

2. Those that have the greatest gifts should not contemn those that have few or less ; and those that have few not envy others that have more, but be mutually helpful one to another, acknowledging the wisdom and goodness of God in all that we have. It is a base spirit that would shine alone, or set up one gift to the prejudice of another : 'Let no man glory, for all things are yours,' 1 Cor. iii. 21. He that laid the world in hills and valleys would not have all champaign and smooth ground, Prov. xvii. 15.

Use. 2. Give yourselves and all that is yours to God. Nothing is more reasonable than that every one should have his own ; therefore let us consent to God's propriety, and absolutely resign ourselves to the will, dispose, and use of our creator ; but first ourselves, and then what is ours.

SERMON XII.

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. Likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.—MAT. XXV. 16–18.

THIS is the second part of the parable. We have heard of the master's distribution, now we shall hear of the servants' negotiations, how they employed the talents received. There was a disparity and inequality in the distribution, so in the negotiation. Two of the servants used their talents well ; the third traded not at all, but 'went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.' Among them that used their talents well there was a difference, but still with proportion to what they had received : 'He that had received five talents made them other five : and he also that had received two gained other two.'

Doct. 1. That those that have received talents must trade with them for God's glory and the salvation of their own souls and the good of others.

Doct. 2. In trading, our returns must carry proportion with our receipts.

Doct. 3. Among those that have received talents all are not faithful ; for one hid his lord's money.

For the first point—

Doct. 1. That those that have received talents must trade with them for God's glory and the salvation of their own souls and the good of others, I shall first explain the point, and then prove it.

First, For the explication or illustration, I will inquire—

1. What things are to be accounted talents ?
2. What it is to trade with them ?
3. To whom the gain and increase redoundeth ?

First, What are these talents ? In the general, all the things God hath intrusted us with, or anything that may help to promote the glory of God ; reason, health, strength, time, parts, interests, power,

authority, wealth, the mercies of his providence, afflictions, ordinances, means of grace; yea, grace itself. All these are vouchsafed to us freely by God, and may be improved for his glory. There is none of us but have had many advantages and opportunities put into our hands of glorifying God and promoting our own and others' salvation. Of all it may be said, Prov. xvii. 16, 'Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to use it?' Reason and parts are a price put into your hands, so is time and strength, so are riches and power, so are ordinances and providences, and indeed all the blessings of this life. God must be gainer, and also yourselves. In a spiritual sense he must have a share in your time, strength, wealth, and power; and you must gain by every ordinance and every providence something whereby you may be more fitted to glorify his name, and to do good in your generation. But more particularly talents may be referred to two heads—*dona sanctificantia et administrantia*: graces, helps, and saving gifts.

1. *Dona sanctificantia*, sanctifying gifts, or the graces of the Spirit; these are highest, and are called the 'true riches;' Luke xvi. 11, 'If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who shall commit to your trust the true riches?' To be trusted with an estate is not so great a trust as to be trusted with grace: this is a gift more precious, and should not lie idle. God trusts ordinary men with common gifts before he trusts them with grace. When we suspect that a vessel is leaky, we try it first with water before we fill it with wine. God expecteth more honour from new creatures than he doth from all the world besides, that they should do more good in their places; partly because they have new obligations by redemption: 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'You are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and souls, which are God's.' You are twice bound, and a double obligation will infer a double condemnation, if we answer it not. And partly because by regeneration they have new dispositions, they are more fitted to glorify God and do good to others; Eph. i. 12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory.' Their τὸ εἶναι, their new being, fitteth them to honour God. They serve mainly for this very use, and therefore this duty of trading for God lieth first and most upon them. Wherefore hath God created them anew in Christ Jesus but to glorify his name, and admire his grace, and live answerable to his love, and to bring him into request among all about them? Mat. v. 16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' They that are eminent for the profession of godliness, and are set as lights in the world, or a city upon a hill, these should bring much honour to God, and provoke others to do so; as the stars, which are the shining part of heaven, draw eyes after them; if they should be eclipsed they set the world a-wondering: so should they shine as lights in the 'midst of a crooked generation,' Phil. ii. 15; or as the star that shined at Christ's birth conducted the wise men to him, so should they by their profession and practice lead others to Christ.

2. *Dona administrantia*, subservient helps. Now these are of several sorts.

[1.] Either gifts of nature, both of the mind and of the body. Of the mind, as promptness of wit, clearness of the understanding, soundness of judgment, or solid wisdom; all these were given you of God, and he expects an improvement of these for his glory; that every man should be what he is for his creator. It was a good saying of Epictetus in Arrian, *Si essem lusciniæ*, &c.—If I were a nightingale, I would sing as a nightingale: *Si essem alaudæ*, &c.—If I were a lark, I would pierce as a lark; but now I am a man I will glorify God as a man. But alas! how often do men of the best endowments miscarry! Isa. xlvi. 10, 'For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none besides me.' Satan made use of the serpent, who was the subtlest of beasts of the field, Gen. iii. 1. The devil loveth to go to work with the sharpest tools. God hath given great abilities to some above others, to enable them for his service. Now the devil, to despite God the more, turneth his own weapons against himself. But it should not be so. We should remember that we have nothing but what we have received, and 'who maketh us to differ?' 1 Cor. iv. 7. So of the body, as health and strength. Surely these *bona corporis* are talents. God fitteth every man for the work wherein he will be honoured by him: Gal. i. 15, 'Separated from his mother's womb,' with a body fit to endure travel and hardship. Strength is not to be wasted in sin and vanity, but employed for God. It is better it should be worn out with labours than eaten out with rust.

[2.] Outward interests, such as wealth, honour, and power; these are comfortable to the animal life, and lay an obligation upon us, and also they give us many advantages of doing good, which should always be taken hold of, and used by us; as the greater veins abound with blood to supply the less: Prov. iii. 9, 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and the first-fruits of all thy increase.' Though many never forget God more than when he hath blessed them, it is their duty to make some improvement of this talent also: Ecces. vii. 11, 'Wisdom with an inheritance is good.' It is good of itself alone, but it is better, more useful and beneficial to ourselves and others, when God giveth us, with the blessings of this life, wisdom. Wealth is an excellent instrument, whereby a man is enabled to do much good, and is a help to piety and charity. Poor men are not heeded and regarded. So honour and great place is an opportunity whereby grace may put forth itself with greater advantage: Neh. i. 11, 'The Lord show me favour in the sight of this man; for I was the king's cup-bearer.' He mentions his relation as having made an advantage of it.

[3.] The providences we are exercised withal, whether mercies or afflictions, we are to give an account of them: mercies and comforts vouchsafed to us by God. It is a naughty heart that would enjoy anything apart from God, and looketh to his own personal contentment more than God's glory, Joel ii. 14. In a great famine they desire plenty, that there may be a meat-offering and a drink-offering for the Lord. So for afflictions; God expecteth some improvement of them. There is mercy in it, that God will put us under his discipline: Job vii. 18, 'What is man that thou shouldest visit him every morning,

and try him every moment?' And we must account for our afflictions, Amos iv. 2, 3. God reckoneth up our chastisements.

[4.] Ordinances and instituted helps; they come under a fourfold notion—duties, privileges, means, talents. As duties enjoined, so they are part of our homage due to God. It is not a matter arbitrary; there is a tie upon our consciences to keep us to the due observance of them. As privileges: Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to them the great things of my law.' This keepeth us from weariness, that we may not consider them as a burdensome task: they are a great privilege, dearly bought: it is by the blood of Jesus that we draw near to God. As means for our growth and improvement; that notion is necessary, that we may not rest in the work wrought, but look after the grace dispensed thereby. There is much difference in doing things as a task and using them as a means; means are for some end. As talents for which we must give an account, which will quicken us to more earnest diligence in the improvement of them. Some do not look upon them as duties, and so neglect them; others not as privileges, and so are not so cheerful in the use of them; others not as means, and so rest in the work wrought; others not as talents, and so are indifferent whether they get good by them, yea or no.

Secondly, What is it to trade with them? It implieth—

1. A conscionable use of all our gifts.
2. A diligent improvement of them to the ends for which they were intended.

1. That we should use them well and holily; our graces well, our parts well, our estates well. Our gifts and graces are not for pride and ostentation: 'Open my lips, that my mouth may show forth thy praise,' not my own, saith holy David. 'The service of hell must not be maintained with the contributions of heaven, neither must we seek God's approbation to the setting up of our own glory: Phil. i. 15, some 'preached the gospel out of strife and envy.' Unmortified corruption will make a man's most excellent gifts subservient to his basest lusts, though exercised in the choicest duties of prayer and preaching. Applause, vainglory, and such like carnal motions and ends may set some men on work, and make them prostitute the service of Christ to their own lusts. This is not to trade as factors for God, but to set up for ourselves. So for estate; to spend it in pomp and vanity, it is 'sowing to the flesh,' Gal. vi. 8. To spend our wit, time, and strength upon the service of our fleshly lusts, or to make our body a strainer for meat and drink, or a channel for lust to run through; to be all for present profit, pleasure, and preferment; this is, instead of trading with talents, to use them to God's dishonour.

2. That we should be laborious according to our gifts and opportunities. As a servant is sent abroad to spy all advantages of gain for his master, so we are sent into the world to take all occasions of doing good: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Always abounding in the work of the Lord.' Ministers are to watch for souls, and magistrates are to watch for good, and private Christians to be careful to maintain good works. To do a little good by the by will not be accepted; we must be hard at work for God.

Thirdly, To whom the gain and increase redoundeth? In a moral

consideration there are three beings—God, neighbour, and self: accordingly we are appointed to work for three ends—the glory of God, the salvation of our own souls, and the good of others; and as we promote either of these ends, we are said to gain and increase our talents.

1. The glory of God must be regarded in the first place, or, which is always concerned with it, the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and his interest in the world; for all the gifts that we have received are for the Master's use. Though God cannot be enriched by anything that we can do, yet he counteth it an increase if we study to bring him into request, or to advance the kingdom of his Son. Therefore this must be our supreme end in all things: 1 Cor. x. 31, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' If in eating and drinking, and the use of our ordinary comforts, much more in the supreme and important actions of our lives, such as we would make a business of: God must be specially eyed there. God only is independent and self-sufficient, of himself and from himself; but self-seeking is monstrous and unnatural in the creature; they are of him, and by him, and for him: Rom. xi. 36, 'Of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' The motion of the creatures is circular, they end where they begun, man especially. Other creatures glorify God necessarily, we voluntarily and by choice; they passively, as they minister matter to the beholders to glorify God; we actively, as we are to intend and seek his glory in all things. They are made for God ultimately, but mediately for man; but we are made for his immediate service, and should glorify him in all.

2. The saving of our own souls, that must be regarded next to the glory of God. For next to the love of God, man is to love himself, and in himself first his better part. The great errors of the world come from mistaking self, and misplacing self: they misplace self when they set it above God, and prefer their interests before the conscience of their duty to him; then they mistake self, thinking themselves more concerned as a body than a soul, and prefer the satisfactions of the carnal life before the happiness of the spiritual. We never truly love ourselves but when we love our souls and seek their good. God ordereth all his providences for his own glory and the good of his people: Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' So should we order all our actions. All things are sanctified to them that are sanctified to God, as helps and means, and something to bring us to him; so should we use all gifts, ordinances, and providences. We distinguished before of *bona sanctificantia, et administrantia*; this is the difference between them. The graces of sanctification, though profitable for others, yet are chiefly intended for the good of him that hath them; gifts of edification, though profitable for the owner, yet are principally intended for the good of others. A man that hath sanctifying grace, he doth good to others with it, that is but *utilitas emergens, not finis proprius*; it is not the proper and chief end for which those graces were chiefly given; but other subservient gifts are for the good of the body, not for the worth of the person that hath them: 1 Cor. xii. 7, 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.' That was the main and proper end.

3. For the good of others, their edification and benefit; as the sun doth not shine for himself, nor the fountains flow for themselves. We drive a joint-trade for heaven, and God hath scattered his gifts, that every part may supply somewhat for the good of the whole; as every member in the body hath its proper station and several use, by which the whole body receiveth benefit: Rom. xii. 4, 'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office;' 1 Cor. xii. 14, 'For the body is not one member, but many.' A man hath not wealth for himself, nor parts for himself, nor ministerial gifts for himself, to promote his own ends, but to bring in souls to God; not for pomp, but for use. All have their proper and distinct offices, some to serve, others to rule, some to counsel, others to execute. Every one hath their proper and distinct use; for God maketh nothing in vain, nor was the world appointed to be a hive for drones and idle ones. Therefore we should all in our places be doing good to others, helping them by our counsel, or by our estate and interest, or by our service; but especially should we do good to their souls; for we are to love our neighbour as ourselves, that is, by a regular love. Therefore first seek their spiritual good, as we would do our own, gaining upon them by assiduous counsels, provoking them by our example. Otherwise we hide what we have in a napkin; and what profit hath the world by hidden wisdom more than by hidden treasure?

Secondly, The reasons, or the confirmation of this point.

1. They that have received talents must trade, with them, because they are not only a gift, but a trust, given us to employ. As a gift, they call for our thankfulness; as a trust, for our faithfulness. He that hath an estate made over to him in trust, and for certain uses expressed in the conveyance, hath indeed no estate therein at all, but only with respect to those uses. The right of a feoffee in trust is *fidei commissarius*, is quite distinct from that of an owner and possessor. Just so it is here; and oh! that we could make you sensible that all that you have is for such uses whereby you may bring some glory to God and some good to others, and so save your own souls by the discharge of your trust! Surely, then, men would use their gifts more industriously, spend their estates better, their time better, and be more profitable in all their relations.

2. This trust is committed to servants, not to strangers or freemen, who are at their own dispose; so that from the quality of the persons receiving there is an argument and obligation upon them. I may desire another to take a trust, who may refuse me; but those under command must do as their Lord would have them. Now, thus are we to Christ, who hath an absolute right in us, and both made us and bought us.

3. The argument is still more binding, if there be a formal covenant and promise on their part that they will faithfully perform this trust. Now there is a covenant between God and us: 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people.' In that covenant we bind ourselves to seek his glory, and to do his people good. As we take God, whole God, to be ours, so we give up ourselves and all that is ours to him, to be for his use and service. In this covenant the *altera pars paciscens* is an inferior. Though there be a mutual interest, yet there cannot

be such an interest in God as God hath in us. God hath not only an interest in us, but a dominion over us, which an inferior cannot have over a superior; so that we are God's more fully than he can be ours. Now a trust accepted and broken afterwards involveth us in the greater crime. I am God's, and will be God's, and would I could do more for his glory; as a Christian in general, as a husband, or wife, or father, or child, or servant, I will more honour God in my place.

4. The fruit, comfort, and excellency of the thing trusted is most seen in the use. It is true of all sorts of talents. Take the lowest outward subservient helps, wealth, power, and honour. A man doth not see the comfort and use of wealth so much in anything as when he doth employ it for God. If he hoard it up, he hath it only for show; if he layeth it out to clothe his back or to feed his belly, he doth but make himself a more honourable sort of brute beast; all the while he is sowing to the flesh, or sacrificing to his god, the belly, or offering up a meat-offering or a drink-offering to appetite. But how sweet is it when we have opportunities of doing more for God! Then he seeth the use of wealth indeed; it giveth him advantages of service, and a more diffusive charity. Ordinances, the worth of them is most known in the use and improvement; not when we resort to them out of custom and fashion's sake, but use them as means to do our souls good. So for gifts; as wells are the sweeter for draining, so gifts are improved by using; so graces of the Spirit. God's most precious gifts should not lie idle: 2 Cor. vi. 1, 'We beseech you receive not the grace of God in vain.' In short, you do not taste the true sweetness of wealth when gorgeously attired, your tables plentifully furnished, and you glut yourselves with all manner of fleshly delights; but in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, that satisfieth the mind and conscience of them that do it; as you do not reap the increase of corn by scattering it in the sand, but casting it into a fruitful soil.

Use 1. To press us to this negotiation; for if these things be so, we should all rouse up ourselves, and say, What honour hath God by my wealth, my parts, my honour and greatness, my place and office? what protection to his cause, what relief and comfort to his people?

1. Consider, it is our business in the world. Now every one should ask for what end he was born, and continued in the world so long. Our Lord Jesus, John xviii. 37, saith, 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.' Every one is sent into the world for some end; for surely God would not make a creature in vain. We did not come into the world merely to fill up the number of things, as stones and rubbish, nor to grow in bulk and stature, as the plants, nor to enjoy pleasure without remorse, as the beasts: God would never then have given us those higher faculties of reason and conscience. For what end did I come into the world but to glorify God in my place, to act that part in the world which the great Master of the scenes appointed to me? Why do I live here? What have I done in pursuance of my great end? Most men live as beasts; eat, and drink, and sleep, and die, and there is an end of them; they never asked in good earnest for what purpose they came hither.

2. Every one is trading for somebody, the devil or the flesh, regard-

ing his maker's glory or his own satisfaction : there is no medium. Now which are you doing, trading for heaven or hell ?

3. Consider how much you are intrusted with. Look within you, without you, round about you, and see how much you have to account for ; the faculties of the mind, the members of the body, your time, health, honour, estate, lifted up to heaven in ordinances, Mat. xi. 23 ; much given, Mat. xii. 48, and Neh. i. 11. Now improve all for God.

4. Talents are increased the more employed. We double our gifts by the faithful use of them : ' He that had five talents gained other five ; and he that had two, other two.' The more grace here, the more glory hereafter. If they be not employed they are lost. How many poor, blasted, withered Christians may we find, by slacking their zeal, and for want of diligent exercise ! But on the contrary, as the widow's oil increased in the spending, and the loaves multiplied in the breaking, in Christ's miracle, and the right arm is bigger and fuller of spirits than the left, so grace, that decayeth by disuse, groweth by exercise. The corn sown bringeth in the increase.

5. We must give an account at last to God, Luke xix. 23 ; he will ' demand his own with usury.' What honour hath God had by us as ministers, magistrates, masters of families, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants ? Beasts are not called to an account, for they have no reason and conscience, as man hath. What will you say when God shall reckon with you, what you have done with your time, strength, and estates ? If an ambassador that is sent abroad to serve his king and country should return no other account of his negotiation than I was busy at cards and dice, and could not mind the employment I was sent about ; or a factor, I spent riotously that which I should have spent in the mart or fair, will this pass for an excuse ?

6. What a sad thing is it to have gifts for this end, to leave us without excuse, as the Gentiles have the ' light of nature,' Rom. i. 20, and Christians the ' light of the gospel : ' John xv. 22, ' If I had not come, and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin.' Others have the word preached to them : Mat. xxiv. 14, ' And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations ; ' compared with Mat. xiii. 9, ' Know that a prophet hath been among them ; ' have advantages and opportunities, but no heart to use them ; only that God may be clear when he judgeth.

7. We improve the stock of corruption left us by Adam, why not the gifts given us by Jesus Christ ? This fire needeth no blowing ; of itself it breaketh out into a flame ; and shall not we stir up ourselves, that we may be more useful ? In employing our gifts three things are necessary—prudence, fidelity, and industry.

[1.] Prudence. This is necessary for a steward or factor : Luke xii. 42, ' Who then is a wise and faithful steward, whom the Lord shall make ruler over his household ? ' Now, there is a twofold wisdom—a wisdom that is not from above, and a wisdom that is from above, James iii. 16, 17. The first is earthly, sensual, devilish ; it either serveth for earthly profits, or to give content to the flesh, or to affect dominion and greatness. He that hath this wisdom sets up for him-

self, and will never be a steward and factor for God. And this is to be wise for the present. But the wisdom we speak of is to be wise for the future, that it may be well with us to all eternity; and that is the wisdom that is 'pure and peaceable,' and full of good fruits; for that is the truest wisdom; it serveth all turns, and provideth for God and self too: that is a holy self-seeking, to seek self in God: it hath what the other affecteth in a more sincere way of enjoyment, 'Honour with God,' Rom. ii. 7; 'Pleasures with God,' Ps. xvi. 2; 'Rich towards God,' Luke xii. 20; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 'Rich in good works, that they may lay hold of eternal life.' This prudence would serve the turn, and make a man take all advantages of doing good.

[2.] Faithful: 1 Cor. iv. 2, 'Moreover, it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful;' that he sincerely seek the glory of God, and watch all advantages to promote his Lord's interest, and carry himself well in his trust.

[3.] Industry, that he stir up himself, 2 Tim. i. 6; 2 Tim. iv. 14, 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee.' Oh! let us not be idle, but hunt out occasions of doing good.

Doct. 2. In trading, our returns must carry proportion with our receipts.

'He that had five talents gained other five, and he that had two gained other two.' God will not accept of every man's rendering for the mercies of common providence, deliverances; 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, Hezekiah rendered something, but not according to the benefit received. Nor for the mercies of his covenant, justification, or pardoning mercy: Luke vii. 47, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' All love requireth love, and an answerable degree. So for sanctification: he expecteth more from them to whom he hath given more grace: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.' And in general, of all talents, ordinances, he expecteth improvement suitable, clear knowledge, strong faith, more ready obedience: Luke xii. 47, 48, 'And the servant that knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes: for unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.' Otherwise his judgments will make it evident: Amos iii. 2, the valley of visions had the heaviest burthen. So for gifts of the mind. God expecteth service according to their measure: Eph. iv. 16, 'That which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part;' according to that place they hold in the body. No member is either dead, or idle, or living and working only to itself, but every one is to contribute for the good of others according to its measure. So for estate. God looks for more from them whose superfluities are larger than others enjoy, that they should be 'rich in good works,' 1 Tim. vi. 18. God accepteth the widow's two mites, that was more than the abundance of the rich; for 'she cast in all that she had,' Luke xxi. Still the rule holdeth.

The account riseth with the gifts; and God will accept that at one man's hands that he will not accept of another, whose capacities and opportunities are greater, who have more time to spend in his immediate service, more wealth to bestow, more advantages of acquainting themselves with God. Only let me give you two cautions in judging of our returns.

First, That in gifts, either of mind or of the body, our faithfulness is measured by our endeavour, and not by our success. *Dominus non considerat*, saith Jerome, *lucri magnitudinem, sed studii voluntatem*. The crown of faithfulness and the crown of fruitfulness do both adorn the person that wears them. Though they be not gathered, yet our work is with God: Isa. xlix. 4, 'Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work is with God.' Though little fruit and effect on men, yet not the less regarded and rewarded by God.

Secondly, That in the laying out of our gifts, God doth not measure them by the quantity and value of what is given, but by the affection and heart of the giver. *Affectus pretium rebus imponit*, saith Ambrose; which is a comfort to the poorer sort, who have but little to give and contribute to good uses: I Cor. viii. 11, 'If there be first a willing mind, a man is accepted according to what he hath, not according to what he hath not.' So in other things; the smallness and meanness of the benefit doth not diminish God's estimation of man's love and affection. On the other side, it is an awe to the great and rich. All those pompous services, if not a real mind, are not accepted, I Cor. xiii. 1. God loveth *non copiosum, sed hilarem datorem*, not a large, but a cheerful giver.

Thirdly, Where the matter will afford it, a liberal and open heart will not be defective in quantity: they think nothing too much for God, and therefore will do all that they can; all seemeth too little: I Chron. xxii. 14, 'And now behold, in my trouble (Heb. or poverty), I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and brass and iron without weight.' Look, as there may be a winter's day in summer, and a summer's day in winter, for the proportion; so much may be little, and little much, according to the mind and love of the giver; the widow gave *ὄλον τὸν βίον*. Some do twice as much good with a little as others with a great deal. Love will not be backward.

Reasons of the point.

Because righteousness doth consist in a proportion, and so it holdeth good both for our duty and God's judgment.

1. For our duty; that we should be fruitful according to our means, opportunities, and helps; for every one of these increase our obligation.

2. For God's judgment. God is not a Pharaoh, to require the full tale of brick where he doth not afford stubble. In all his proceedings there is great equity; he considereth men according to their advantages: Rom. ii. 9, 'Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.'

Use 1. Let this assuage the envy and trouble of the meanest. If

thy gifts be mean, thy account will be so much the easier. Merchants that have the greatest dealing are not ever the safest men: Eccles. i. 18, 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' None so miserable as they that have received much and returned little; which should prevail with us to an acquiescence in God's providence, though our talents be not so large.

2. Let it quicken those that have received greater gifts than others to do so much the more good with them. You are more bound, and that which God will accept from others he will not from you. If you have many ordinances and means of improvement, you should get the more grace, Heb. vi. 6, 7, and Mat. xi. 22-24. You are deeper in the state of condemnation if you do not bring forth fruit proportionable to the means of salvation: if greater abilities, you must give God the more glory; if a greater estate, you must be richer in good works, 1 Tim. vi. 7, 8; for you to shut up your bowels: 1 John iii. 17, 'How dwelleth the love of God in you?' *Potentes potentius cruciabantur.* Mighty shall be the destruction of the mighty. If we have greater mercies, there is greater duties; and greater duties, greater sins; and greater sins, greater judgments. Surely if men had any sense of their accounts, those that have much to answer for would have more trouble.

Doct. 3. Among those that have received talents all are not alike fruitful.

I shall handle the point with respect to the context we have in hand.

1. Though but one be mentioned, yet the number of unfaithful ones is very great. In parables the scope must be regarded. Now the general scope is to show that as the virgins are not all admitted, so all the servants of the house not accepted. In the parable, indeed, two of the servants are faithful, one unfaithful. We cannot conclude thence that the number of those that used their talents well should be greater than of those that hid them or neglected the improvement of them; as in the former parable, that the number of the foolish shall be just equal with the number of the wise; or in the parable of the wedding garment, that but one shall come to the gospel-feast unprepared. No; the ornament of that scheme and figure which Christ would make use of to signify his mind required it should be so expressed; for since our Lord, to avoid perplexity and confusion, would mention but three servants, it was fit that one should be an instance of eminent faithfulness and service, another of service in a lower degree, that the meanest may not be discouraged, and the other should represent the unfruitful ones. Now experience showeth they are more than one to two; yea, more than ten to one, much the far greater number. Oh! how few are there even of those that hold much from God, that return him aught of love and service! The idle and unprofitable ones are found everywhere, in all ranks and conditions of men.

2. Observe, he that had but one talent is represented as the unfaithful one, and that with good advice. If the example of reprobation and punishment had been put in the servant that had five talents, or two talents, we might have thought that men of eminent gifts, rank, quality, and employment in the church, shall be called to an account, and pun-

ished for their neglect. No; but as our Lord hath laid it, it reacheth his full scope and purpose. For in the instance of the servant that had but one talent, those that had five and two may easily know how much sorer punishment shall light upon them, if he that had least be called to such a strict reckoning for his non-improvement. However, this we may observe, that he that had the least gift was unfaithful. To be sure, those that have most spiritual gifts, do usually improve them, and the rest are left without excuse.

3. Observe, his crime is, 'he went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.' Men dig in the earth to find metals and talents, not to hide them there. Mark, it is not said he did embezzle his talent, as many waste their substance in riotous living, quench brave parts in excess, sin away many precious advantages of ordinances and education, and powerful convictions. No; he did not embezzle his talent, but hid it. Mark again, he did not misemploy his talent, as some do their wealth, others their wit, to scoff at religion, or to put a varnish on the devil's cause, their power to oppress and crush the good: the precious gifts that many have are like a sword in a mad-man's hand, they use them to hurt and mischief. No; no such thing is charged upon this evil and naughty servant. It is fault enough to hide our talents, though we do not abuse them. That you may conceive of this, I shall show you—

1. His sin, in hiding his lord's money.

2. What may be the cause of it in those that imitate him.

First, It was a sin, partly because it was against the command of his master. In Luke xix. 13, 'He gave them a charge, occupy till I come.' Partly because it was against the end of the distribution of the talents. To keep money unprofitably by us is a loss; it was made for commerce, so were gifts given us to profit withal; scattered into several hands to bring in some increase to the Lord and owner. Partly because it was against the example of his fellow-servants, who were industrious and careful to comply with their charge: 2 Cor. ix. 2, 'Your zeal hath provoked very many.' And partly as his obedience and account would have been easier; as it is more easy to give an account of a small sum than a greater, as there is less trouble, less danger; so his refusal is less excusable. And partly as it was an abuse of his master's patience; it was long ere he called him to a reckoning. God will bear long with us, in infancy, childhood, and youth, but he will not bear always; if we do not bethink ourselves at last, our account is hastened, and God will suffer idle servants no longer to have an opportunity of promoting his glory, the good of others, and their own salvation.

Secondly, What may be the causes of such-like unfaithfulness? Men are taken off from improving their talents—

1. Sometimes by a slothful laziness, and should that hinder us, especially us that are servants to God? What man can endure an idle servant? Though he should not whore and steal, yet if he do not his work, you put him away. Everything in the world costs diligence, and shall not we be diligent in our master's work? How will men labour for a small reward in the world, and is not heaven worth our most industrious care? Shall not we be hard at work? 1 Cor. xv. 58. The

reward is still propounded to the diligent: 1 Cor. iii. 8, 'Every man shall receive his reward according to his own labour;' 2 Cor. ix. 6, 'He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly.' Idleness is its own punishment. An idle man is a burden to himself, like a man buried alive. When it is morning, would God it were evening. He contracts distempers; a key seldom turned rusts in the lock; standing pools are apt to putrify. David, when he was idle, fell into those foul faults. An idle man can think of nothing but the delights of the flesh, and so becometh a ready prey to Satan.

Oh! then, shake off laziness and the ease of the flesh! God is at work, John v. 17; the creatures are at work; the sun is always going up and down.

2. Another cause is a foolish modesty and pusillanimity. Oh! this should not be; we should not, like Saul, hide among the stuff when God calleth us forth to some employment for his glory, 1 Sam. x. 22; or, with Moses, draw back when opportunity is offered us to be useful in our generation, Exod. iv. 20. God can help the stammering tongue, and will bless mean gifts when you sincerely obey his call.

3. Self-love: Phil. ii. 21, 'All men seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ.' Many care not how it goeth with Christ's matters, if their particular go right: they serve their own worldly ease, profit, credit, pleasure.

4. Distracting businesses, or love to the world; this is digging in the earth, and hiding our talent indeed: 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'Demas hath forsaken me, and embraced the present world.'

5. Fear of danger, if publicly active for God. Some are so cowardly that they are browbeaten with a frown; cannot venture a lesser interest, cannot bear a scoff or a disgraceful word; therefore sneak, loath to own what they are, or to do for Christ and his despised cause. This is not a Christian frame: Phil. i. 28, 'In nothing terrified by your adversaries, which to them is a token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.' It looketh like Christ's business; he speaketh of endeavours to propagate the faith of Christ, and to gain men to embrace the gospel.

Use. Let us see if we be found in the number of the faithful or unfaithful. A negligent ministry, a Gallio, a careless magistrate, an idle master of a family, a slothful Christian, is like the servant in the text. You have your use whether you be in a public or private station. Let us be faithful; if but one talent, the smallest gifts must not lie idle, but be seriously exercised for God's glory; if but one, your temptations are the less, private men are not exposed to such dangers as public persons. It will aggravate your negligence if, when less is required, you are found idle. Oh! therefore, shake off the ease of the flesh, that loathness to be troubled with the faithful discharge of your duty.