

2. Improve what you receive in that way: 1 Thes. v. 14, 'Quench not the Spirit.' Fire may be quenched by pouring on water, or withdrawing the fuel: quench not the Spirit by fleshly delights, nor by a careless conversation.

3. They ask the wise, 'Give us of your oil.' First, 'This demand was unseasonable; to be getting oil when they should use it, to have their oil to buy when their lamps should have been burning.' There is a time of getting, if we lose that, our opportunity is gone, Luke xiv. 32; Isa. lv. 2; John ix. 4. While 'you have the day work, for the night cometh in which no man can work.' Secondly, it was extorted by mere necessity. In a time of straits and distresses men will call upon the people of God to help them, as Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, when God's judgments were upon him.

SERMON VII.

But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.—MAT. XXV. 9.

IN the words we have—(1.) A denial; (2.) The reason of the denial; (3.) Their advice and counsel to the foolish.

First, The denial, *not so.* It is not a churlish and envious denial, but such an answer as the nature of the thing would bear. If they should be so kind, they would deprive themselves, and not leave sufficient for them both; therefore they were better take the usual way of supply. Three points are in this verse:—

Doct. 1. Every one must get oil into his own lamp, or get grace of his own, or else in the day of his accounts the grace of others will do him no good.

Secondly, From the reason, 'Lest there be not enough for us and you.'

Doct. 2. They that have most grace have none to spare.

Doct. 3. If we would get grace, we must have recourse to the ordinances.

For the first point, that every man must get grace of his own.

1. I do not hereby exclude the righteousness of Christ, or his communicating his Spirit to us. There is a great deal of difference between Christ and the saints in point of sufficiency, power, and authority.

[1.] They have not a sufficiency for themselves and us too. Christ hath a fulness out of which you may receive enough: John i. 16, 'Of his fulness we receive grace for grace.' There is *plenitudo fontis et plenitudo vasis*—the fulness of a fountain and the fulness of a vessel. The fulness of a vessel is lessened and abated the more you take out of it; the creature is wasted by giving, but a fountain is ever flowing and overflowing; it keepeth its fulness still, though it affordeth to others. God saith to Moses, Num. xi. 12, 'I will take of the spirit that is upon thee, and put it upon them.' The words seem principally to

intend as if his own gifts and abilities were given to them to help bear a part in the burden of the government.

[2.] In point of power, they have no power to transfuse and put over their righteousness to another; as a man cannot divide and part his life between him and another. But Christ, who liveth in us, and is spiritually united to us, he can impart his grace and righteousness: 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' Gal. ii. 20, 'The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.'

[3.] If they could do so, they have no authority and commission to do it, as God hath given to Christ: John iii. 34, 35, 'For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand;' and John xvii. 2, 'As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' Such a difference there is between the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints. He can give us of his oil, and will do it, will not deny those that seek it humbly and seasonably, and have enough himself; as the 'precious ointment upon Aaron's head and beard ran down to the skirts of his garments,' Ps. cxxxiii. 2, so doth Christ the head communicate his gifts and graces to all his members.

2. I do not hereby exclude the benefit which we have by the 'communion of the saints' in the mystical body of Christ here in this world. The members are mutually useful to one another; as it is said, Col. ii. 19, 'From which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.' It is from the head, but knit together by nerves, veins, and arteries. The apostle saith, that 'every joint supplieth something,' Eph. iv. 16. We communicate to one another that strength and nourishment which all receive by the head. There is no member but is of use; we have benefit from one another's gifts and graces, or else we could not be serviceable in the body. But the case in the text is different; these foolish virgins had their former advantages, which they should have improved, to have supplied them in the day of their account. Now the wise could not help the foolish, nor the foolish the wise; but every man shall be judged according to what is within him.

3. As to the keeping off of temporal judgments, the very society and neighbourhood of the godly may be a means to respite the wicked: Jer. v. 1, 'Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man that executeth judgment, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it.' If they are not pardoned they may be respited for a time. So the sentence against Sodom; we read that if ten righteous persons had been found therein, Gen. xviii. 32, God would have spared it. And God gave Paul the lives of all them that sailed in the ship with him for his sake. As to temporal things, God may stay the judgment upon others for the godly's sake, though not always; for it is said, Ezek. xiv. 14, 'Though Noah, Daniel, and Job stood before me, they should deliver but their own souls by their own righteousness.' When the decree was irrevocably past, and their provocations grown to an insufferable height. So it is said in the Jewish proverb, that two dry

sticks may set a green one on fire: to which Christ is supposed to allude when he saith, 'If this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?' Well, but bating these cases, we shall not be the better for others' righteousness, and this is often pressed in scripture: Hab. ii. 4, 'The just shall live by his faith;' by his own, not by another man's: Ezek. xviii. 20, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him;' that is, as to eternal rewards and punishments, every one is to be considered according to their own personal estate. Every tub shall stand upon its own bottom, and every soul shall be dealt with according to its own capacity. So Rom. xiv. 12, 'Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.' We shall give an account of our own thoughts, words, and actions; not shuffled together by the lump, and in gross, but every one severally. One shall not appear for another, as here we may appear by proctor or attorney; nor the whole party and profession for single persons, but every one is to give an account of himself apart, man by man. So Gal. vi. 4, 5, 'Let every man approve his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another, for every man shall bear his own burden.' We should every one look to his own actions, and our own spiritual estate and frame of heart: to fetch the grounds of our rejoicing from abroad will not be so comfortable and safe to us. We are to look to our own selves.

Use 1. Is to disprove the conceit of works of supererogation, or doing more than is required of us, to increase the stock of good works to be put into the treasury of the church, as if others should fare the better for their over-godlying it.

2. To disprove the vain and foolish confidence by which men please themselves in the goodness of others about them, their relations, and societies in which they live. They have friendship with such good people, are in relation to such eminent and pious persons; a godly wife, or husband, or father: Mat. iii. 9, 'And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.' No; they cannot give us of their oil. Men will catch at anything rather than a right ground of confidence.

Use 2. Is to exhort us to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. ii. 12, or to be more careful of our own personal qualification, if we would be saved in the day of the Lord.

1. It is not enough that Christ engaged for us as the public surety of the church, Heb. vii. 22. He did some things for us, and in our names, that we might take a bond upon ourselves, that we may enter ourselves heirs to the benefits of his undertaking. You must give up yourselves to the Lord, 2 Cor. viii. 5. All that are brought home to God do personally covenant for themselves: Ezek. xx. 37, 'I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant,' one by one. God would not trust the Jews with their own choice, but would take the tenth that came out of the fold by course. God will not covenant with us in the lump or mass, but man by man.

2. It is not enough that the church as a visible political body, pro-

fessing faith in Christ, doth engage for us: Ezek. xvi. 7, 'I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine.' There is a visible church covenanting which is made between God and whole societies, as they do profess submission to Christ's gospel. Alas! in these societies, there may be many persons whose souls have not particularly and personally, each one for himself, entered into covenant with God, therefore we cannot satisfy ourselves with this, but every one of us must engage himself to the Lord.

3. It is not enough that our parents did engage for us, and dedicate us to God in baptism, as they did in their own names, and in the names of their little ones, Deut. xxix. 10-12, as we devote, and dedicate, and engage our children to God in baptism; but this is a work and business that no man can savingly transact for another. The engaging of a soul to Christ is a thing that a man cannot do by proxy or assignee; we must personally enter into covenant with God for ourselves, or else our parents' dedication will not profit us; we shall be children of Ethiopians to God, though children of the covenant, Amos ix. 7.

4. It is not enough that we belong to strict and reformed societies, unless we come visibly to ratify the covenant in our own persons, by that which the apostle calleth 'a professed subjection to the gospel of Christ,' 2 Cor. xiii. 9. Unless there be a hearty and real subjection, as well as a public professed subjection, our company will not save us, nor our church save us. Many fall asleep in Christ's own lap that shall awake in flames. He looketh to single persons, knoweth his sheep by name, and whether they obey and follow him, yea or no. He considereth the frame of their hearts, and how they stand affected to him: 'My son, give me thy heart,' Prov. xxiii. 26. It is the heart he seeketh for: Jer. xxx. 21, 'Who is he that hath engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.'

Lastly, Consider the distinction Christ will make at the last day between persons of the same vicinity, family, religion: the one is taken, the other left.

Now, to excite you to get grace into your own hearts, consider—

1. None is more near to you than yourselves. God hath made you guardians of your own souls. We read, Eph. v. 20, that 'no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.' Oh! that we could say so in this case, that no man ever hated his own soul! It is no less monstrous and unnatural not to take care of our souls, than not to take care of our bodies. The soul is the man, the nobler and better part, that should be first cared for; therefore, if you love yourselves, you should look after your personal interest in Christ.

2. Your happiness is left merely as on your own consent. God offereth his grace to you as well as to others: Isa. lv. 1, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters and drink;' Rev. xx. 22, 'Whosoever will,' &c. If you refuse it, you wrong your own souls, Prov. viii. 36, forsake your own mercies, Jonah ii. 8. And if you miss of Christ, and be shut out of heaven, it is by your own default. You have none to blame but yourselves, if you do not enter into covenant with God, and so qualify yourselves for the great blessings and favours thereof.

3. Consider how much others have done for you in a way of means, though they can do nothing in a way of merit. You have received as much benefit by others as can rationally be expected; you were born of Christian parents, by them dedicated to God, and trained up in his fear; and now, after all this, when you come to stand upon your own bottom, you wrest yourselves out of the arms of grace: your obstinate refusing seriously and heartily to enter into personal covenant with God will exclude you out of heaven; you are not moved by the examples of the word, and self-denying Christians. If you never try to bring your heart to consent to the Lord's terms, you will find your oil to seek when you should use it, at the bridegroom's coming.

Secondly, I now come to the reason alleged, 'Lest there be not enough for us and you.'

Doct. 2. They that have most grace have none to spare.

1. With respect to our great hopes, all our endeavours are little enough for heaven; we cannot be at more cost and pains than our blessed hope is worth: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' Work, because it is for salvation: 2 Thes. ii. 12, 'Walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory.' That is the worthiness of condescency; walk suitable to your high and holy calling, walk as those that expect such a kingdom and glory, walk as those that are contented with a little here, Heb. xiii. 5. A little here should serve our turn, but in heavenly things it is otherwise; there should be a holy covetousness, and an insatiableness of desiring more, and a suitableness in our walking to that state of life which we expect. But alas! it is otherwise with most, for the comforts of this life, which are but as a vapour, they are insatiable as the grave; but in grace, every little, yea, a bare nothing, is thought sufficient. Surely these men have not a true sense of God's punishments and rewards, nor what preparation is necessary for that heavenly happiness they expect.

2. With respect to our great temptations, not a jot of grace can be spared. We are told that 'the righteous are scarcely saved,' 1 Peter iv. 18. There are so many trials by the way, and our folly and weakness is so great, that it is no easy matter to get safe to heaven. If we have strength to carry us through our present condition, yet we know not what we may meet with before our service be over; a day may come when all the grace we have may be thought little enough, and too little for the trials we may be put upon. Little grace is as no grace when a temptation cometh: Luke viii. 25, 'Where is your faith?' But Mark iv. 4, 'How is it that ye have no faith?' and Mat. viii. 26, it is said, 'Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith!' Little faith in some cases is as if they had no faith: faith in the habit they had, but they could not put it into act, in that sudden and great trial: Eph. vi. 10, 'Be ye strong in the Lord, and the power of his might.'

3. With respect to our comfort, a large measure of grace is necessary. We are bidden to give all diligence, that we may enter abundantly, 2 Peter i. 11. Not only make a hard shift to get to heaven, but to get thither with full sails of comfort; now this will never be, unless we have much grace, and that kept in lively action; for other-

wise it will not come into the view and notice of conscience, to make up an evidence there.

[1.] I do suppose that conscience hath a vote in the matters of our peace, Rom. viii. 16. In the matters of our sense, Rom. ix. 1, the bosom witness is conscience; the knowledge of our estate is not intuitive, but discursive.

[2.] That small things are inconspicuous, and not easily to be discerned, especially by weak eyes; therefore it is a hard matter for conscience to discern a little grace in a great heap of corruption. Man's heart is not watchful, nor so tender, nor are things in such order there, as that every lesser thing should be taken notice of; though conscience be a secret spy, yet small things escape its view and notice, both in a way of sin and grace; in a drowsy and inattentive soul, it cannot be imagined: therefore there must be a great deal of grace before it can be seen and distinguished from a common work; for the heart of man is deceitful: the woman was forced to light a candle, and search diligently, before she could find her lost groat; so hard will it be to discover that in the soul which is small and little.

[3.] The testimony of the Spirit is usually given in upon the greatest exercise and abounding of grace; for the oil of gladness followeth the oil of grace, and comfort is dispensed according to the rate of obedience: John xv. 10, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;' and John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and is loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him.' Therefore out of all this it followeth, that if we would maintain any comfortable and delightful sense of our interest in Christ, and the glory of the world to come, we should not be contented with a little grace.

4. With respect to the nature of grace, it is a sign we have no grace when we think we have enough and to spare; surely they that have tasted that the Lord is gracious, 1 Peter iii. 2, they are not cloyed, but will long for more; that man that doth not desire to be better was never good. As the little seed works through the hard and dry clods, that it may grow up to stalk and flower, so is grace, it is working and increasing to perfection: therefore it is an ill sign, to be satisfied with small measures of grace, to say I have enough. Every degree of grace, is as desirable as that we have attained to; and those whose hearts God hath touched, they earnestly desire more.

5. All is too little to stand before the Lord, and therefore none have any surplusage of grace, or more than will serve their own turn; as in the gathering of manna, he that had much, had nothing over. If we consider the glorious and holy presence of Christ, we have all little enough: Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant;' *Non dicit Cum hostibus tuis, sed Cum servo tuo.* He doth not say, O Lord, enter not into judgment with thine enemies, but, Enter not into judgment with thy servant.

6. Every one is to be considered according to his advantages, and opportunities of growth and improvement. Less may be sufficient to salvation, but not to them to whom more is given; as they distinguish of a fundamental *in se* and *quoad nos*. God may accept of an implicit faith in some, but not in others; so it is true of

grace, that rule, Luke xii. 48, 'He that knew not and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.' God may accept that from others which he will not from us, and we are to be answerable for our means of growth; we expect he should come sooner that rideth on horseback than he that travelleth on foot; and therefore we must not be contented with a bare competency, but labour for abundance.

7. The greatest graces have many times the greatest corruptions and temptations to wrestle with. God doth not call every one to such a trial as he called Abraham; but as Jacob drove as the little ones were able to bear, so doth God proportion temptations according to the measure of grace and strength that every one hath; and therefore he that hath most grace, hath but enough for that condition of life wherein God will exercise and try him.

8. You may easily have too little, you cannot have too much. There are many come short, none over; you never read of any that had too much faith, too much of the love of God and the fear of God. In the internals and essentials of religion, there is no *nivium*: a man may spend too much time in praying and hearing, when it encroacheth upon other duties; but he cannot fear God too much with a filial fear, or love God too much; many love him too little, and therefore are kept so doubtful all their days, that they cannot tell whether they love God at all or no.

9. Because of that conformity that should be between us and Christ, who is our glorious head; and all the heirs of glory are destined to be conformed to the first-born, Rom. viii. 24, chiefly in grace, purity, and holiness: indeed this cannot so full and exactly be till we see him as he is, but the present sight that we have of him by grace should make some change in us, 2 Cor. iii. 18. In heaven we shall be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, as he, Heb. vii. 26; above the reach of temptations, as he, John x. 30; our vile bodies shall be changed, Phil. iii. 21, and both soul and body conformed to that glorious estate, as he, Rom. vi. 9; but it must be begun here; the very hopes of it should put us upon purifying ourselves: 1 John iii. 3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure:' you are to do so, that there may be some proportion between head and members.

10. Because a little grace is not so honourable to God: John xv. 8, 'Herein is my Father glorified, in that ye bring forth much fruit;' and Phil. i. 11, 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God;' 2 Peter i. 8, 'If these things be in you and abound, you shall not be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ.' It is not a naked and empty profession, it is not sleepy habits, or a little grace, but when grace hath a deep power and sovereignty over our hearts and lives, that bringeth God into request, and commendeth him to the consciences of men. The knowledge of Christ is reproached as a low institution by carnal men; but to the truly wise, no such excellent and noble spirits as they that are bred up under him.

Use 1. Of reproof to those that think we make more ado than needeth. When we press men to a constant watchfulness, and serious diligence in the spiritual life, no wonder that every slight thing seemeth enough; so the foolish virgins, 'Give us of your oil;' the wise

virgins are more cautious; their saying is, 'Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.' What thoughts have you of Christ, when you think every slight preparation enough for him? what sense of the world to come, when you do so little in order to it? what is it that you call grace, that you do so easily come by it, and maintain it upon such cheap terms? Surely men have no sense of the end, or else mistake the way, that think so little will serve the turn. Indeed a little in the world will serve the turn, if men had sober and moderate desires, and did not increase their necessities by the largeness of their affections. A man may have estate enough for ten men, yea, twenty men, and yet not be satisfied, but the best hath scarce grace enough for one; but alas! how soon are men satisfied (such is their indifferency) about spiritual things! instead of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a little or none contents them; here only they are for sobriety and moderation; all is too much, and too easily passed over that seemeth to awaken them to a lively sense of that religion they do profess. Christ saith, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. v. 20. What do ye more than they? and Luke xi. 24, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate.' They cannot endure that Christ's authority should be urged on the conscience; can you hope to be saved on easier terms without all this ado? A little time will determine whose word shall stand, God's or yours; you cannot do too much as long as you do but what God bids you. Certainly if you judge by that rule which God hath given to try by, no man on earth is as good as he should be, and he that is best is too bad, and he that doth most, cometh unspeakably short of what he should do. All the holy ones of God complain of their naughty hearts, that they cannot do the things that they would; they groan under the body of death, and cry out, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' And will they then obtrude this sorry perfunctory obedience upon God as a full satisfaction of his gospel law?

2. It is to reprove those that think they have grace enough to bring them to heaven. Now they may go rest, and trouble themselves no further. Alas! they know not what belongeth to the spiritual life; for if they had true grace, they would see a need to keep it lively and growing; they would find they could not keep what they had unless they did increase it; the daily lapses make breaches upon it, and conscience would tell them how easily they lose many degrees, and a sense of it, and that every day they need serious humiliation; and it is a naughty heart that can satisfy itself with the *minimum quod sit*, a bare competency, without seeking after greater measures. When men do things against their will, they do not more than needs; but love hath an amplitude and largeness in it, it thinks it can never do enough.

Use 2. Is to excite us: Phil. ii. 13, 14, 'Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching to the things that are before, I press towards the mark of the high prize of God in Christ Jesus.' You have not answered your holy rule, nor done things worthy of your blessed hope, nor answerable to the great obligations laid upon you, nor becoming the glorious salvation which you expect: if these things were well thought of, you would see a need of making a speedy addition to

your stock every day. Oh! then, as to the internal habits of grace, we beseech you let your love abound more and more, Phil. i. 9; and as to the external acts of obedience: 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'As ye have received of us how to walk, and how to please God, so you would abound more and more.' Let your vessel be fuller, and your lamps burn brighter; you owe God a thousand times more than ever yet you have paid him; he hath both deserved and required more at your hand; you cannot make out your gospel qualification of sincerity, unless there be a lamenting of defects, and a striving after perfection.

Thirdly, We come to the advice and counsel, 'But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.' Go to them that sell; that is, go where it may be had; for selling and buying are put improperly for getting into our hand. *Emptum cedit in jus emptoris*. Things are said to be bought when they are made ours, as if we had paid a just price for them, as Prov. xxiii. 23, 'Buy the truth, and sell it not;' that is, keep it, and do not part with it. So Isa. lv. 1, 'Buy wine and milk;' and Rev. iii. 18, 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold.' Calvin is of opinion, *non admonitio est, sed exprobratio*; and Austin before, *non consulentium, sed irridendum est ista responsio*. It is a check and rebuke to their negligence; as if it were said, Go buy now if you can; heretofore you had a time of buying, which you neglected; the shops were open, but now the opportunity is lost: and so think it not a counsel but a rebuke. You should have bought for yourselves. I rather think it is an advice, directing them to the remedy, or the true course that must be taken if we would get oil, as appeareth by the practice of the foolish virgins in the next verse; and if they used this remedy too late, it was their own folly.

Doct. 3. Those that would have grace must have recourse to the ordinances.

1. Mark iv. 24, 'Take heed how you hear, for with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.' And you that attend upon hearing, more shall be given to you. 'With what measure ye mete,' that is a proper rule for commerce between man and man, and our Saviour urgeth it, Mat. vii. 12. But it is true also in commerce between God and man; if you take heed how you hear, and do what you hear, that is, seriously weigh that divine and heavenly doctrine in your deep and ponderous thoughts; if they would use such conscionable care to profit as was fit, the Lord would recompense their diligence with an answerable blessing on the soul. Another place is 1 Thes. v. 19, 20, 'Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesying.' If you would not quench the Spirit, his convictions, excitations, and counsels, you must use the means; they are instituted to this end, and God instituteth nothing in vain; they have a tendency to that end; the formality of the institution is a word of command and a word of promise.

2. Christ hath sanctified ordinances to this end, Eph. v. 26, 27; and John xvii. 8, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.'

Use 3. If we would have the graces of the Spirit begotten, strengthened, and increased in us, let us use the means, Acts xvii. 11. Let us use them more conscionably, and see¹ that by every converse with God we may get some new blessing from him.

¹ Qu. 'seek'?—ED.