

## The Forlorn Son.

*“ And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment : and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends : but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.”—LUKE xv. 29–32.*



LET the world, beloved in our Lord, esteem of the children of God as they will, the Lord has aye<sup>1</sup> a good eye to them that repent and come home to Him. The Lord is kind to any without exception who will come and lay their sores upon Him and will give Him the weight of all that lies upon them. And the Lord seeks no more, in the matter of believing, of a humbled sinner, but that they lay the weight and burden of their salvation upon Him.

In thir<sup>2</sup> words there is (1) the reason the Lord gives why the forlorn sinner is so handled. (2) We have to consider how this elder brother that knows not God takes with this. At the first he knows not what it meant when he heard more than ordinary joy and

<sup>1</sup> Always.

<sup>2</sup> These.

melody in his father's house, and he calls for one of the servants, and asks what it means. There is no natural man that knows the sweet kisses and expressions of love that the Lord shows to a home-coming sinner.

(3) We have the servant's answer to the elder son. "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound."

(4) When the elder brother hears this, he is angry and refuses to go into the house. As the hypocrite he will not in any ways countenance the home-coming sinner. He will not welcome his brother when he is come home. Then his father comes and entreats the elder brother to come in. Then we have in the end, a conference between the loving father and the elder son, the father answering all the objections that the son could give against his kind and friendly dealing, and the son again accusing both his father for what he does and accusing his brother also.

First: He says, "*I have served thee so many years and served thee after such a kind that I never at any time brake any of thy commandments, and yet thou never gavest me a kid to make merry with my friends.*" And herein accuses his father of unjust dealing, accounting him as it were the transgressor.

Second: He finds fault also with his father's son; he calls him not his brother but "*thy son.*" "But as soon as this thy son was come which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." He calls him a drunken waster, and one who had spent all his father's goods with harlots. The children of God they will never get that praise from

hypocrites that the Lord Himself gives them. And then we have the father's mild and gentle oration<sup>1</sup> to his son, yet entreating him and giving him fair words and giving a good reason wherefore this should be a time of mirth and rejoicing. "*It was meet,*" says he, "*that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*" Albeit he will not call him his brother, yet his father calls him his brother, and therefore, says he, this was a fit time to be glad and rejoice, namely, when a sinner comes home in penitence and mercy is shown to a penitent sinner. Now of thir<sup>2</sup> particulars shortly.

And first: We have to speak of this that the forlorn son gets such a welcome of his brother and that his brother thinks so of the joy that is at his home-coming, that he knows not what it means. Therefore we have to learn that—

The course of God's goodness to a home-coming sinner and of that rejoicing that the Lord and the blessed angels who are His servants, and the matter of the Lord's giving mercy to such a one, it is a hid mystery to the natural man. He that knows no better than mere nature thinks God's kindness that He shows to sinners the work of the gospel and the news thereof, inviting sinners to come to Christ telling them that they will be welcome, he thinks that to be an uncov<sup>3</sup> thing. That God should take a defiled sinner into His cleanbosom, and give him mercy for all his sins, he knows not what that means; and therefore he offends<sup>4</sup> at it. The natural man knows not the things that are of God,

<sup>1</sup> Entreaty.<sup>2</sup> These.<sup>3</sup> Strange.<sup>4</sup> Is stumbled at it.

neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. And he is carnally minded, he knows not the depth of the Lord's love; he knows not what that is for mercy and misery to meet together. He knows not, nor considers not, how kind and gracious the Lord is towards such, and what bowels of love and tender compassion the Lord has to a repenting home-coming sinner. No. There is no man that knows the greatness of the Lord's mercy, and how far His kindness is extended to home-coming sinners, but only he that will come and see, that will come and take a proof thereof himself. Sense is the best schoolmaster to teach us this lesson of God's goodness and His loving-kindness. By preaching, hearing, reading, contemplation of the cause and the theory of this, by all these we will only see this [goodness and loving-kindness] afar off. But once come and taste this goodness of the Lord, and come in within Christ's house, and hear heaven's music, and that will say more to you of these things than anything else can do, and more than ever ye would [have] believed.

A second reason for this is, This is a thing that is so contrary to nature that one who is a sinner, and withal a wicked sinner, that such should get mercy they cannot believe it. Scribes and Pharisees they wonder at this; and therefore Christ is challenged<sup>1</sup> for this by them, for going to Zacchæus's house, who was a publican; and He is challenged and sore accused, and calumnies raised upon Him for this matter, in that He ate and drank and kept company with publicans and sinners, who were a people most hated among the Jews, that none would

<sup>1</sup> Found fault with.

keep company with, but those that were like themselves, And Scribes and Pharisees and the Rabbis among the Jews break their neck upon Christ because of this, that He was so entire<sup>1</sup> and so warm-hearted to poor vile sinners. And this is one point of the gospel, and indeed a main point of it, that Christ in the gospel invites sinners to come, and receives repenting sinners be they never so vile in their own eyes and the eyes of others. So that repentance is a work of the gospel and not a work of the law. It is a thing altogether supernatural and not proceeding at all from nature. And then—

Third: That the Lord should extend more than ordinary mercy to sinners, who have been furthest and deepest in guiltiness, the natural man cannot away with it. And that slays all these who are opposers of God's mercy, and so come not to Christ for mercy, because they think the offers of the gospel are not so meikle<sup>2</sup> for them, seeing it is reached to them who transgress so highly in such a large manner. They cannot believe that, and foster themselves in that conceit, and take a wrong opinion of Christ. And thus they make hell to come upon themselves before the time, and the terrors of the second death before ever the Lord give out the sentence.

Now our *use* of this is to let us see what is the natural man's light, and what is his judgment of God's matters. That which is called free will in the understanding, believing God and Christ, the elder brother knows not what that means. This should be marked that the natural man who goes on into the ways of sin he has not

<sup>1</sup> So intimate with.

<sup>2</sup> Much.

right thoughts of God. All of them have false thoughts of God in their will and their affections. There is a hostility and enmity between their mind and the Lord, and His manner of dealing with poor sinners. He knows not what that means. What! has the natural man no light at all? Yes; he has some literal and natural light, but there are four faults in it shortly, and this is a clear difference between the light of the natural man and the believer's light.

First: There is no proportion between the light of the natural man and the things that are of God. Christ is little to the natural man, and so are mercy and repentance to a home-coming sinner little also. His heart is misted<sup>1</sup> and blinded, he sees not what wide bowels of mercy and love Christ has to a home-coming sinner. But the believer sees Christ and mercy and repentance all in one colour. He sees that Christ has open arms for receiving a repenting sinner. He sees there is a chamber of love to receive a lost and tint<sup>2</sup> sinner in Christ. He sees there is a door opened in Christ to receive those who come not into Him till the eleventh hour. Again —

Second: The light that the natural man has, it wants weight to draw the will and the affections and all the powers of the soul to love and embrace and follow after Christ. And therefore it may well be resembled to the light of the moon, especially in the winter season. The moon in winter has light, but it is not like the summer sun that has a melting and warming power with it. Whereas the light the believer has, it works upon his

<sup>1</sup> Obscured as with a mist.

<sup>2</sup> Lost, perishing.

heart to warm and refresh him with the love of Jesus, that as he knows Christ so he follows on to know Him. And these two are joined in Hos. vi. 3 by the spirit of God: "Then shall ye know Him if ye follow on to know Him." So that light and heat and refreshment follow the heat and sense of Christ's love that the natural man has. The natural man may see the gospel to be true, but he sees it not to be good, neither assents to the promises that are contained therein. Yet they are true promises but he assents not, or follows not in them as good, and so he goes no further on but to a bare light.

Thirdly and lastly: There is no liking, love, joy, desire, accompanying the light the natural man has, and because of this it is no wonder that those who have but little knowledge of Christ, it is no marvel albeit they misken<sup>1</sup> the Lord's dealing with His children, and call that which is the excellence of Christ and of the gospel, madness and daffin.<sup>2</sup> As certainly this will follow the not knowing Christ and His ordinances rightly, that so natural men may break their necks and stumble upon the works of God, as we may see in Psa. lxxxiii. 11.

Now the servant gives an answer to the elder brother, wherefore there should be mirth and rejoicing in his father's house. "*Thy brother is come: and he hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.*" The argument that the servant uses for that [which] the father did is: "Thy father hath received him a whole and living son who was once sick and dead, and therefore there is mirth and rejoicing." And the strength of the argument is tane fra<sup>3</sup> the hazard wherein

<sup>1</sup> Misunderstand.

<sup>2</sup> Folly.

<sup>3</sup> Taken from.

the forlorn son was once, and now, says he, he is escaped from that hazard and danger, and therefore it is most expedient and lawful, that there should be mirth and feasting and rejoicing in heaven. And so by this we may learn that this forlorn son he has once been in great hazard, he has once been over in the devil's camp, and so in great danger, but now he is returned safe and sound; and therefore the servant says to his brother: "He has received him safe and sound." The Lord would hereby teach us that we have been in a fearful and dangerous hazard while we remain in the state of nature. And indeed so it is. For being there we are under spiritual death, as it is Eph. ii. 2: "Called us from death to life." And being in nature, we are also under the state of condemnation: "And were by nature the children of wrath as well as others."

And therefore all those who are come to Christ, they have cause to be blyth,<sup>1</sup> and to rejoice and to praise Christ's rich and free grace, and to say with their hearts: "I thank God that whereas once I was a persecutor, and a blasphemer and an injurious person, one who hated Christ and the power of religion, &c.; but now I am not so, but, by free grace, I am become a new man." There is no man has such cause to sing a triumphant song of the Lord's praise as he who was once dead, and the Lord has given him mercy, and quickened him from that estate.

"*And he was angry, and would not go in.*" This was the older brother. There seems to be natural reason for this, that he would not go in, he being a civil<sup>2</sup> liver, and

<sup>1</sup> Happy.

<sup>2</sup> An outwardly correct.



an honest <sup>1</sup> man that way, one who had not at any time broken his father's command, as he himself says, that had not run away from his father, and tired of his company, and spent his goods with harlots and in debauchery, as his younger brother had done. This is a strange thing, thinks he, that he should make so meikle <sup>2</sup> of him. Because it is so, I will not go into the house. Reason would say that the elder brother has cause to stick here, and to be offended at what his father does. But this is one of the supernatural points of the gospel, and a very great one ; that those who seem to be furthest from mercy, who have done most for stopping mercy to be extended towards them, the Lord He ordinarily gives mercy to such. And yet, on the other part, honest civilians and well-covered Scribes, Pharisees, that have a trim-like <sup>3</sup> outside, and seek for no more of religion, and seek not into Christ, the Lord hardens the heart of such, and gives them over to the spirit of error and delusion ; and harlots and publicans, and very sinful persons, who are even seen to be great sinners, they get mercy and forgiveness, and are led into Christ to seek their life in Him.

We may learn here that it is God's way, and it is the way of the gospel, to ride upon the weakest, poorest, basest, and most contemptible things in the world, and to cause the glory of His mercy and goodness to shine upon them, and to cause the news of mercy to sound effectually to those who seem most lost in the world. Look wherever, at any time, God has shown mercy and the light and saving power of His truth, wherever the

<sup>1</sup> Honourable.

<sup>2</sup> Much.

<sup>3</sup> Fine.

Lord has shown the greatest works of mercy, whether it be upon nations, or congregations, or families, or particular persons, it has always been shown most clearly and effectually to such as the world thought least of. When Jacob is blessing his children, there is not a word spoken of any blessing to the tribe of Levi (Gen. xlix.); but when he is dying the Lord by him gives them a curse because "they slew a man in their anger, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel." And yet the Lord has chosen them for His portion, even the tribe come of him who gat his father's curse, the Lord chooses him out of all the tribes of Israel to be His portion. And a bastard Jephthah—the Jews abhorred any of that kind—yet the Lord will have him to be a judge in Israel, and the instrument by whom He will work a great deliverance for that people. And among the twelve Patriarchs, the odd and the castaway son Joseph, who was hated and sold of his brethren; the servant of God, Moses, at the direction of the Lord's spirit, says of him, "The blessing of the Lord upon him who was cast forth of his brethren."

And likewise when Christ is coming into Jerusalem in His triumph, as it was prophesied, riding upon an ass and a colt the foal of an ass, He will not have Scribes and Pharisees to sing His triumph, but bairns and little ones, cry out "Hosanna, blessed is the king that cometh in the name of the Lord." And where, when Christ was born, were all the Bible-men and the book-learned men that should [have] known so well, and

observed the time and the place of His birth? And yet shepherds get leave to be the first preachers of His birth to the world? No; all the great rabbis and exponents of the law they had beguiled themselves with their light, and knew not that Christ was born, and the shepherds proclaim His birth that so the Lord he may triumph upon the weakest things, and these fardest<sup>1</sup> unlike heaven he will take them to heaven.

And this is, indeed, the sweetness of the mercy and love of our Lord, that even those who are furthest off from mercy in their own eyes, and in the eyes of the world, these shall get mercy rather than others who seem to be nearer within the reach thereof, that the Lord may make good that which is said by the apostle (1 Cor. i. 26-29): "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the strong; and base things in the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence." He will choose the kinless<sup>2</sup> things of the world, and the nothings, to be his portion, that no flesh may glory before him, but that the glory of the salvation of all those who are saved may be to the Lord, and to the Lord allanerly.<sup>3</sup>

O happy and blessed is the case and condition of a sinner who is despised of all, yea, even of themselves, and thereby can come home to Christ. When thou

<sup>1</sup> Most.

<sup>2</sup> Poorest, without relatives.

<sup>3</sup> Alone.

comest to Him the Lord will not speer<sup>1</sup> at thee when thou comest, who was thy father, or thy mother, or what thy kindred is, neither will He speer<sup>1</sup> what thou hast been doing all the time till thou come to Him, if so be thou come to Him with a bleeding heart for sin. And therefore let never man speer<sup>1</sup> this question what they have been doing before who are come into Christ, for all thy harlotries and thy manifold sins and provocations be not bars away for those. And albeit Scribes and Pharisees hoot at you that thou should seek home to Christ, and be made welcome of Him; yet for all their ill will and their malice at Christ's dealings with His own poor ones, seeing He makes you welcome, make thou thyself welcome also.

What further says his elder brother to his father? "*Neither did I at any time break Thy commandments.*" The word in the first<sup>2</sup> language is, "I never went beyond thy commandment." Albeit this be the word of a proud Pharisee, yet it tells us what sort of obedience our God requires of us. That obedience he craves is not to go out of the straight line, not to decline to the right hand or to the left hand.

The doctrine is clear, and it is this: The law that God will have us to follow and to square ourselves unto as a line and rule, it is such a law as requires strict and precise obedience of us. The apostle says: "Walk circumspectly as in the day-time," that is, walk as those who count all their stops, and have light to see where they set their feet. God will either give such obedience as that, or He will account any obedience we give no

<sup>1</sup> Ask.

<sup>2</sup> Original tongue.

obedience. And look to five things in the law of God, and that will tell us this is true.

First: The law of God it is a spiritual law, and it is not by hands, and feet, and tongue, and teeth, and obedience with the outward man that will satisfy God, but He must have the obedience of the heart and the inward man. And therefore the Lord lays charge upon our thoughts; Jer. iv. 14; Isa. lv. 7. In those places God will have the thoughts to be subject to Him: "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness. How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" "Let the wicked man forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." And our Saviour Christ when He expones the the law (Matt. v. 22), ye will see expounding the sixth command, He not only forbids murder, but He says, "Whosoever miscalls his brother, and calls him 'Raca,' 'thou fool,' or is angry with him without a cause, he is a breaker of that command." And He not only condemns adultery for a sin and breach of the seventh command, but He says he that looks upon a woman and lusteth after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart; so that it will not be the outside of civility and of country holiness that will make a man accounted religious and holy in the sight of God, but the holiness of the heart.

Second: Look also to the universality of God's commandments, and that will tell us He requires such obedience, Psa. cxix. 6: "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all Thy commandments." This

says that shame follows upon that man who pretends to keep some of God's commands, and yet breaks other some wittingly. Not a drunkard and yet a harlot, shame will come upon such a man; not a cozener, and yet none may lippen<sup>1</sup> to his word, shame shall come upon such a man. And that it is the commendation given to Zacharias and Elizabeth, that they walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Again—

Third: If we will look to the universality of time, God requires such obedience of us, Psa. cvi. 3: "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times." There are anew<sup>2</sup> who will keep the commandment of the Lord while the cross is lying upon them, or upon their house, or any of their bairns; but that place says: "Blessed is the man that doeth righteousness at all times." And then—

Fourth: In obedience to God's commands is to look to all the circumstances of our actions, to the end wherefore, to the manner how, and to the ground and principle from whence they flow. So the believer he must look to his intentions, what it is he sets before his eyes when he comes to hear the Word of God. If a man comes to the kirk to hear the Word for saving his honesty, because it will be a shame for him, he being a man of whom notice is taken, and in some place and reputation, if his place in the kirk shall be seen empty, or for any other by respect, then you obey not God after a right and acceptable manner. But if you can say, ye do what [ye do] in obedience to His commandments,

<sup>1</sup> Trust.

<sup>2</sup> Enough.

for that end that ye may win <sup>1</sup> a step nearer God, and may grow deep in His love, then that is right obedience. And then—

Lastly: In our obedience to God's commandments no man must make a pattern and rule of others in their obedience. What, albeit ye be as holy as that man, if ye be not holier than he, you and he may both go to hell together, as the Scribes and Pharisees ilk <sup>2</sup> one of them did imitate others. But made that them to be holy? No. Christ says, "If your righteousness exceed not the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God." It is a remarkable place that which we read 2 Kings xiv. 8, where King Amaziah is reprov'd of the Lord, that he did not as David had done before him. And may not a man be a good man, albeit he be not as holy as David was? Who can win <sup>1</sup> to that high pitch? Yes; I confess he may be a good man, and not win <sup>1</sup> so far on as he did. But this is to teach us that we make no man our copy in obeying the commandments of the Lord. But we must set that copy before us which Christ says of His Kirk, Cant. iv. 7: "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." You must see and strive by all means to be quit of spots in the world.

Now the *use* of this, that we have been speaking [of] is, to reprove them who mock godliness, and scorn those who fear an oath, as the Scripture speaks, and make conscience of their words and thoughts as if that were in needless preciseness. But the way to heaven is a straight and narrow way, and alas! the world knows it

<sup>1</sup> Get.

<sup>2</sup> Each.

not. They scorn a strict and precise walking with God in everything. And alas ! this is even now the sin that rings in Scotland, that any who would walk so as to approve themselves to God in everything, these get a new name to be " Puritans " and " Separatists." And I believe there be not many parts where the gospel is that have gone so far on in this sin as we have done, notwithstanding our light be clearer than the light of others ; and therefore our judgment must be the greater, for we lie under the woe that is pronounced by the Lord against those who call evil good and good evil.

Now only a word [more] of two things in this parable that we may close it. And—

First : That albeit the forlorn son when he comes home be highly honoured and kindly entreated by his father, yet the elder brother will not go into the house where he is, but is angry at both his father and his brother, challenging them both.

Second : What is it that ails him at his brother and his father ? Nothing, but only because God is good to him, he cannot digest that. Where we may learn :

First : That whenever a sinner comes home to Christ they shall then get the hatred and envy of the rest of the world. What fault had this younger brother done to him to be angry for ? No fault at all. But because he came home to Christ, therefore he is angry. And what is the ground of the hatred, that is between the followers of Christ and the rest of the world ? They have no other cause wherefore to be angry at them, but because they are come home to Christ, and because it is so, they cannot get the world's heart. That must be true which



Christ says and registers in His Testament: "Ye are not of the world, for if ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Ye shall get the world's malice, and all the quarrel that the world shall have against you shall be only because you are My disciples. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent cannot go together, but they must be at enmity." And how comes it to pass that there cannot be a kindly peace between Prelatists and Papists, and those who have bound themselves in a covenant with God? Even because we are not in one way. The Lord has said it, that their horns must be in our side.<sup>1</sup> And, therefore, let no man who comes to Christ look always for the wind fair in his sails, and that he shall lie always upon a soft bed, fra<sup>2</sup> thou hast tane<sup>3</sup> you to Christ. No; thou shalt be used hardly of the men of the world, who are not in the same course with you, and shall be forced to say as the prophet Jeremiah says (xv. 10): "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; and yet every one doth curse me." And the reason of all their envy is because the Word of God is his delight. That shall be enough for a quarrel to the world. Seek God, and ye shall get the world on your top.<sup>4</sup> Even thy father and mother and the wife that lies into thy bosom, if thou seek God, and they go not on into that

<sup>1</sup> *I. e.*, they will ever be pushing at us.

<sup>2</sup> From the time.

<sup>3</sup> Taken.

<sup>4</sup> Upon or against you.

way, also they shall be thy enemies. And, therefore, we must resolve to take the world's feid.<sup>1</sup> If we would have God's favour, whoever comes to Christ must make them[selves] for the scourge of the world's tongue.

Wherewith is it that he finds fault? "*As soon as this thy son came that hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.*" The Pharisee has an ill eye towards the children of God, because God has a good heart to them. It is the natural man's ordinary to find fault with his neighbour's sins. It is ordinary for them to speak that word which we read, Isa. lxxv. [5]: "Stand back by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou." A soul that is truly sanctified will be loathe to make a hole in his neighbour's conscience, that he may see what is there. No, he sees so many faults in himself that he sees not the faults of others well. He will say with the apostle, "I am the chief of sinners." The forlorn son speaks no ill of him, but he has much that he casts up to the forlorn son.

The last particular that we observe is: The Lord taking the forlorn son's part. "*It was meet (says he) that we should make merry, and be glad,*" &c.—to teach us that God will for a while flatter a hypocrite, for you see the Lord reproves him not for his rough dealing. And woful is the case of that man under whose head God lays a cod<sup>2</sup> to let him sleep in his security, and wakens him not to whom he says, as it is in Hos. iv. 17: "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." Now,

Lastly: That the Lord takes the defence of His forlorn son. "*It was meet that we should be glad and*

<sup>1</sup> Enmity.

<sup>2</sup> Pillow.

*rejoice*," teaches us this: Come home to Christ, who will, albeit all the world should speak ill of them, yet He will take their defence, and speak on their part. When that poor woman poured the ointment on Christ's feet, and the disciples began to murmur, and say, "It might [have] been sold for much money and given to the poor," Christ took her defence, and says, "Let her alone, she has wrought a good work on Me, for she did it for My burial; and wheresoever this gospel is preached throughout the world, this also that she has done shall be preached for a memorial of her." And Acts ix., when Ananias is bidden, "Go, preach to Saul," Ananias says: "This man has done much ill, and he has presently authority to bind all that call on Thy name, and carry them to Jerusalem;" but in ver. 15 Christ says, "Go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." And—

O, but that is a sweet thing, that albeit all the world should say against you, yet if thou wilt come to Christ, He will take thy part. Let them call you what they will, never so ill, He will call you His love, His dove, His undefiled, &c. And well is the soul that has Christ's commendation and high song of praise. It is better nor <sup>1</sup> the commendation of all the world. What's the matter <sup>2</sup> what men speak of you if God commend you. What is the matter <sup>2</sup> albeit wicked men speak ill of you, if God speak good of you, for what He says all the world shall not get undone. Seek ye the Lord's commendation, and to be approven of Him, and

<sup>1</sup> Than.

<sup>2</sup> What matters it.

it makes<sup>1</sup> not then what men say against you. Lord teach us so to do for His name's sake. To this Lord, and our Lord, to His Father, and our Father, and to the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all glory, praise, and honour for ever and ever.—Amen.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, does not signify.