine linen, temptations (the devil's dogs) are hounded out against us, to rive‡ our clothes. This world is a smoky room, a filthy house. What are malice, pride, love to the world, security, and avarice, but the devil's smoky walls, that we should keep ourselves from.

Verse 9, "*He saith to me, write, Blessed are they that are called.*"—That which is written by God is sure, a concluded thing. The saint's happiness is not, He said it, and shiegled.‡ God has booked§ your heaven and your happiness, if you be called to the Lamb's marriage-supper. As the wicked man's hell is booked and written of God, and sealed up among his treasures, so vengeance is laid up for him (Deut. xxxii. 34). Be glad and rejoice, O believers, your salvation is past through the great seal; this testament is confirmed with Christ's blood. Say ye, "The testament is written, but my name is not there?" *Answer.* Neither Abra-

* Throw no spot upon.

† Soil.

‡ To tear.

§ Was unstable; vacillated. In the old copy, the sentence has "and shelied."

ham's nor David's names are in it, yet it is sure enough. A father leaves his inheritance to be divided equally among his sons; ilk* one has no more ado† but to prove that he is a son; then he falls to his part of the inheritance. We err oftentimes in our applying either promises or threatenings. You make a question of God's part, "if Christ died for you, and loved you." Make aye sure your own part, and take no fear of God's part. If ye ask for whom Christ died, I answer; "for all that lean to Him, be who they will." Take ay‡ to you, till Christ say, I died not for you. A cord is cast down in a hollow pit to draw up you and a hundred more nor§ you. If ye dispute, "Is the cord cast down for me?" I will tell you how ye shall answer that doubt, grip and hold fast by it for your life, and out of question then it was cast down for you. If ye take the offer, question not His good will; step in; Christ's good will will not ask to whom pertain ye? And if He ask, say ye, "I am Thine." If He deny it, be ye humble and bide|| it. Cain's and Judas' names are not written in the sixth command. "But they have no due right to His promises." Yea,¶ they have to His threatenings against murderers. If ye ask if Christ died for you? He answers you with another question, Would ye die for Him? Or are ye dying for love to Him? that answers your question. Sinners are like a number of men swimming in the sea betwixt life and death. Christ and His merits are like a strong boat and a man holding out both his

* Each one.

† Trouble in the matter.

‡ Take "yes" to you; consider it as granted.

§ Besides you.

|| Endure it; submit.

¶ The meaning seems to be "Yes;" the principle is the same; they should apply *personally* the threatenings.

arms drawing them in one by one, saying, "Give me your hand;" and so he presses them in.

Verse 9, "*Blessed are they that are called.*"—Then all that hear His word are blessed. We are sent out to call you, and to cry, "Our Master, the King's son, is to be married, come to the feast, and bring all your best clothes with you." But there are many called, who are not called. That calling in the Proverbs i. 24, is not here meant, "I called and ye refused;" nor that in Matt. xx. 19, "Many are called but few are chosen." There is a difference between the inward calling and the outward calling. *First.* In the person; none are called but the Bridegroom's friends, who are come of Christ's own house, and are native of kin to Him; strangers and bastards to the house get but a word. Different from this is that calling that is to the saints; a calling by their names, as when God called Abraham who said, "Here am I." The friends of the Bridegroom hear a voice upon their hearts, as if God had called them by their names; the rest are called, but they obey not the King. They hear a voice sounding in the air as afar off speak to a man of inheritance in Spain; he hears and hears not. The reprobate hear of God's calling as if ye were speaking to him of playing at the football, or some trifle. But speak to a man of his own inheritance, and how he shall be lord of all things; O, that goes near his heart. *Secondly.* The inward calling goes foot for foot with the decree of election. "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called" (Rom. viii. 30). The inward calling is more than a word; it is a word with an arrow shot at the heart, or struck on the soul, but it must yield to Christ and be led captive at His will. "Other sheep I have, them also I must bring in" (John x. 16). I must have them, cost what it will. If they be un-

willing, they shall be made willing. Indeed, the wicked run away with one of Christ's arrows sticking in them, as a wild beast with a dart; (but if it is shot with Christ's full strength, it goes to the bone); it but draws blood, and makes a hole in the skin. The arrow falls out and the wound closes again. But it is the Mediator's arrow John speaks of in John x. 28. O, says the man,* there is a grip called the Mediator's grip. "I, when I am lifted up to the Cross, will draw all men after Me" (John xii. 32). No man can resist Him if he once get a blow of Him, and a wound in his soul with one of Christ's arrows. So Paul was not called to His supper till he was blind, and had fasted three days. So this in Zech. xii. 10, "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn as one that mourneth for his only son." These that are called to the marriage supper are "blessed" for ever. To be called to the marriage is to be promised away and spoken for in marriage; and when the contract is subscribed and the woman gives her oath, hand, and promise, to her husband—when she is hand-fastened † before God to him—she cannot with honesty enter into marriage with another man. By the law, the last ‡ testament is of force. So, when we have given our names to our husband Christ, it is not honesty to fall in love again with other lovers; to marry two is vile falsehood. Are ye content that Christ get your first love, and to go with Him before § another? All that are called to the marriage should be chaste, and think of that look of their husband Christ, who got the first promise of them. He has a tongue that

* Perhaps it should be, "O yes, man."

† Betrothed and contracted.

‡ Her recent betrothal.

§ Rather than.

is sweeter than all tongues. An honest merchant, who made the first black * and stroke with you, will not beguile you for a penny more. And, when all is done, the devil and the world cannot over-bid† our Lord Jesus Christ. Can they bid more than heart? or Christ? or God? Yet many, after they have given away their hand to Christ in covenant, the world ravishes them ere ever Christ can come to claim them again.

“*The Lamb's Wife hath made herself ready.*”—It is not said that, “*The Lamb made Himself ready.*” There is no stop‡ of the marriage on Christ's side of it. It is long since He died and rose again, and entered into His glory. But the wife is wild,§ sweer, and slow to the draught. The reason why the last marriage-day is deferred is because God will have none of His own to be lost, or perish (2 Peter iii. 9). Long for the marriage-day. Cry, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Ye would be at heaven; but your lusts are not yet subdued. Get the body of sin, and the world, crucified, and the wedding-garment ready; for on Christ's side there is no stop, the lodgings are taken. Ye bid Him come quickly; He may bid *you* go fast; for He runs, and ye creep at leisure. Ye come out of the world, as Lot came out of Sodom, sweerly.|| Put every day some of your journey over, that you and He may meet. But ye stand still and sleep; ye are like a drunkard that says, “We are over long here, in the ale-house,” yet sits still and drinks on. It were not telling¶ us that the

* Bargain and agreement. † Offer a higher price.

‡ Nothing to delay.

§ Wilful, and reluctant, and slow to be drawn into compliance with His wishes. || Reluctantly.

¶ It would not be for good to us. From the A. S. word, “*teala*, good,” says Jamieson. But it may be just, “It would not tell in our favour.”

marriage came when we seek it ; there is a great part of the wedding-garment yet still unready.

“*The Marriage-Supper of the Lamb.*”—Gospel promises and mercies are called a marriage-supper. God calls not brass gold. He calls blessedness in Christ, a supper and a marriage-supper, wherein are all pleasures that can delight hearing and tasting, music, and good cheer. It is a supper after which meek men get rest, and the night's sleep ; for the saints have many a hungry dinner in this world. Pleasures are the husks that the swine feed on, the devil's draff.* Hebrews xi. 25, “The pleasures of sin for a season.” They have much toil and labour the long summer day, but here is their blessedness, they know of a hearty meal of meat at night, and rest in the bosom of their well-beloved Christ. After this supper there is no such toil and trouble as is after dinner. Men have no rest, but are weary and laden till Christ and they meet ; they are aye under Satan's yoke till Christ loose them. Habakkuk ii. 13, “Behold it is not of the Lord of hosts that people should labour in the fire, and weary themselves with very vanity,” and Jeremiah ii. 20, “Of old I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands asunder.” God's people were in Satan's yoke, and under abominable slavery in Egypt, till supper came, when they got some rest and sleep. Satan has men yoked in a plough, and profit, pleasure, and honour, are his iron pricking goads. Balaam hears of gold and honour, Judas of money, and they go sweating up the furrows. So God's children are yoked till God loose and ease them, and call them to His supper ; and then they rest from their long summer day's toil. Ye marvel to see the wicked get so good cheer, and to wallow

* Mere dregs.

in pleasures; ye stattle at providence here when ye see the godly in trouble. But the reprobates are not called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Wonder not that God gives a greedy dog a bone; and so indeed is the world to them. Let them get the belly full of it; they shall for all that "lie down in sorrow" (Isaiah l. 11) without tasting the marriage-supper.

"And He said to me those are the true sayings of God."—Angels got a taste of Christ at the beginning, and have learned something that they had never known if man had not fallen. And though they be but beholders, and eat not of the supper as we do, yet when Christ's meat is on the table, it casts a good smell, and they delight to learn something of Christ which they knew not before. If *they* say, much more cause have *we* to say so, that God's word is "faithful and true." All the messes of the supper are for us, "His flesh is meat indeed" to us, and "His blood is drink indeed" to us. Say ye, Will not all men as well as angels say so? Do any deny God's word and sayings to be true? It will be thought, men for shame will not give God the lie in His face. Indeed, in general, we say God's words are true, but, when it comes to practice, we stand not to give Him the lie in His face. Like archers who set their eye upon the mark, and when all is done, the bow it breaks, and the arrow falls at their foot. Whilst conscience keeps in generals, and is a hundred miles from the word, we say the word is good, but when the word is near to command us, and to control our lusts, and deny our wills; then we do as Jeroboam's conscience, that slipt the shackles, when God's word was like (as he did think) to deprive him of his kingdom. Our conscience goes along with the word in general, but when it meets with our wild

humours, or lights on Herod's belt,* then we cry and complain as he did. When our lusts rise, and the Word binds our conscience, then conscience gives God fair words, like a flattering friend, or knavish servant that is aye to seek when there is most to do. The adulterer says God's word is true, yet in time of temptation, when the seventh command comes in handy† grips, and hard wrestling, then he tells another tale. The mind is as a judge that aye does right till he get ill counsel, and then never a good turn. The mind afar off judges aright of God's word, but in comes the affections as an ill counsellor and does lead conscience by the nose. When it comes to practice, the affection is conscience's ill neighbour, like Rehoboam's counsellors, that led him wrong to his hurt.

Verse 10, "*And I fell down at His feet to worship.*"—We read of very few of John's faults. Here he fell twice in idolatry, inconsiderately taking the angel to be more than an angel, he directing his worship to God, no doubt, as he supposed; but his heart being too much addicted to admire and reverence a creature, he slips when he doats so much on instruments. Observe, humility can steal on our heart in the heat of love; and Satan can beguile us with it. Idolatry comes in upon John with a sweet disguise; he welcomed it as God's worship. Our hearts and Satan do work to other's hands. While we are not advising with God, our hearts go far on in pleasuring of sin, and covering of idolatry. But let men wash idolatry with all the holy water of Rome, it has aye a black skin. Many go farther on in idolatry than John did. Saul would not himself kill David, and does not mind the

* Perhaps it should be "belly," as Philippians iii. 19.

† Close grappling.

matter and event of it ; nay, but he gives him over into the Philistines' hands. Sins (especially gross sins) have a bloody, black face, so that men must put on a mask before they kiss them. Men think to beguile their consciences by challenging of some circumstances. The Colossians worshipped angels (ii. 18), but they did it under pretence of humility. Israel did swear that they would not give their daughters to the Benjamites ; but how made they up the matter ? They bade the Benjamites at a dance take their daughters by force, and so they play their conscience a slip. Sin can go out at one door, when conscience bosts* it ; and comes slipping in again with a new garment, it being that same sin. Pilate, he put murder from himself by washing his hands, and said, I am free of Christ's blood ; he plastered his murder fairly with this, "The people caused him to do it." So swearing is good enough to many, if they swear the truth ; men would fain have God's law beguiled. If vanity of apparel lose the name of pride, and commend this that it is called the fashion, it is thought good enough. But if your clothes be proud, your heart cannot be humble. If the deceiver can conn† his conscience, and win by‡ the eight command, and say, The bargain was made in daylight, your eye was your merchant, he thinks he has loupens§ dry-shod. But consider Jer. ii. 22, "Though thou wash thyself with nitre, and take thee much soap ; yet thy iniquity is marked before Me." Why is it that we learn not to deal honestly with God's law ? Alas, we make the Almighty a child, provok-

* Threatens it with a blow.

† *Conn*, to make oneself master of. But, also, there is a word, "*Connand*," used for terms of peace offered previous to an engagement, from the French, *Convenant*.

‡ Get past.

§ Leapt over.

ing Him to anger, and then we put Him off with fair words. John here doated on the instruments, in his devotion, labouring to be thankful to God for the sweet news he had heard. It was an ordinary fault in many, to give more to some instruments, than was their due. Among the Hebrews (chap. iii.), some will set up Moses as a High Priest. In Corinth, no preacher like Paul; says another, I think Apollos better; a third says, In my judgment, Cephas, Peter, is best of all. What are ministers but earthen pitchers carrying the heavenly treasures? If they be faithful, they should do as John the Baptist, when the people thought to have done homage to him, and took him to be Christ; he took them witness that he told them, "he was not the Christ, nor worthy to loose His shoe-latchet." Call no man Rabbi. God is witness that ministers desire to put you fair off their hands, and to send you to Christ. They are but the Bridegroom's friends carrying your love letters from your husband. But carry it who will, leave off comparing ministers with mysteries,* lest you provoke God to blow out the poor man's candle; and ye know that a blown out candle will have an ill smell. They but carry the trumpet; the Spirit blows. Ye should not dote on any man. Would you have an idol to waste your love on? There is one Christ Jesus; dote your fill on Him. Love, and better love † Him, till ye be wearied of loving Him. Beware that ye move not the Lord to take the gift from the ministers. The devil can cast wildfire in people's zeal, and cause them make a god of a man in whom there is not much stuff, if he were sifted. Is comfort bound to any man's tongue above another? Balaam's ass once made a preaching, that might have

* Ministers? † Love, and love more and more.

been a lesson to the ill man. I say, sirs, take God's meat, cook it who will. Alas! that ministers by their wicked lives should spoil God's meat, so as the children skunner.* Who would believe when John was in an angel's company, and ravished in the spirit, and had seen Christ so gloriously revealed to him, and such comfortable victories over Antichrist, having his heart so well set to praise God, that he would have snappered † on a course of idolatry. Hence, if we were in an angel's company, as was Judas, ‡ the devil and sin are lying in wait to insnare us. This world is as a great wood, and at every tree-root there lies, and in every bush there lies a serpent. We had need to tell § all our steps to heaven, and see whether we go right or wrong. When we are rejoicing in God, the devil can deceive us. Peter thought himself a humble man, when he said to Christ, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," but he was devilishly humble. In praying, reading, hearing, communicating, &c., temptations are at our elbow. Satan, in Job's days, came before the Lord to accuse the man; think ye not the devil is as bold as ever he was? And think ye that he dare not come to the Communion table? When Judas was at the table with Christ, Satan goes in with a sop. The devil has been at Christ's high messes, and will be waiting on to go into every believing soul. The world is like a piece of broad sea full of nets and lines. Satan hath laid his lines through the world, and it is all full of girns || and traps wheresoever we go. In an instant John is here hooked with idolatry. David with the glance of an eye was hooked with adultery. We had need to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and that we go not through Satan's camp without our armour,

* Loathe it. † Stumbled. ‡ John? § Count over; watch. || Snares.

and our Christ with us. For Satan's arrows and bullets are flying thick about our ears, whatever we be doing. We live here beside ill neighbours, we dwell on a dry march* with Satan and his temptations. O let us beware of one that is at our elbow in the holiest work we can go about.

"See thou do it not, I am thy fellow-servant."—Angels will have none of God's glory. All that have gifts or light should labour to see that our Lord gets His glory. When that beast† suffered men to fall down on their knees to give him that worship and title that was due only to Christ, we may know by that what spirit was in him. The man that is nearest to God would have all glory given only to God. God and we must not be halvers‡ in His glory. Papists say they give glory to God, but images must have a bow by the way! Is not our part to keep good neighbourhood with God? to keep His marches?§ Grace may well satisfy us; glory is a high mass,|| none may say to Christ in that half mind. Cornelius gave his knee to Peter, but he refused it. Where there is betwixt God and us a creature that represents God, if we bow a knee to it, that smells of idolatry, although our worship be directed to God. We have a jealous husband. If ye bow the knee to a creature, and say it is to Christ, it is as a wife should prostrate herself to a strange lover, and then say, "God knows my heart is towards my husband." Idolatry may be idolatry

* A boundary line, which has not even water to keep us separate.

† Revelation xiii. 4. ‡ Sharers, each taking a half.

§ His boundary line.

|| The sentence is obscure. The meaning seems to be this— "Let us creatures be content with *grace*; but as to 'claiming' *glory* that is a High Mass which none should venture to say to Christ, as if we might halve it with Him."

although men intend not idolatry in worshipping the creature. They who say John intended to worship the angel, have not well considered the place. John directed both his inward worship and his knee worship to God, and took the angel to be God, otherwise the angel's reproof, "*I am thy fellow-servant,*" were not worth a straw. And yet he is rebuked for idolatry in directing knee-worship to an angel. Cornelius intended not to give to Peter what was due to God, he kend,* as it was told him, that Peter was a man; yet he thought, for his Master's sake, and the gospel's sake, he would bow his knee to him. For which he was rebuked.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."— This is the testimony of Christ, which comes from the Spirit of Christ, who reveals things to come. As ministers are witnesses for Christ, so they must see and hear, otherwise they cannot depone upon their consciences to the people. They must have the spirit that John had, John xv. 26, "The Spirit of truth." 1 Cor. xii. 3, "None can call Jesus the Lord, but by the Spirit." This will tell men if they be rightly called ministers; and if they want the Spirit, they sound not with the trumpets, but with rams'-horns. I shall add no more. Amen.

* He knew.

