

and therefore put in their plea. There is a hope that will leave ashamed, Rom. v. 5. (3.) It is the cause of all other misery. *Pœna damni* maketh way for *pœna sensus*. Here we care not for him, so long as we can be well without him. It may be now you esteem it nothing to have a frown from Christ in the day of his patience; but then, 'Depart, ye cursed.'

Use. Oh! let this make you more serious for the time to come. Do not grieve the Spirit any longer, Eph. iv. 30. Do you receive and own Christ when others refuse him, and you will be owned by Christ: Luke xii. 8, 9, 'And I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.'

SERMON X.

Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.—MAT. XXV. 13.

HERE is the conclusion of the whole parable, as the illative particle *therefore* showeth. Every passage in it will infer this conclusion.

First, The suddenness and unexpectedness of his coming, *watch therefore*.

Secondly, Only those that are ready shall enter into the marriage-chamber, *watch therefore*, that ye may be always ready.

Thirdly, The shutting the door, and exclusion of the unprepared, *watch therefore*.

Fourthly, The door is shut, as never to be opened again. When they beg entrance they are refused and disowned by Christ, as having not his mark upon them, *watch therefore; for ye know not the day, neither the hour, &c.*

In the words we have—(1.) A duty; (2.) The reason of it. The one will explain the other.

1. For the duty; what is meant by watching? Because we are pressed to it upon the account of the uncertain time of Christ's coming. Here it meaneth a care to get and keep ourselves always ready, and in a posture to receive him for our Lord, as himself explaineth it, Mat. xxiv. 42, 'Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.'

2. The reason, 'For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh;' Mat. xxiv. 44, 'For in such an hour you think not of, the Son of man cometh.'

Doct. The great duty that lieth upon them that believe and look for Christ's coming is watching.

My business will be to show you what watching is in the general notion of it. As it is taken spiritually and metaphorically, it implieth a diligent care and heed to the great affairs of our souls; for it is a mixed thing, made up of prudence and diligence. It implieth a prudent foresight of the soul's danger, with a diligent care to avoid it. It

is pressed in scripture to a double end; partly that we may maintain the present state, and partly that we may prepare for the future: the one quickeneth the other. And though the latter be of chief consideration in this place, yet it will not be amiss to consider both; for there is no hope to stand before Christ at his coming, unless we be careful to get and keep grace for the present. And on the other side, the argument to quicken us to present care and diligence is the blessedness we shall have at Christ's coming, and the danger of being disallowed at last.

1. Watching with respect to our present preservation is pressed: Mat. xxvi. 41, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;' and 1 Cor. xvi. 13, 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith.'

2. Watching with respect to future acceptance. That is pressed in other places: Mat. xxiv. 42, 'Watch ye, for ye know not in what hour the Lord cometh.' The particular time of Christ's coming is kept secret, that we may be moved at all times to prepare for it. The Lord foresaw that we would be prone to negligence and carnal security, and that the knowledge of the express time of his coming would be hurtful to us; therefore it is *inter arcana imperii*, among the secrets kept in the Father's bosom, that we might be always ready. So Luke xxi. 36, 'Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of man.' The meaning is, that we may escape the judgments then to be poured out upon the wicked and the careless; that we may not *causa cadere*; that we may have a sentence of approbation passed in our favour. These are the two sorts of watching pressed upon us in scripture, the one to avoid the snares of the devil, the other that we may be ready for the coming of the Lord.

First, Watching with respect to our present state and safety. This again is twofold—a watching to avoid evil, and a watching for the careful performance of that which is good. The scripture speaketh of both; and both are enforced by their own proper reasons.

1. For the avoiding of evil. There is in us all a sinful proneness to evil, which we must seek to cure and prevent: Prov. iv. 23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' The heart is *terminus actionum ad intra, et fons actionum ad extra*. It is the heart that God aimeth at in all that he doth upon us, and it is the heart that is the ground of all our actions. The fountain must be kept pure from pollutions, that the streams may be the more limpid and clear. Every man hath a little garrison to keep, and he himself is the watchman of it; his conscience is to sit porter at the door, and to examine whatever cometh out and entereth in, as a watchman doth at the gates of a city. All the thoughts, affections, words, actions, are to be examined, what they are, whither they go, whence they come, whither they tend, lest a temptation be let in, or a corruption be let out; otherwise the heart cannot be kept pure and loyal to God. Solomon telleth us, Prov. xxv. 28, 'He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is without walls.' A town without walls lieth open to every comer: sin and danger, and all kind of evil motions go to and fro, without any kind of check and control: things will pass out which should be suppressed and kept in, and temptations will enter which should be kept out. Now this caution is no more

than needeth, if we consider the enemies of our salvation, the devil, the world, and the flesh.

[1.] The malice of Satan. Our adversary is very watchful, and getteth advantage by nothing so much as our security. *Vigilat hostis, et dormis?* It was an old word: the devil is neither dead nor asleep, and shall not we stand upon our guard? 1 Peter v. 8, 'Be sober and watchful, for your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' Satan is a restless adversary, full of malice and craft; his end is to destroy and to devour souls, and his diligence is answerable to his malice. Night and day we are in danger every one of us. There were but two Adams, and they were both tempted, though the one was made after God's image, and the other had the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily. Adam in innocency and Christ in human nature were tempted, and can we hope to escape? Neglect your watch, and you become a ready prey to the devil: 'When the servants slept, the enemy sowed tares,' Mat. xiii. 25. He observeth all our drowsy fits, and is waiting for some advantage, or at least some occasion. Sometimes we give him an advantage by our folly and indiscretion: 2 Cor. ii. 11, 'Lest Satan should get an advantage against us.' Or if not, he taketh occasion, as he tempted Christ when he was an hungry, Mat. iv. 2; and 2 Cor. vii. 5, 'That Satan tempt you not.' He can interpret the silent language of a blush, a smile, a frown, a look, the glance of a lustful eye, the most secret discovery of wrath and discontent, and suiteth his temptations to all the postures of spirit we are in.

[2.] There is besides this, *hostis domesticus*, the bosom enemy, the flesh, or the inbred corruption of our nature, that is ready to betray us to the basest temptations, and to open the gates to the enemy without. Man needeth no devil to tempt him, we have enough in our own bosoms to prompt and urge us to sin: James i. 5, 'The spirit in us lusteth to envy;' Gen. vi. 5, 'The thoughts and imaginations of our hearts are evil continually.' It is easy to set tinder, gunpowder, or flax on fire, and therefore they had need to be kept asunder. We cannot be too careful, the best of us have a good self and a bad self; the one must watch over the other, or all will come to ruin, and grace will be ready to die: Rev. ii. 2, 'Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.' From whence cometh the vanity of our minds, our proneness to break the bounds of due liberty in all our comforts, our readiness to err in speech, our frequent miscarriages in conversation, our frequent unfitness for holy duties, our unfruitfulness in our conversing with others, our unsettledness in our consciences, our immoderate cares and fears; whence, I say, cometh all this, but from our want of watching against this inward enemy our flesh? Especially when temptations are near, importunate, and constant. We proceed every step to heaven by conflict and contest, because sin is always at hand, ready to assault us and taint us; so that a serious Christian cannot but take himself to be still in danger.

[3.] The world. We walk in the midst of snares and temptations, saith Austin; and Bernard saith that our life is a continual temptation. We are in the midst of tempting objects, that are comfortable to our senses, necessary to our uses, and present to our embraces, that

we can hardly distinguish between what necessity craveth, and lust desireth, and so we are strangely gained upon: 1 John ii. 16, 'For all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and pride of life.' He doth not say, 'Whatsoever is in our corrupt hearts;' but he describeth the objects by the lusts, because they are readily excited by them: 'All that is in the world.' There are baits for every temper; honour for the ambitious, wealth for the covetous, pleasure for the sensual. Now every distemper loveth the diet that feedeth it: lust in the soul, or unmortified corruption maketh our abode in the world dangerous: 2 Peter i. 4, that 'having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' Here one plungeth himself over head and ears in the world; another is intemperate in the delights of the flesh and the entertainments of sense; another is aspiring after honour, great places, and pomp of living, or esteem in the world; or at least we give ourselves too great a liberty and freedom in these things. Therefore you see what need there is of watching, when alluring objects lay such close siege to the appetite and senses.

2. There is a watching unto good, or for the performance of our duties, that we go about them in a holy, serious, conscionable manner, observing the best opportunities, and taking heed there be no secret leaven of hypocrisy in them. Of all holy duties the scripture applieth it to prayer, which of all other holy services is the commonest and the chiefest; and watching therein is a great help; though by analogy it holdeth good in other duties, as we shall see in a few places: Col. iv. 2, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving.' So 1 Peter iv. 7, 'Be sober, and watch unto prayer.' So Eph. vi. 18, 'Watching therein with all perseverance.' Satan is a great enemy to this duty, and our hearts are averse, and hardly brought and kept to it. Unless it be well performed, our communion with God is interrupted and at a stand. Out of all these places we may well collect that there is—(1.) A watching unto prayer, or before prayer. (2.) A watching in prayer, or in the duty. (3.) A watching after prayer, or when the duty is over.

[1.] The watching unto prayer, or before the duty, is mainly to keep up a praying frame, that we may be ready upon all occasions to call upon God. The praying frame lieth partly in brokenness of heart, or a due sense of our necessities; and partly in an earnest bent of heart towards God, and holy and heavenly things; and partly in a holy liberty, and child-like confidence. If either of these be lost, how slack and backward shall we be in God's worship, or slight in the performance of it, whether in closet, or family, or public assemblies; and slubber it over in any fashion. But when this frame of spirit is kept up, the soul is mightily actuated and enlarged in the duty. As when there is brokenness of heart, or a due sense of our necessities, which is the occasion of prayer, or an earnest desire of grace, which is the soul of prayer, or our liberty and confidence is not broken, which is the great encouragement of prayer, then we are like light and airy bodies, whose natural motion is upwards; so are we carried out towards God, and prayer is our element in which we live and breathe. Indeed the whole spiritual life is but a 'watching unto prayer,' that we may have always a readiness for communion with God, 1 Peter iii. 7.

[2.] There is a watching in prayer, that the duty be performed with that seriousness, attention, and affection that the nature of it doth require. This watching is necessary because of the slipperiness of our hearts, which easily go off from the work in hand. We often mingle sulphur with our incense, interline our prayers with carnal distractions, suffer our hearts to be stolen away from under Christ's own arm; therefore we had need to watch, Eccles. v. 1, 2.

[3.] There is a watching after prayer, partly that we may observe God's dealing with us, whether our souls have been straitened, or whether he hath given liberty, hidden his face, or showed himself gracious. Here we may gather some matter of comfort to ourselves and thanksgiving to God, Col. iv. 2. We must not throw away our prayers, as children shoot away their arrows, and never look after them: Hab. ii. 1, 'I will pray and look up,' to spy the blessing a-coming. We should have many an argument against atheism, great helps to faith, and encouragements to love God, and many a sure ground of comfort in ourselves, if we did look after the answer of our prayers. And partly that we lose not that affection which we have professed and expressed before God. We seemed to express a great desire of glorifying his name, and doing his will, and being sanctified, pardoned, and strengthened against temptations. Now it is but the personating and acting a part before God, if we be not such in some measure as we professed ourselves to be in prayer; if we be not careful to glorify his name, zealous to promote his kingdom, ready to do his will, earnest for pardoning grace, watchful against temptations. A Christian's life is a comment upon his prayers, and his prayers do interpret his life; we understand the one by the other. Our endeavours and diligent use of means do show what we really desire; for what we pray to God for we bind ourselves to seek after.

Secondly, There is a watching with respect to our future estate, that we may be ready to meet Christ at his coming. Now this consisteth—

1. In a deep and lively sense of Christ's appearing, and the whole state of the world to come. We look for nothing but what we believe. Faith is a realising sight of things not yet in being; and maketh them in some measure to work as if they were at hand and ready to be enjoyed. Now the more lively sense we have of the concernments of the other world, the more diligent and serious shall we be in our preparation; when we have a deep sense of these things, as if presently to be arraigned, and walk as before the judge to whom we are to give an account of all our actions. Most men live as if there were no day of reckoning, no God to see and punish, no books to be opened: the careless spending their time showeth they have no deep sense of these things, no sound belief of them. But faith looketh upon these things as great, sure, and near, and so keepeth the soul awake and alive. It greateneth our apprehensions of these things; for it is no slight matter for the creature to meet with his creator, the sinner with his judge, from whom he must now receive his final doom. Faith doth speak aloud to a sluggish soul, Thou must be judged: Rom. xiv. 12, 'So then every one of us must give an account of himself to God.' And as it is sure, so it is near: 'The judge is at the door,' James v. 9. You must

hear of what you now speak and do another day : Mat. xii. 36, 'For every idle word that a man shall speak, he shall give an account of at the day of judgment.' It suppresseth sin, and quickeneth and awakeneth to duty, 2 Peter iii. 11, 12. Without faith we have no sensible, awakening, practical knowledge of these things. The sight of faith differeth from the sight of sense. Sense can discern little more than we see, taste, smell, hear, and feel. We are affected with these things ; so are the beasts, who only see things before their eyes by the eye of sense. We see nothing but what dogs may see and beasts may see ; that it is comfortable to eat well, and drink well, and sleep well, and be well clothed, and walk up and down at pleasure, and pursue the advantages of the animal life. There is a mist upon eternity ; how acute soever men be in worldly things, they are blind here : 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off ;' sharp-sighted in things that concern the back and belly, and this present world, but know nothing of the hazard of perishing for ever, or the worth of salvation, their need of Christ, and making serious preparation for their great account. Faith is a perspective, by which we look into the other world. None have such a sharp sight as believers have ; for they can see beyond the limits of time, the corruption and changes of all things that are in the world, even to that blessedness which God hath reserved for them that love him. And the light of faith differeth from reason. That can only see things by guess, or see things in their causes, and that as probable ; but faith can look through the mists and clouds of intervening ages : Heb. xi. 13, 'Having seen them afar off, embraced them ;' and with certainty, and such a sure persuasion, as if the things we are persuaded of were in hand and actually enjoyed. Reason corrects sense. A star to the eye of sense looks no bigger than a spangle, but reason showeth it must be of a vast bigness, because of its distance from us. But faith is a higher light ; and compare it with the light of prophecy, Rev. xx. 12 ; they agree in the common object, divine revelation ; they agree in their common nature, that they are both for things future, and things future to us ; but they differ, that faith depends upon the common revelation which God hath made to all the saints, whereas prophecy hath more of ecstasy and rapture in it, and the light is like the *lumen gloriæ*, the beatifical vision in some measure and degree. We do not see him face to face, but are desirous of this blessed estate, and persuaded of it, and are affected with it as if we saw it. The sight of faith is not a full enjoyment, but as sure, and so proportionably affects the heart. Nay, this *lumen fidei* is somewhat like the sight God hath of things. God seeth all things in his own design, and faith seeth them so far as they are manifested in the promises of the gospel. There is no hope to get rid of our dead-heartedness and security till we have this realising light of faith.

2. This watching consisteth in preparation. If we expect a thing to come, and do not prepare accordingly, we do not watch for it but neglect it. Now this preparation must be speedy, thorough, and constant.

[1.] Watching implieth a speedy preparation. That we may be in a fit capacity to receive Christ at his coming, we must take the next

advantage, lest we be surprised and called home before we are ready. This is not a work to be put off to age or sickness. Why should we provide a burden for that time when we are weakest and least able to bear it? And therefore now we should begin it. Every day brings burden enough for itself. He is an unthrifty tenant that suffers the rent of one year to run into another: how shall that crop discharge two years' rent that cannot pay one? If it be tedious now to turn to God, it will be more tedious when thou art hardened in sin, and thy neglects of God and Christ will provoke him to deny his grace. And what assurance have we of another year? We have this by the favour of providence. Our life was forfeited and lost in law the first moment, and therefore we have but a reprieve during pleasure. What warrant have I to expect another day but my own hope and fancy? He that is security for himself to himself is no whit the better secured; he doth but take the word of a spendthrift. If we had a lease of our lives, yet what hope of grace? when we have resisted the Spirit of God all our lives, what hope that he should assist us at death? We do but provide matter of despair to ourselves; every day will prove worse and worse. A traveller may easily pass over the head of a brook, but when he goeth down, thinking to find it narrower, it is so broad that he cannot pass at all. Every delay brings on a new degree of hardness of heart on our part, and a new desertion on God's part. Now how wilt thou untwist the former web which thou hast been so long a-weaving? That soul must needs be in perplexity at the hour of death that seeth the day spent and the business appointed to him not yet begun, and a disease disabling him for any serious reflections; as if a traveller seeth the sun setting when he is entering upon his journey: the evening of the day and the morning of the task do not well agree together. All the time that remaineth is too short to lament the lost time already past. Therefore, if watching inferreth preparation, it inferreth speedy preparation; and a man is not in a good condition to live that is not fit to die.

[2.] It must be a serious and thorough preparation, such as will serve the turn, and be accepted by Christ at his coming. The whole design of this parable is to caution us against the shallowness and slightness of the work of grace upon our hearts. Heathens have a conscience (as Felix trembled); much more Christians. Men may see and have a taste of sin's bitterness, and have a longing mind after Christ, but the life of grace is not begun in them; they do not 'awake to righteousness,' 1 Cor. xv. 34. We should often think what is required in order to that day, and what the scripture maketh our readiness to consist in. Repentance and actual conversion to God, this is pressed upon us, Acts iii. 19, 'Repent, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.' Repentance is the soul's return to God in love. And Acts xvii. 30, 31, 'Now he commandeth all men to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.' That day is kept off that we might have time to repent, 2 Peter iii. 9. So faith in Christ, that will unite us to him, or a hearty taking him for our Lord and Saviour: Rom. viii. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ;' Phil. iii. 9, 'Found

in him;’ 1 John ii. 28, ‘And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear you may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.’ We must be in Christ, and abide in Christ. To abide in Christ is to persevere in our adhering to him as our Lord and Saviour, in the profession of his name, observation of his precepts, recumbency on his merits, imitation of his graces, communion with his person. Certainly he will not cast off those who are members of his mystical body, and abide in him by faith, nor condemn those whom he hath redeemed and washed in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. This is our preparation; yea, the scripture doth not only look to our hearts, but to our lives, James ii. 1, 2.

[3.] It must be a constant and daily preparation. You must not only get ready, but keep ready. Besides habitual preparation, there must be actual preparation. We must every day be more in a readiness. The sentinel is to watch all hours; it is death to be taken sleeping, though he hath watched all the night before: ‘We know neither the day nor the hour,’ it is in the text, implying there must be no intermission of our care. What if my master should come and find me idle? said Calvin to his friends, that demanded of him why he wasted his body in such constant labours. Few are like-minded that put this question to their souls, Am I as I would meet with Christ? We should always stand with our lamps burning and our loins girt, Luke xii. 35. A Christian should be always as a ship that hath taken in its lading, and is prepared and furnished with all manner of tackling, ready to set sail, only expecting the good wind to carry him out of the haven. So should we be ready to set sail for eternity, stand at heaven’s gates, be in a perpetual exercise of faith and love, and be fittingly prepared to meet our Saviour. Oh! what a happiness is it to live so that we care not when death cometh upon us; and so live every day, as if we were presently to be summoned before the tribunal of Christ! The world thinketh this a foolish strictness, because many days go over our heads, and it proveth not so. But let them mock on; when they come to hell they will find this to be the greatest wisdom. A Christian will count every day his last. Not only his own necessity, but his love and earnest desire of Christ’s coming maketh him look out.

3. The last thing in this watching is earnest expectation of Christ’s last appearance, and the grace he will bring along with him: 1 Peter i. 15, ‘Gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.’ Our hearts and minds should be more taken up with the thoughts of his coming, and the privileges we shall have by him. It is expressed by looking, longing, waiting; and Christians are often described by these acts: ‘Titus iii. 13, ‘Looking for the blessed hope;’ Phil. iii. 20, 21, ‘From whence we look for a Saviour,’ Heb. x. 27. We should stir up our minds to look for his coming; and not only stir up our hopes, but our desires: 2 Tim. iv. 8, ‘To them that love his appearing;’ it is a sign and token that he cometh with a blessing to us: to them he cometh with a crown of righteousness. So for waiting: 1 Cor. i. 7, ‘Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ We were converted for this end, to wait for his coming from heaven, 1 Thes. i. 10.

Now I come to show you the reasons why this watching is required of us, or to move us to it.

1. Consider who it is that biddeth you watch. Christ himself, whom you call Lord and Master, who knows the worth and danger of souls, and hath a tender esteem and value for them. If we did impose so strict a duty upon you, you might take or leave it as it shall be for your conveniency. In the 1st of Proverbs, Solomon bringeth in Wisdom lifting up her voice, and crying, Prov. i. 20. What to do? To accept of the grace offered. The most then will miss the season; they shall never receive advantage by the cry if they neglect it, ver. 26; ver. 28, 'They shall call upon me, but I will not answer.' Many clauses in these verses do fitly agree with the passages of the parable. It agreeth with the foolish virgins, who lost their opportunity of getting oil; and with the wise, who in a time of plenty provided against a famine, as Joseph advised the Egyptians: a greater than Joseph is here. Now in the times of grace watch.

2. Consider whom it is he inviteth. Do not put it off to others: Mark xiii. 37, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.' Some persons are especially deputed to watch over others, as magistrates, Rom. xiii. 6; ministers, Heb. xiii. 12; but every man is made a guardian over his own soul; rich and poor, they are both to watch. The meanest people are then taken notice of, and that exactly: Mat. xxiv. 40, 41, 'Two women grinding at the mill; one shall be taken, and the other left: two in the field, one taken, and the other left.' Those of the meanest degree. All that live in all ages, in all times, to them he said, Watch. Do not put it off to them that live in the age on which the ends of the world are come. You will be found at that day as death leaveth you. None of all degrees of grace are past this care. If there be any difference between Christian and Christian, one is more watchful than another; if of never so long standing and experience, yet if not watchful, soon surprised. God's best servants have been surprised for want of watching. Noah was overtaken in drunkenness; Lot, that was chaste in Sodom, committed incest in the mountains, where were none but his own family. And do but compare David and Joseph; you find David tempting, Joseph tempted. David was a king, Joseph a slave; David an old man of much experience, Joseph a young man; David a married man, and Joseph a single man. David was fain to plot and contrive to make way for his sin, but Joseph had the advantage of secrecy; but the one stood, and the other fell; David left his senses at random, but Joseph kept himself in an awful watchful posture: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?'

3. Consider when and how long we are to watch. The time is kept from our knowledge for this very end, that we may always be watching: Mat. xxi. 36, 'Watch and pray always;' 2 Tim. iv. 5, 'But watch thou in all things.' There must be a constant and continual watch. When we are secure we lose our actual fitness, and our common enemy breaks in upon us. There is a working, warring principle in our hearts.

4. There is a blessing promised to those that watch: Rev. xvi. 15, 'Blessed is he that watcheth;' and Luke xii. 37, 'Blessed are those

servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find watching.' What do we lose by watching but a few trifling pleasures, which are abundantly recompensed here and hereafter by solid rejoicing in Christ? It is irksome to the flesh, but the reward sweeteneth it.

5. The hazard and danger of not watching. It is notably represented in this parable: only the ready enter. Take heed, therefore, the like do not happen to you as to the foolish virgins: they are excluded, and that irrevocably; if they would never so fain enter, Christ will not hearken unto them: Rev. iii. 3, 'If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee like a thief in the night;' 1 Thes. v. 3. Woful is their condition that are secure and unprovided.

6. Consider what men would do to avoid temporal inconveniency: Mat. xxiv. 43, 'If the good man of the house had known when the thief would come, he would have watched;' much more should Christ's disciples to avoid eternal destruction. It is an advantage to put the case in outward things, Mal. i. 8; it showeth the disproportion of our respects to temporals and spirituals. If we are so careful in looking to our bodies and goods, we are or should be more careful in watching over our souls, where the danger is greater. The world's diligence and double diligence in earthly things will condemn our neglect in spiritual things.

Use 1. I may from hence take occasion to bewail the neglect of this duty. Oh! how much is watching laid aside! Thence cometh our decay of grace. The church of Sardis was even dead for want of it, Rev. iii. 2. Thence comes our want of comfort, and of assurance of God's love. Our peace of conscience is gotten by diligence, and kept with watchfulness. Thence comes our loathness to die, and our coldness to everlasting life. We do not 'gird up the loins of our minds, and watch.' Thence come all our afflictions. God is fain to use dreadful means to awaken his servants out of their drowsiness. We are apt to be drowsy and sleepy; God useth sharp discipline to awaken us; some smart cross or sickness to bring us to ourselves again. We should bewail the neglect of watching in two things:—

1. Our not watching for the coming of the Lord. Some can live merrily and quietly in a careless unprepared estate; but do these men consider what it is to meet with their Redeemer, before they have gotten any benefit by his blood? We cannot draw nigh to him with any comfort till we feel the benefit of his death, Heb. x. 22. His business is 'to present his people faultless to God,' Jude 24. These men do not consider what it is to meet with the judge, 1 Peter iv. 5. There is no plea but innocency and pardon in Christ, Rom. viii. 1; 1 John iii. 8. These do not consider how they shall look Christ in the face, when so unlike him, 1 John iii. 1, 2, and 1 John iv. 17. These do not consider what it is to meet the bridegroom when their filthy garments are yet on.

2. Bewail the neglect of watching against present evils with care and circumspection. What is the matter? Is Satan less busy to tempt, or is the heart of man and human nature grown better, and sin less dangerous? Is our weakness and inability so far strengthened and cured, that we are out of danger of falling? Were the servants of God such weaklings, that prayed, as David, Ps. xxxix., 'I put a

watch upon the door of my lips;’ and Job, that ‘made a covenant with his eyes’? Job xxxi. 1. But rather are not we more foolhardy and negligent, do not mind our business, and consider not the inconveniency of not watching?

Use 2. To press us to this duty; there is a God that watcheth, and enemies that watch, and conscience watcheth, and will do its office first or last; a day of judgment, when you are to answer for all that you have done; and will not you watch? When you consider how much you are in danger of sin, and in danger by sin, can you be negligent and secure? Oh! watch your hearts, Prov. iv. 23; watch your tongue, Ps. xxxix. 1; watch your senses, Job xxxi. 1: gratify them and you wound your hearts. Watch your ways, Prov. iv. 24; but above all watch your state. Let us examine well our case, that we may be found in Christ, and have the ‘seal of his Spirit,’ Eph. i. 13. That is your warrant.

For means to help us in this duty of watchfulness:—

1. Sobriety, or moderation in the use of all outward things: 1 Thes. v. 6, ‘Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but watch and be sober,’ 1 Peter i. 13, iv. 7.

2. Go to God in prayer. Watching and prayer are often joined together. We are best kept when recommended into God’s hand: Ps. cxli. 3, ‘Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.’ I do observe there—(1.) That unadvised and passionate speeches do easily drop from us in our troubles, especially in our persecution. (2.) That a godly conscientious man is very tender of these, as of all evil. He that would live in communion with God for the present, and hope to appear with comfort before him hereafter, is sensible of the least thing that tends to God’s displeasure and God’s dishonour. This is the true spirit of one that will be owned by Christ at the last day. (3.) There is no way to prevent being provoked to impatience and rashness of speech, or any evil, but by keeping a watch, and renewing our obligations to God. (4.) Whoever would keep a watch must call in the aid and assistance of God’s grace: ‘Lord, set a watch upon the door of my lips.’

SERMON XI.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered to them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to every one according to his several ability.—MAT. XXV. 14, 15.

THE particle *for* showeth that this parable hath some connection with the former. We have but two great affairs in the world—the one to promote God’s glory, the other to save our own souls; or, in other words, to be faithful to God and wise for ourselves. This latter was taught us in the former parable; the wise and provident virgins made sufficient preparation for their reception into the nuptial feast. The other, faithfulness to God, in employing our gifts, talents, and oppor-