

2. That the gathering of a spiritual disease is very secret and insensible. Bad humours breed in the body, and are not discovered till a strain; much more distempers breed in the soul ere we are aware, and therefore the more caution is necessary: Prov. xxx. 9, 'Give me not riches, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?' Every man is afraid of want and poverty, but who is afraid of riches? Yet Agur is as much afraid of that as of poverty. Our greatest learning is to learn how to abound. The worldly-minded judge riches and abundance a happy condition: Oh! blessed is the man, they will say, that is in such a case. It is the sum of every man's wish; but to be shy of the world, to suspect danger in plenty, it can never enter into their hearts. But alas! as a rank soil is apt to breed weeds, so many snares are incident to this condition and this sort of life. Alas! they that have great and plentiful estates, how apt are they to pamper the flesh, to grow forgetful of God, slight in holy things, to be wedded to worldly greatness. A corrupt heart will take mischief in every course of life, as a drunken man will stumble in the plainest way, but especially in a plentiful condition. As soon as men have anything in the world, their heads are lifted up above their brethren, and they grow proud, scornful of God's word, slighting of holy things, and we are wholly enchanted with pleasures of such an estate, but consider not the snares that secretly are laid for their souls.

3. There is no means to prevent the danger but by the continual exercise of good works, and a prudent carefulness to improve our substance for God's glory and helpfulness to others. Look, as we clip the wings of birds that they may not fly away from us, or as we cut off the superfluous boughs of trees that they may not hinder their growth and height, so this should be your care, not to join house to house, and field to field, for then our desires will swell into so vast an excess and proportion, as will not become grace and hopes of heaven. No; but your business should be how you should honour God: Prov. iii. 9, 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thy increase; 'Give alms, and all shall be clean unto you,' Luke xi. 41. A man's care should rather be for contracting and cutting short his desires, and how to make use of it in order to eternal life. Unless there be this constant solicitude upon the heart, it is impossible 'for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

SERMON X.

And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!—
 MARK X. 23.

You have heard this young man was loath to sell all, and yet loath to quit his hopes of eternal life. He did not go away murmuring and frowning against Christ, but, because he could not bring both ends

together, 'He went away sad, for he had great possessions.' The instance of this young man had raised them all into wonder, and therefore when they were full of thoughts about it, our Lord would make use of this for the instruction of his disciples. You find our Lord edifying his disciples upon all occasions, and improving every occurrence for their good. As a wise man passing by the field of the sluggard learns wisdom, and hath a sensible discovery of the loss and ill effects of idleness and careless indiligence; so by this young rich man's refusal of Christ's terms, the disciples might know the snares of the wealthy, and what a pull-back from Christ the love of the world is. Surely they that were sent forth to gain the world need such an instruction partly that they might be more diligent in warning rich men of their danger and duty: 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;' and partly that they might not be offended if their doctrine should be despised by men of that rank and order. The rich and full-fed worldlings were likely to despise the doctrine of a crucified Saviour and oppose his worshippers: James ii. 6, 7, 'But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?' Now they are forearmed against this contempt by seeing Christ himself refused by a rich man. And partly for themselves, that, laying aside all thoughts of worldly greatness, they might the better bear their own poverty, riches being such a hindrance and impediment to the kingdom of God; for they were leavened with the conceit of a carnal Messiah, that they should be mighty men in the world, and until the Spirit was poured out they had this conceit; for these and such like reasons, 'Jesus looked round about him, and saith to his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' In this verse we have—

1. Christ's gesture, 'And Jesus looked round about him,' *περιβλεψάμενος*, the gesture of one that is to speak or do some notable thing: Luke vi. 10, 'And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand.' So here he looked round about to every one of them, to see how they entertained this passage and occurrence of providence, and to stir up their attention, and to cause them to be affected with it as a matter of some great weight and moment, that, when this moral, sweet-natured, forward young man came with such respect, kneeling to him, and asking him such a question, and went away sad, Jesus looked round about, as if he had said, How do you entertain this?

2. Here is Christ's speech, 'He saith to his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.' I will take notice of the matter and the form.

[1.] The matter, where the persons spoken of, 'They that have riches.' The privilege denied, entering into the kingdom of God.

[2.] The form. It is by way of question, 'How hardly?' he would appeal to them. See now what the love of the world did. They were leavened with it, and thought of great offices in the kingdom of the Messiah; but how hard is it for a rich man to enter into the kingdom

of heaven. 'How hard?' It is—(1.) *Questio admirantis*. It is propounded in the form of an admiring question. (2.) It is *questio dolentis*, of one that bewails the corruption of human nature, that men should turn God's good gifts and blessings into a snare. Alas! 'How hard!' &c.

For the matter, there is not an utter impossibility, but a very great difficulty. It is spoken of such men as have riches only; and Christ explains himself in the next verse, 'Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!' It doth not lessen the wonder, but increase it, for then 'they were astonished out of measure among themselves, saying, Who can be saved?'

By the kingdom of God is meant the kingdom of grace, or the kingdom of glory. How hardly do they submit to the doctrine of Christ, or enter into the kingdom of grace here! Or how hardly are they made partakers of his glory in the kingdom of heaven hereafter!

Doct. It is a very hard matter for such as abound in worldly wealth to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

1. I shall explain the point by the circumstances of the text.
2. Show whence the difficulty doth arise.
3. Make application.

I. To explain the point by the circumstances of the text. And here—

1. The persons spoken of, 'They that have riches.' The very having layeth us open to a snare. It is true Christ explains himself in the next verse, 'Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!' The plain sense of the words is this, It is hard to have them and not trust in them. The disciples were astonished at his words when he said, 'How hardly shall they that have riches,' &c.; but when he said, 'How hard is it for them that trust in riches,' &c., they were astonished out of measure. And we see Agur, when he prays to God, not only deprecates the sin, but the estate, 'Give me not riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?' Prov. xxx. 8, 9. James ii. 6, 'Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats?' He doth not say, Do not wicked rich men oppress you? but simply 'rich men.' As a fat and fertile ground produceth weeds, if it be not carefully tilled and planted with better seed, so do riches usually prove a temptation to us.

But you will say, Why doth he speak so hardly against one order and sort of men whom God hath set up in the world? Are not riches in themselves God's blessings? Prov. x. 22, 'The blessing of the Lord maketh rich;' and are they not promised to his people? Ps. cxii. 3, 'Wealth and riches shall be in his house;' and accordingly are bestowed upon them. For we read of Abraham, Gen. xxiv. 25, 'The Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become exceeding great;' saith Eliezer. So was Job, chap. i. 3, 'The greatest of all the men of the East.' So David, Solomon, and Lazarus of Bethany, Joseph of Arimathea, and others; and therefore is it not to calumniate our Master's bounty to say, that the very having of riches is an impediment to us in our heavenly pursuits, and a snare to us? I answer—No.

[1.] The fault is not in riches, but in our abuse of them: 2 Peter i. 4, 'The corruption that is in the world through lust.' It is your

unmortified corruption that spoils all, not wealth in itself. The poison is not in the flower, but in the spider. The carnal disposition which remains in us maketh us ready to drown our mind, our time and affections, our life and love in the world, and the cares and pleasures thereof, and so they are ensnared thereby, and hindered from looking after heavenly happiness. Riches are an advantage of doing liberal, magnificent things, if they be used well; and to blame riches simply, were to blame him that made them, and distributeth them according to his will, as if he did bait his hook with seeming blessings, and did set golden snares to entangle the souls of men. The goods of this world are profitable to them that can make a good use of them, as giving them the means of being more God-like, and more useful in their places; for certainly 'it is more blessed to give than to receive,' Acts x. 35. They do not make us corrupt, or put corruption into us, but only discover the corruption that is there already; as when we fill a leaky vessel, the unsoundness of it is seen, as soon as it is filled it begins to run out. Our corruptions are drawn out by these things, and plainly discovered to the world, when the fault is not in the riches, but in the lust.

[2.] When wealth is spoken of as an estate full of spiritual danger, it is rather to check our desires of it than to lessen God's bounty, as if there were no obligation upon us by those temporal blessings. If we covet and seek great things for ourselves, we do but run into the mouth of temptation: 1 Tim. vi. 9, 'They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.' We are to bless God for his bounty, but we are to guard our own hearts, and contract our desires before the will of God is declared. When we ask riches, we know not what we ask. Do not aim at great things for yourselves in the world.

[3.] Wealth, considered not as sought by us, but as given by God, needeth peculiar and special grace to improve it, because we must not only look to the manner of acquisition, but to the manner of fruition. It is true we have honestly acquired it, it comes to us fairly, but then we must see how we enjoy it. Some are rich because they are wicked, having gotten their wealth by unjust and indirect means; but others are wicked because they are rich, being corrupted by the enjoyment of them. There are some gifts of God that are *absolute bona*, so absolutely good that they can never be evil, such things do certainly make the owner, or him that possesseth them, good too; as the graces of the Spirit, faith in Christ, the love of God, fear of his name; but one may be rich, but yet never the better. Nay, consider man *in statu lapsi*. fallen from God to the creature: he is easily made worse, and usually is too, and that by the good things he doth enjoy, if the Lord doth not vouchsafe to him his grace.

[4.] I answer again—When temporal blessings follow eternal, then it is well, as wisdom with an inheritance is good; and Solomon asked wisdom, and with it God gave him riches and honour in great abundance; but where they are given singly and apart, so they are given to God's enemies. Elijah was poor, and Abab rich; Paul, that holy man, was in prison, and bound with a chain, and Nero at the same time emperor of the world. God hath gifts for all his creatures: some in

one way, some in another, shall find him a good God. Jesus Christ, that gave his Holy Spirit to the best of the apostles, gave the bag to Judas. Nay, Jesus Christ himself, that had the Spirit without measure, chose a poor estate. He that made a fish to pay him tribute could as well have made men to do so; he that multiplied a few loaves could have increased his stock; he that made the world could have built himself a stately palace; but 'when he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor,' 2 Cor. viii. 9, that he might sanctify holy poverty in his own person, and honour it by his own example; and usually he cuts his children short, while wicked men live in plenty. Therefore they that merely have riches, that is, that have it apart from grace, are in a worse condition than those that are kept low and bare. As a child may be dieted for its health, while a servant is left to a free allowance, so God knows our weakness; and they understand nothing in divinity that do not know this, that God works congruously, and will not only give strength, but will also abate the temptation itself, and not suffer us to have overmuch in the world, lest it should become a snare to us. So much for the persons spoken of, 'They that have riches.'

2. The privilege in debate, that which is denied or hardly vouchsafed to them is, 'Entering into the kingdom of God.' By which is meant—

[1.] The kingdom of grace; and so the meaning is, they are incapable of the doctrine of Christ, as the thorny ground was of the good seed. Now what are they that answer to the thorny ground? 'They that are choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life,' Luke viii. 14; that is, the heart wherein christianity cannot enter with any good effect and success: these choke and destroy many hopeful seeds of grace, which would otherwise spring forth in a lively diligence, and earnest pursuit of that one thing necessary. And this may be the meaning of 'How hardly do they enter!' viz., the great difficulty of rich men's becoming the disciples of Christ; and the truth is, at the first setting forth of the gospel, it was verified by plain experience, for it is said, Mat. xi. 5, among other miracles which Christ wrought, he tells us 'the poor have the gospel preached unto them;' it is *πρωχοι εὐαγγελίζονται*, they are all to be gospelled; and *οὐ πολλοὶ*, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, nor many mighty, nor many noble are called,' 1 Cor. i. 26; not many of that order and rank.

[2.] Entering into the kingdom of God may be expounded of being made partakers of his glory in the kingdom of heaven; this follows necessarily upon the former, for if they are incapable of grace, they are incapable of glory. And this is true too: James ii. 5, 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?' And this was such a truth that even the scoffers and opposers of the christian religion took notice of it. Julian the apostate, in his epistle to Ecebolius, speaking scoffingly of those passages, saith, I have taken away from these Galileans some of their wealth, that they might not be deprived of the heavenly kingdom which their master promised them.

3. The thing spoken of these persons with respect to that privilege; there the form, *πὼς*, 'How:' it is *θαυμάστικον ἐπιφῶρημα*, saith Hesichius, a form of admiration; and the matter, 'How hardly!' It is not an utter impossibility, but a very great difficulty. All men are

saved with difficulty: 'If the righteous scarcely are saved,' 1 Peter. iv. 18. It is no easy matter, but it is more difficult for them than others. It is passionately expressed, 'Oh, how hardly!' it is the greatest difficulty imaginable, such as made the disciples wonder: 'They were astonished at his words,' ver. 24. Afterwards it is set forth by the proverb of 'a camel passing through the eye of a needle,' ver. 25. Many foolish conceits men have about this, whereas in truth it is nothing but a Jewish proverb, to show it is a very unusual thing, of extraordinary difficulty, not to be removed but by the almighty power of God, 'but with God all things are possible,' ver. 27. Not that riches are evil in themselves, but that it is hard for such creatures as we to possess them without sinful and inordinate affections.

4. Consider who it is that speaks it. Alas! if it had been the saying of any private divine or particular minister, we might tax it as rash and rigorous; but the mouth of truth itself hath spoken it, even Jesus Christ, whom we own as our Lord and Master. He knew the way of salvation, and knew the state and danger of souls, and he hath interposed his authority, and represents the difficulty. It is Jesus Christ, that had so much wisdom to judge aright of matters, Jesus Christ, that had so much regard to the comfort and happiness of men, that he would not fright them with a needless danger; and therefore certainly you should take such an admonition to heart from the mouth of him whom you call your Lord and master, and from whom at last you expect your doom and judgment; he hath said it. If any wise man had said it from the experience of almost all ages and persons, you ought to have regarded it; but when our Lord hath said it, he who is the 'Amen, the faithful and true witness,' why should we not believe him? I pray what do you think of Christ? Was not he able to judge of the case? It was the saying of Plato, *ἀγαθὸν εἶναι διαφερόντως, καὶ πλούσιον εἶναι διαφερόντως ἀδύνατον*—It is impossible to be excellently good and eminently rich; therefore Celsus, a heathen who sought all occasions to disgrace the gospel, saith that Christ borrowed this saying of Plato, but he is confuted by Origen in his book against him. This proud heathen was sensible there was wisdom in the speech, therefore he would deprive Christ of the honour of it. But now since we believe the doctrine of Christ, and own it as the speech of Christ, who is our Lord and master, therefore it should more sink into our hearts. Thus for the explanation of the point, from the circumstances of the text.

II. Let us see whence this difficulty doth arise? I answer—Because of the sins to which a wealthy estate doth expose us.

1. Riches are apt to breed atheism and contempt of God. They that are wholly drowned in pleasures of sense do not look into the invisible world, and see God which is the Father of spirits: Prov. xxx. 9, 'Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?' There is a practical atheism when men forget or despise God, and a speculative atheism when they deny God. Now the rich are apt to do both. A man that tumbles in wealth, ease, and plenty is apt to forget and despise God: 'But Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness, then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salva-

tion,' Deut. xxxii. 15. Nay, in some sort they deny God ; they live as if there were no God at all, none to call them to account. Men that have seen no changes, and were never humbled under God's mighty hand, never think of an invisible power. I remember the psalmist saith, Ps. lv. 19, 'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God ;' they have not an awe or reverence, or due sense of a divine power upon their hearts, because they never have been acquainted with changes ; the condition they have lived in hath been a constant tenure of worldly happiness. So Zeph. i. 12, 'They are settled upon their lees ;' that is, are not tossed from vessel to vessel, as wine that is racked. They live in an even course of worldly prosperity, and in abundance of worldly comforts, without a change, and this chokes and gluts the heart, that they have no sense of the Lord's goodness. Changes do more awaken us, and make us look to God, as the fountain of good and evil. *Iste vices magis in nobis excitant sensum divine bonitatis, quam continuus tenor felicitatis, qui nos inebriat.* In short, the pleasures and thoughts of the world do so take up their hearts, that there is no place for any serious thought and solemn remembrance of God, such as should beget an awe in us. It is said, Isa. v. 12, 'The harp and the viol, and tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts ; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.' Thoughts of God are suppressed as soon as they do arise, and they take no notice of the work of God's hands, nor what he doth in their days to revive the sense of his eternal power and Godhead ; nor do they take their comforts out of God's hands, but look altogether to natural and to second causes, as being sufficient to themselves, to live of themselves. Indeed, they may seem in opinion to own a God, as others do ; they take up the current opinions, and perform customary worship, but they do not glorify him as God, or repair to him with that life and fervency as those that stand in need of him, nor consecrate their best time, and strength, and affections to his service. It is usually the broken-hearted godly poor, and those that have had frequent experiences of the changes of providence, that exercise themselves to godliness, and seek after God in good earnest. The great landlord of the world hath more rent from many poor cottages than from divers great palaces, for they wallow in plenty, and never think of God.

2. Riches keep men from being broken-hearted and seeing their need of Christ. It is the poor needy soul, sensible of its own sin and misery, that is likely to thrive in religion, and prosper in any heavenly design and pursuit. Now those that are rich have so many entertainments of sense to inveigle their minds and divert their thoughts, and are so besotted and enchanted with present delights and pleasures, that they have no feeling of their condition, or sense of the necessity of God's grace ; therefore it is our Lord begins his description of blessedness : Mat. v. 3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' How few of them that are rich in estate are poor in spirit ! The sense of their present ease and welfare makes them forget all thoughts of their spiritual condition, and reconciling themselves to God by Christ. The prodigal never thought of going to his father till he began to be in want, Luke xv. 17, 18. While men have any-

thing in the world, they are senseless and secure in the midst of all their sin and misery ; and if they can live without God and apart from God, they will not come at him : Jer. ii. 31, ' Wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee ? ' As if this merry world would always last, and there were no judgment to come, and God would never bring them into his presence, but they live a life of estrangement from God ; they can live upon themselves, and their own supplies, and things that fall to them by the bounty of God's providence.

3. Suppose these worldly rich men should take to the serious profession of religion, as some of them do, and so mask and varnish over a heart wholly wedded to the world and worldly things with some kind of form and garb of religion, and it may be the strictest too, yet they can never walk worthy of it, nor hold and maintain it with any power and vigour : ' They are enemies to the cross of Christ ; ' and why ? ' They mind earthly things, ' Phil. iii. 18, 19. Christ speaks of selling and forsaking all, and they are for getting and taking all into their own hands. Now it is more difficult for them that have anything in the world to comply with Christ's commands. Surely they that live in a lower condition have less temptations. The young man here went away sad, ' For he had great possessions. ' I shall mention a story of a soldier of Antigonus, which is well known, because it helps to set forth what we have now in hand. This person had a very loathsome disease upon him, which made his soul desire to be divorced from his body, and then none so ready and forward to venture himself in all battles as he, and when the general, admiring his valour, got him to be cured, then he, that had been so prodigal of his life before, was as shy, tender, and wary of it as others ; when he had a life worth the keeping, he was loath to venture and expose it to danger. I apply it to this purpose. It may be when the world disappoints thee thou art ready to venture thy little all for christianity, but if anything may make the world sweet to thee, none so sparing, so afraid and ashamed to own Christ as they. Certainly it conduceth much to the safety of grace to have the temptation removed, as well as to have the lust abated : *Rebus in angustis facile est contemnere vitam*—He that hath little can soon part with it, whereas riches expose to apostasy : 2 Tim. iv. 10, ' Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world. '

4. It maketh men apt to take up their rest here, and to sit down satisfied with the world as their chiefest good, without any earnest longing for or looking after a better estate : Ps. xvii. 14, ' From men of the world, which have their portion in this life ; ' small hope or desire of the pleasures of another world ; they will have their heaven here, and therefore ' How hardly shall they enter into the kingdom of heaven. ' The Lord will not remove us *a deliciis ad delicias*, from Delilah's lap to Abraham's bosom, from carnal to spiritual delights ; and the truth is they have no mind to be removed : James v. 5, ' Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton. ' Here we are in a place of exile, banishment, separation from God, where God doth not exhibit himself in that latitude which he doth in the other world, and yet here they seek their felicity : Luke vi. 24, ' Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. ' God requires of us

contentation, and allows us a temperate use, and holy delight in the blessings of his providence, but we are not to take our whole comfort here (for that is meant by our consolation), and sit down drunk with temporal happiness, that will make us mindless of those other things offered to us in the gospel, and kept for us in the world to come.

5. They are apt to wax proud and scornful, and impatient of reproof, and so grow licentious, and lose the benefit of the remedies that might reclaim them from their errors: 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded.' I interpret it of this sort of pride, when men grow scornful of admonition, licentious in sin, and hate reproof. All pride is incident to riches, but especially this pride; for as soon as a man hath anything about him, he begins to speak higher, and look higher, and fare higher, and to display the ensigns of his vanity in his apparel; but chiefly his heart is higher, and so grows impatient of check, and so cannot bear the means God hath appointed to warn him of his danger and duty. They think we are too bold thus to deal with them and speak to them. It is observed of beasts, that they never grow fierce but when they are in good plight; so usually men when they are full, grow scornful and fierce, and cannot endure to hear the mind of God powerfully and plainly set forth. Great men have great spirits, and they will not stoop to such base and mean persons as the messengers of Christ: Jer. v. 5, 'I will get me to the great men, and will speak unto them, &c., but they have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds;' Jer. xiii. 15, 'Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken.' Men are high and scornful, and if they have anything to bear them out in contempt of the Lord's message, they set themselves to oppose Christ and his interest, and dash against the corner-stone, though they are broken in pieces. They are the great and yokeless men of the world that will come under no rule, and no awe of christianity.

6. They are wanton and sensual, and so must needs be careless of heaven and heavenly things: partly as sensuality brings a brawn and deadness upon the heart, and takes off all sense and feeling and savouriness of spirit: Hosea iv. 11, 'Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart;' that is, infatuate men, and make them of such a base brutish spirit, that they are incapable of sound reasoning, or of entertaining the doctrine of godliness: 1 Tim v. 6, 'She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' A life of pleasure brings on a strange deadness and infatuation upon the soul, partly as sensuality engrosseth the time, and causeth us to waste those precious hours in which we should make provision for eternity; to eat, drink, and be merry, and knit one carnal pleasure to another, and so leaves no room for any serious sober thoughts of God, Christ, and the world to come, and necessity of regeneration and taking the way of holiness: Luke xii. 19, 'I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' And partly as sensuality doth strengthen our enemy. The greatest enemy we have is the flesh, and the more we please it, the more we set back our salvation. Now when men nourish their heart, and strengthen their corruptions, how can they be overcome by the power of the Lord's grace? James v. 5, 'Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of

slaughter.' They add fuel to their lusts, and make corrupt nature more active and stirring than otherwise it would be. Now rich men are very sensual and apt to please the flesh; yea, they can hardly avoid it in the plenty of accommodations they enjoy, as scripture and experience witnesseth. Sodom was a pleasant and fruitful place, and was as the garden of God. What were the sins of that place? 'Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness,' Ezek. xvi. 49; and that fulness did *dispumare in libidinem*, as Tertullian saith, issue out into monstrous lusts. Alas! where there is such a glut of worldly things, what hope is there to prevail, and bring men under the power of strict religion and that holiness Christ calls for. Men grow excessive in their pleasure, and they refresh not their labours with some kind of pleasure (for that God hath allowed), but they refresh one pleasure with another, and so set up the flesh in God's stead: 'Their god is their belly,' Phil. iii. 19, and they are 'Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,' 1 Tim. iii. 4. Men think sensuality no sin in those that are rich. Indeed greedy getting or griping to raise an estate the world will condemn. Oh! but when a man lives plentifully, and is at heart's ease, without considering whether he nourish a temptation or no, the world takes no notice of that: Ps. xlix. 18, 'While he lived, he blessed his soul; and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself;' that is, when thou spendest freely upon carnal satisfactions, that is accounted more honourable. Nay, and they themselves do applaud themselves in this course, and think because their estates will bear it, therefore they may indulge their carnal desires. Oh! do not think so. You are to consider things with respect to eternity and the world to come. Plenty will be no excuse. You would be angry with your cook if he should make your meat too salt because he had store of salt by him; so may God be angry with you, if you have plenty, such as would refresh the hungry, and supply the needy, and you altogether lay it out upon pomp and pleasure, above what your estates and what your bodies will bear, but chiefly what your souls will bear; for you should keep up the welfare of your souls, and be ready and free towards God. Do you think you were made only for idleness and pleasure, and others must glorify God only by labour and service? The rich glutton was cast into hell; here was no oppression, but 'he fared deliciously every day,' and sucked out the sweetness of his wealth, and the indictment that is brought against him is this: Luke xvi. 25, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.' A slavery to pleasures will make the hardship and duties of religion intolerable. You are brought into bondage and under the power of these things, and then you cannot leave them that you may attend upon the good of your souls and upon the things that relate to eternity: 1 Cor. vi. 12, 'All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.'

7. The more rich, the more wedded we are to the world; for *crescentem sequitur cura pecuniam*; usually the more we have, our desires are increased to get more: Eccles. v. 10, 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.' Men when they are low are modest; food and raiment is enough, and they receive it with great thankfulness; but if they had a little more

in the world, then they should serve God without distraction, and if they had such a proportion they would care for no more; but if those desires be granted, they find themselves entangled, and their hearts deceived, and still they must have more and more, until they settle into a worldly course. As a river, the greater it grows by receiving of little brooks, the wider and deeper still it wears the channel, so outward things, the more they increase, the more they enlarge desires. Men would be a little higher in the world, a little better accommodated; and when they have that, they would have a little more, and still a little more, and so keep 'joining house to house, and field to field, till there be no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth,' Isa. v. 8. They would seize upon all things within their grasp and reach. As fire increaseth with new fuel, so this burning desire doth increase on their hands; whereas we should still take thankfully what God vouchsafeth to us, without those vast cravings and desires, and look after no more than will serve us in our passage to heaven. Mariners freighted for a near haven will not victual for a long voyage. *Magno viatico breve iter non instruitur*—'Time is short,' 1 Cor. vii. 29. Thus there is very great difficulty with respect to the sins that are incident to a plentiful estate, and grow upon us insensibly.

Use 1. This doctrine showeth us how contented we should be with a mean condition, if God reduce us thereunto. We can hardly be poorer than Christ and his apostles, and shall we murmur? Many have more than they had, take them altogether, and yet think their condition hard and strait: 1 Tim. vi. 8, 'And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' God hath freed thee from those snares and occasions of sin which others are subject unto, and so thy way to heaven is made more easy. Certainly they that do indeed intend the kingdom of heaven would not desire a more difficult passage; therefore be content with a mean estate, though you have no more than necessities. Contract your desires, and your trouble will be lessened. The Israelites said to the king of Edom, 'Let us go through your land in peace;' but the cravings of carnal men are endless, 'They enlarge their desire as hell,' Hab. ii. 5. Not to be content with our lot and portion, especially when it is competent, is a great sin. When you hunt after more, what do you but increase your temptations, and multiply your snares? 'You load yourselves with clay,' Hab. ii. 6; base riches which pollute you, thorns which make your condition more uneasy. And when will there be an end of these desires? Lust will grow with the possession; the more wood you put on, the more the fire increaseth. Therefore, rather bring your minds to your estates than your estates to your minds; if you be not content with what you have now, you will never be contented hereafter; a greater estate will not do it, if grace do not do it; as in some diseases, *non opus habent impletione, sed purgatione*, there is more need of purging than filling; a man is still hungry though he hath eaten enough, and still thirsty though he hath drunk enough. The way is, not to increase our substance, but to moderate our desires.

Use 2. It teacheth us patience and comfort under loss of goods. We should possess the things of this world as if we possessed them not, and therefore when God taketh away our plenty, we should mourn as if we

mourned not. You may find gain in this loss, and profit in this trial. The Lord seeth fit many times to take away the fuel of our pride and other lusts, to draw us to seek better treasure in heaven, the purchase whereof is certain, the possession firm, and the price incomprehensible. The Lord will keep you aloof from temptations; he knows that if you were rich, you would grow sensual, insolent, and negligent of spiritual things. God knoweth what condition is best for you; you should have a greater account to make; he expecteth from others charity, from you patience. Besides, says Job, chap. i. 21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Some think it is the greatest misery to have been sometimes happy, but that is through corruption, when former enjoyments make men more nice, delicate, and tender, and so less able to bear the present cross. But if we consider rightly, the less we have been afflicted, the less are our afflictions on that behalf. Is it nothing that God hath given us to pass over some of our days with peace and comfort? should we be so unthankful as to account that no benefit because it is past? Job ii. 10, 'What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' is not what you have received a pledge of what he can do for the future?

Use 3. To the rich, to show them what need they have of special grace to manage that condition aright. It would seem a hard censure upon this sort and order of men, yet it is a truth, and spoken by him who is truth itself. It concerneth you to look after special grace more than others; your danger is great, and your difficulties in order to eternal life not a few. You need peculiar grace—

1. To prevent the evils and to heal those diseases that are incident to riches; as contempt of God. We are apt to neglect and despise him when our necessities do not drive us to him, such is the pravity of our natures: Hosea v. 15, 'In their affliction they will seek me early.' Make God your refuge and he will be your habitation: Ps. xci. 9, 'Because thou hast made the Lord thy refuge, even the Most High thy habitation.' Neglect of Christ and salvation by him; they that have an happiness in their hands already see no want in their condition: 'The whole need not a physician.' Take heed of being heart-whole, then you will have no relish for the gospel. It disposeth to apostasy; you have something of value which you must esteem as nothing for Christ. It maketh us neglect heaven: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' An estate without God is not good. Lord, let me not have my all here, for these things must be left. It maketh you proud and scornful; remember there are the true riches, without which a person is but vile. He is most honourable before God that hath most grace. The value of men is otherwise in the world to come than in the present world. Your humility is your crown. It makes you to be more sensual. Wealth is the pander of pleasure, the purveyor for the flesh, but it should not be thus. There is more cause of fear than rejoicing: Gal. vi. 8, 'He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.' It makes us worldly, as chains to detain us under the power of Satan,

and enslave us to the world. It doth but betray you into mischief. Do you desire your way to heaven should be made more hard, that is hard enough already?

2. That you might devote your riches to the Lord, and be holy and heavenly in the midst of so great temptations; that you may not by momentary and temporal things forfeit eternal, but rather further them: Luke xii. 21, 'So is he that layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God;' 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19, 'That they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.' Wealth rightly employed makes us capable of a greater reward hereafter, as it makes us more useful here.

SERMON XI.

And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again, and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!—MARK X. 24.

In these words you have two things—

1. The entertainment which the disciples gave to his former speech, 'They were astonished at his words.'

2. Christ's further explication of himself, 'But Jesus answered again, and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!' Wherein observe—

[1.] The manner of our Saviour's speaking, in that kind compellation, 'Children.'

[2.] The matter of the explication, 'How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!'

1. For the entertainment which the disciples gave to his former speech, 'They were astonished at his words.' This astonishment was caused either by the legal dispensation under which obedience was rewarded with visible and temporal blessings, and therefore they marvelled that rich men should find such difficulty of entering into heaven; or else it was occasioned by the Jewish expectation of a pompous Messiah, wherewith the disciples themselves were leavened, expecting to share of the honours and riches of that kingdom which Christ would set up. Now Christ's answer was quite blank contrary to these carnal hopes, therefore they marvelled. Or it may be upon the common reason that the gates of heaven should be shut to them to whom the gates of the world do always lie open. Thus hardly are good men brought to disesteem worldly things, and rightly to ponder and weigh the doctrine of the cross, which Christ had so frequently taught them.

2. For Christ's explication; and there—

[1.] The compellation, τέκνα, 'Children;' so he bespeaks them who