

can be saved?' or with scorn: Luke xvi. 14, 'The pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and derided him.' For the reverence you bear to Christ, I hope you will not entertain it with scorn, but rather with wonder, holy fear, and solicitude.

I expect now you will say, What shall we do to prevent this mischief?

[1.] Remember your condition in the world. You are not a freeholder, but a tenant-at-will: Luke xii. 20, 'Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall all those things be which thou hast provided?' You are not owners, but stewards; not lords and masters of what you have, but only must improve it for God; and you must give an account: Luke xvi. 2, 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.' You are not citizens but strangers: 1 Peter ii. 11, 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' The world is our inn, where we abide but for a night; our dwelling is there where we live longest.

[2.] Judge of your estates to be good or bad to you, not as they do accommodate the flesh, but as they help or hinder you in your way to heaven. Make heaven your end, and consider all things else as means and helps. Ordinances are the next means, riches and estates are remote helps to heaven. All things are measured by the great and last end, therefore you are to judge of all things as they help you on in heaven's way. Better to be preserved in brine and pickle than to rot in honey.

[3.] Devote your wealth to the Lord: Luke xii. 21, 'So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.' Riches are snares, and will certainly prove means of our damnation if we do not so. That is the best condition for us in which we may do most service to God, and not to the flesh: Gal. vi. 8, 'For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'

SERMON XIII.

*And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves,
Who then can be saved?—MARK X. 26.*

In this verse you have the entertainment of Christ's doctrine concerning the difficulty of rich men's being saved. The effects of it are two—(1.) A great wonder or deep sense of this difficulty, 'They were astonished out of measure;' (2.) An anxious question, 'And they said among themselves, Who then can be saved?'

For the first branch, their great wonder, *περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο*, they were struck at heart, 'astonished out of measure.' We meet with it before at the first proposal of this difficulty, 'They were astonished at his words;' but now, when Christ had rendered the reason, and reassumed

the former difficulty, 'It is easier for a camel,' &c., this doth increase the astonishment, and it is not barely said, 'they were astonished,' but 'out of measure.' Let us a little inquire into the reason of this wonder. Why should the disciples be so troubled at this speech? They were poor, or, however, had left all and followed Christ, as it is in the next words.

I. Some say it was for others, to see so great a part of the world cut off from all hopes of salvation. Though all have not wealth, yet there are few but do desire it, and that desire may hinder as well as the enjoyment; therefore, they being solicitous for the salvation of others, they were astonished, and said, 'Who then can be saved?' Certainly it is good not only to work out our own salvation, but to effect the salvation of others. We have a saying, *Omne bonum est sui diffusivum*—All good seeks to propagate itself; as fire turns all things about it into fire. This is the disposition of God's people; when they have found any comfort and benefit by Christ themselves, they desire others should share with them, and be partakers of the same grace and heirs of the same promises. David, after many roarings and disquiets, when he had found that penitent confession of sin was such a notable way for the easing of his own conscience, and had seen the fruit of humble dealing with God, he pens the 32d psalm, which is 'Menschil, a psalm of instruction,' and so is willing to teach others the way. So Andrew calls Peter when he had found Christ, John i. 41, and Philip calls Nathanael, ver. 45. Carnal things are possessed with envy. They that are rich and great in the world would shine alone, and when they are gotten to the top themselves, they are loath to teach others the way to climb up after them. But it is not so with spiritual things, grace is charitable and communicative. Indeed, where any take up religion out of faction and carnal aims, they would enclose the common salvation, and envy the profession and hope of it to others, that they may be the better esteemed and respected themselves. It is observed of mules and other creatures that are of mixed and bastard production, that they never procreate and beget after their kind. Mongrel christians are envious rather than communicative; but those that have really tasted of the sweetness of Christ themselves are glad of company, and it is a great satisfaction to them to hear that others are in a towardly or hopeful way of salvation: 1 John i. 3, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' The apostle had fellowship with Christ, and therefore was so zealous to bring others to the enjoyment of that privilege; therefore, this might be one reason why the disciples, that were safe as to their own particular, and had left all and followed Christ, were troubled to hear that it was so hard for rich men to be saved. Surely this charitable disposition becomes us well, and answers the great patterns we have in the world. We read of some that were so zealous for the salvation of others that in some sense they preferred it before their own: 'Blot me out of thy book that thou hast written,' saith Moses, Exod. xxxii. 32; and Paul, 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,' Rom. ix. 3. So much of personal happiness as resulted to him

from communion with God, he could even lay it down at God's feet for their sake. These are rare instances I confess, but some portion of this spirit all should have: 'Charity seeketh not her own,' 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Chrysostom saith, I cannot believe it is possible for that man to be saved who doth not labour to procure and further the salvation of his neighbour; for whoever would go to heaven would not go to heaven alone, but laboureth to draw others along with him. *Vide* Chrysostom de Sacerdot., lib. vi. It was out of zeal for the salvation of others.

2. The former reason was good, and argued a gracious disposition in them, but this that I shall now give is of a worse alloy, and argues weakness. And yet I cannot but think that this had an influence upon them, viz., the hopes of an earthly kingdom, and the great emoluments and preferments they expected thence. Christ's own disciples were deeply leavened with a conceit of an earthly kingdom which the Messiah should set up. And though they had left all and followed him in his poor estate, yet they expected greatness and honour, and the confluence of all worldly blessings, when the kingdom of the Messiah should begin; and therefore, when they heard Christ again and again expressing himself concerning the difficulty of rich men's entering into the kingdom of God, 'They were astonished out of measure,' as finding all their carnal hopes dashed at once. I cannot but think this was one cause of their astonishment, because in all their converses with Christ they betrayed a spice of this humour. Two instances I shall give as a pregnant proof of it. One when they were at the sacrament, a little before the death of Christ: 'There was a strife amongst them which of them should be accounted the greatest,' Luke xxii. 24. They understood that the kingdom was consigned to them in that ordinance, and they were framing of principalities, and striving who should have the highest preferment and office in this kingdom. Nay, you shall see after Christ had suffered such ignominious things at Jerusalem, this conceit abode with them; and therefore after his resurrection they come to him with this question, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' Acts i. 6. They thought the Messiah would set up a temporal kingdom over all nations, and that they should at least be princes and lords under him, in the exercise of his dominion and sovereignty. Justin Martyr tells us that the heathens imagined some insurrection that the christians would be guilty of against magistracy, because they spoke so much of the kingdom of heaven; and well might they be excused of their jealousy and of this surmise, since Christ's own disciples were so far mistaken in it, whom he had so often warned of the cross, and to whom he had expressly said, that 'his kingdom was not of this world.' But we see hence that the best are too carnal, and too apt to mind earthly things, and to please themselves with the dreams of a happy estate in the world. The appetite of temporal dominion, and wealth, and honour, and peace is natural to us, and we think God doth us wrong if he doth not make us flourish here. All God's children find something of this disposition in themselves, even whilst they are under the cross; they do too little comfort themselves with the meditation of the glory of the world to come, but are always feeding themselves with desires and hopes of an

earthly happiness, and of turning the tide and current of affairs that seem to be against them, that the world may more smile upon them, and befriend them more; and when they are frustrated and disappointed of this hope, their soul faints, and they are astonished out of measure. Oh! this is a sign that our conversation is not in heaven, and that we do not seek the things that are above, and are not perfectly subdued to the will of God, who many times sees the cross to be necessary and profitable for us; and therefore, to please ourselves still with carnal hopes and dreams of a commodious and comfortable condition in the world, is not for a christian.

3. The sense of this difficulty might revive the thoughts of other difficulties. Other things besides riches might obstruct them, and hinder their passage to heaven; and therefore, even those that had left all and followed Christ were astonished out of measure, when they understood the way to heaven to be much harder than they formerly conceived. Certainly it is good to think of the general case when one instance is given. Is it hard to the rich and not to the poor? have they no temptations? When we hear strict doctrine pressed, we should not put it off to others, but fear for ourselves. The poor disciples were astonished out of measure when Christ spake to the rich, How hard it was for them 'to enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

4. Possibly this astonishment might arise from fear of the success of the gospel, wherein they were to be employed as instruments, when they heard that rich men were not likely to prove friends, but rather enemies to the kingdom of God. Alas! what should they do that had parted with all, and were like to be left destitute to the mercy of an unkind world! If the great and mighty men of the world, who should be their props and supports, should so hardly be gained, alas! then how should they go abroad and preach with any efficacy for the saving of souls! Now, whether this or that or all caused the wonder, I will not now determine; all these have an influence upon it, and for these reasons they were astonished out of measure. This is the first effect, their wonder.

The second effect is a doubt moved among themselves privately, 'Who then can be saved?' This question may be looked upon either—

1. As a question of anxious solicitude. Alas! how is it that any can be saved! Or—

2. Of murmuring and secret dislike. Why, if it be so, who is able to receive this severe doctrine, or to enter upon this strict course? Now which of these shall we take it to be? Either for a question of anxious solicitude, or a question of murmuring and secret repining? I answer—

[1.] I suppose this question expresseth their anxious solicitude, and so for the main it is a good question. When we hear strict doctrine, it is good to be moved with it, and fall a-questioning. Many hear it over and over again, yet are slight, no wonder, no astonishment in their hearts; therefore it is good when it is weighed and laid to heart. This question of the apostles brings to mind a saying of one, when he heard Christ's sermon on the mount read to him, he cried out, *Aut hoc non est evangelium, aut nos non sumus christiani*—Either this is not true gospel, or we are not true christians.

[2.] There might be something of weakness, mixtures of infirmity. I cannot say there was nothing of murmuring and dislike; the muttering or saying this among themselves seems to infer it; they durst not make Christ conscious to the question, for it is in the text, 'They said among themselves;' that is, they muttered privately, and so it argues there was something of dislike.

[3.] This weakness was not to a prevalent degree, so as to make them take offence, and depart from Christ, as we find others did upon the like occasion, when Christ had preached something strict and contrary to their humour: John vi. 60, 61, 'Many of the disciples when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying, who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before, &c. And from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him,' ver. 66. Now these, though they were astonished at the strangeness of the doctrine of Christ, yet they did not reject or refuse the belief of it. There was more of anxious solicitude, but somewhat of muttering, 'Who then can be saved.'

Doct. When the difficulties of salvation are sufficiently understood and laid forth, we shall wonder that any are or can be saved?

I shall prove—(1.) That it is a difficult thing to be saved; (2.) Wherein the difficulty of salvation doth lie; (3.) Show how this ought to be seriously minded and regarded by us, that it is such a difficult thing to go to heaven.

I. That it is a difficult thing to be saved. Christ showeth that, Mat. vii. 14, 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' The way to heaven is somewhat like that which is described, 1 Sam. xiv. 4, 'And between the passages by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side and a sharp rock on the other side.' So is our way to heaven a strait way, between rock and rock; here is the rock of vain presumption, and there the rock of despairing fears. Indeed, the text tells us of two things, the gate strait, the way narrow. The gate is strait, the entrance into religion hard; there must be repentance and bewailing our former sins, the working up the heart to a fixed resolution against sin, and a serious dedicating ourselves to God. Oh! how hard is it to pass through this gate! And then there is a narrow way, full of difficulties to corrupt nature; our lusts are impatient of any restraint, and we are loath entirely to give up ourselves to do and suffer God's will. So Mat. xi. 12, 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' It is no wonder that earthly kingdoms are surprised by violence, but it is strange that the kingdom of heaven should suffer violence; how shall we understand this? Violence doth not signify unlawful attempts, but earnest diligence. It is not an injurious violence, such as snatches at earthly crowns, but the industrious violence, a resolution to break through all impediments, and take no nay; no discouragements can much abate our edge, and take us off from our pursuit of the heavenly kingdom. So 1 Peter iv. 18, a righteous man is 'scarcely saved,' *μολις σωθήσεται*; with much ado he gets to shore, he makes a hard shift to

get to heaven. This is enough to intimate the general truth, that there is difficulty to get to heaven.

II. Wherein lies the difficulty of salvation? The reason of doubting is this, because God's terms upon which heaven is offered are gentle and sweet: Mat. xi. 30, 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' The law which God hath given us is holy, just, and good, becoming a God to give and a creature to receive: Rom. vii. 17, 'The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good;' a law such as a man would choose if he were at liberty, and at his own option and choice. Therefore how is it so difficult, especially since there is so much strength given. Habitual strength: Eph. ii. 10, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' We are fitted by his grace; and there is so much actual strength: 'I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me,' Phil. iv. 13. God is no Pharaoh, to require brick where he gives no straw. And therefore, since the way is so good, his yoke so easy, and there is so much strength given, and since the encouragements are so many, both from the work and from the wages. From the work itself: 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,' Prov. iii. 7. There is a great deal of peace, comfort, and sweetness in walking with God, as those that travelled to Sion, 'Passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools,' Ps. lxxxiv. 6; so they meet with many comfortable refreshings in a course of godliness. And then for the wages, 'God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Heb. xi. 6. Well, then, to sum up all, these things concur, since the way is plain, the helps many, the promises full and sure, why is it so difficult to go to heaven? I answer—The fault is not in God, but in our own selves, in our own hearts, in our addictedness to temporal satisfactions; and therefore when God calls us off from the interests and concernments of the present world, wholly to look after the interests and concernments of the world to come, the disposition of our flesh or carnal nature and the course of God's institutions will not suit. And this must needs be a very great difficulty, not easily removed, because—(1.) It is natural to us; (2.) It is increased by custom; (3.) It hath a powerful efficacy upon us to hinder us from walking in the ways of God, that are so sweet and pleasant.

1. This is natural to us, to be led by sense, or to be addicted to present things. There are three sorts of beings in the world—angels, that are pure spirits without flesh, these were made for heaven, and not earth; there are brute creatures, that are flesh without immortal souls, these were made for earth, and not heaven; and there is man, a middle nature between both these, that hath a fleshly substance and an immortal soul, made partly for heaven and partly for earth, as partaking of both; he hath a body that was made out of the dust, and so fitted to live in this world, and he hath a soul that came down from the superior world, and must return thither again. Now these two things must be regarded according to the dignity of the parts of which man consisteth, his earthly part and his heavenly part. The soul being the better part, the perfection and happiness of it should chiefly be looked after. The good of the soul is the enjoyment of the ever-blessed God, this should be our main work and business; and the good of the

body should be looked after in an inferior and subordinate manner. The good of the body is meat, drink, wealth, honour; these things are to be looked after in our passage to heaven. The good of the soul is the chief good, and so should be looked after as our great end and scope, and the good of the body minded only as a means. Man was made for earth in his passage and way to heaven, but his home and happiness is in heaven, where he is to enjoy the blessed God among his holy angels, and those blessed creatures that dwell above in the region of spirits. This was the end for which man was created, and while man continued innocent he had a heart inclined and disposed towards God as his chiefest good; he sought the good of his soul, and was to love him, and fear him, and serve him, and depend upon him as the fountain of his happiness. But by the fall man was drawn off from God to the creature to seek his happiness there: 'They have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,' Jer. ii. 13. Not only Adam in his own person, but all his posterity are turned from God to the creature. Now man in his pure naturals is inclined to the creature, which conduceth to the satisfaction of the earthly part, and not to God, wherein the happiness of his soul lies. This will be evident to you if you consider that though the soul be created by God, yet it is created destitute of grace or original righteousness; and being destitute of the image of God or original righteousness, it doth only accommodate itself to the interests of the body, and seek the happiness of the body; for where there is not a principle to carry us higher, it can only close with things present and known, such as are the pleasures of the body and the interests of the bodily life, and so forgets God and what concerns the enjoyment of him. And so it is said, Rom. viii. 5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind (or savour) the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.' Therefore take man in in his pure naturals, as destitute of grace, his soul forgets its divine original, and so conforms itself to the body, and only seeks its welfare and happiness; and thence proceeds all our mindlessness of God and averseness to him, our unruly and inordinate appetites of temporal things, and the confusion, weakness, and disorder that is seen in the life of man and all his operations and faculties. Hence comes that dulness and slowness that is in his understanding to conceive of spiritual things, his acuteness in back and belly concerns: 'He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off,' 2 Peter i. 9. He is sharp-sighted in all things that concern the present world, but cannot see things to come; and until the Lord make a gracious change upon him, he sees nothing of the worth of salvation, or of a need of Christ, and making any serious preparation for eternity. Hence comes that averseness of will to what is truly good, that he cannot endure to hear of it: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' And while the soul is so, it hath such a bent and proneness to that which is evil, or what concerns our interest in the world. Hence it is that our memories are so frail and slippery as to that which is good, and so tenacious of that which is evil. Good things easily slip from us, as clear water through a grate; but evil things, as slime and mud, stick with us. Hence

comes his affections to be like tinder, to take fire at the spark of every temptation ; the affections are awakened and stirred presently ; but in holy things they are like fire in wet wood, that needs much blowing and much excitation. Hence it is that in the course of our lives we take up with the interests of the present world, and make no provision for a better life ; we are ‘ lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,’ 2 Tim. iii. 4, and forsake God for the present world : 1 Tim. iv. 10, ‘ Demas hath forsaken us, having loved the present world.’ Well, then, by a natural constitution we are utterly at a loss, the soul being destitute of a principle that should carry it to look after spiritual things as its great scope and interest ; it wholly purveys and caters for bodily pleasures, and the honours and profits of the present life. Here lieth the great difficulty in the way of salvation.

2. This addictedness to present things is increased by our converse in the world ; so that besides natural inclination there is inveterate custom, whereby this inclination to carnal satisfactions, such as riches, pleasures, ease, safety, and sensual delights, is strengthened and deeply engraved in us. The first years of a man’s life are merely governed by sense, and the pleasures of the flesh are born and bred up with us, by which means we come to be stiff, and settled in a carnal frame. Custom is another nature, and therefore the more we are accustomed to delight in any course of life, we are weaned from it with the greater difficulty : Jer. xiii. 23, ‘ Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil.’ Every act disposeth the soul to the habit, and after the habit or custom is produced, every new deliberate act adds a stiffness of bent, or sway unto the faculty, wherein the custom is seated ; so that by degrees we grow into an obstinacy and strength of will in a carnal course, which is called ‘ hardness of heart,’ or ‘ a heart of stone,’ in scripture. A man is ensnared by his customs, whatever they be ; for an addictedness in the general to carnal satisfactions brings a slavery upon us. So if men be addicted to this or that carnal satisfaction, it brings slavery upon them ; as a man that is given to wine : Titus ii. 3, ‘ Not given to much wine.’ The word in the original is *δεδουλωμένος*, ensnared by wine ; or a man that is given to women : 2 Peter ii. 14, ‘ Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.’ Men by the tyranny of custom become so impotent to resist their lusts, that the satisfaction thereof becomes their very element, out of which they cannot live ; it is their Eden and their heaven, their very paradise, though at length indeed they find it to be their hell. And of all evil customs, covetousness or worldliness is most dangerous, because it is of more credit and of less infamy in the world ; and besides, it doth multiply its acts most, and works incessantly ; and therefore we read of ‘ hearts exercised with covetous practices,’ 2 Peter ii. 14. Their hearts are always running on the unworthy things of this present world. Now, while worldly men’s hearts are so deeply dyed with such desires as carrieth them out to such things, they are hardly saved. Well, then, here is another reason of the difficulty that our lusts are born and bred with us from our infancy, and can plead prescription, and religion cometh afterwards, and findeth us biassed and prepossessed with other inclinations, which by reason of long use cannot easily be broken and shaken off.

3. Let us now consider the great efficacy and power which this inclination to temporal things hath upon us, and then you will see it is very difficult for us to enter into heaven.

[1.] This inclination and addictedness to present things weakens our sense of the world to come, and then our reward hath no influence upon us to move us and encourage us to serve God. Whilst the world bears bulk in our eye, heavenly things are of small or of no value with us. Satan blinds us as 'the god of this world,' 2 Cor. iv. 4; that is, by the love of the world. Christ cured the blind man by anointing his eyes with clay, but the devil puts out the eyes of our souls with this thick clay, for gold is so called: Hab. ii. 6, 'That ladeth himself with thick clay.' He blinds us so as we cannot have a true sight and persuasion of the truth and worth of things to come. We cannot look afar off into the other world: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.' Mountains seem molehills only at so great a distance; heaven is as a matter of nothing in comparison of present things; as in a prospective glass, look at one end of it, it greatens the object, at the other end it lessens the object. Thus when we look upon things to come through the glass of our own passions and carnal affections, they are nothing, they have no force nor power to move us. Saith Austin, Men do not look after heavenly things; *Quia in terrena prori dorsum eorum semper incurvum est*, their backs and necks are bowed down, that they cannot look upward and have any true sight of heavenly things; the world and the profits of it are real and substantial, but heavenly things are shadows, dreams, matters of conceit and mere imagination. And therefore, since this addictedness to temporal things hath such force upon us, to hinder the sight of the world to come, it must needs be difficult to us to be saved.

[2.] This addictedness to present delights and pleasures makes us impatient of the restraints of religion. Our natural desires carry us to those things which religion forbids. We cannot endure to be bridled, and kept from forbidden fruit, but we have all an appetite after it: Ps. ii. 3, 'Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us;' and Jer. v. 5, 'They have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds;' and Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' *Nititur in vetitum*, the prohibition doth but irritate corruption, as a stream if checked grows more furious. A man wholly given up to present satisfactions cannot endure the yokes and fetters religion would lay upon him; he would be a free creature, and live as he list. Indeed it is to be a captive creature, but this he accounts his liberty and freedom.

[3.] It maketh those duties seem irksome and unnecessary which are necessary as the way to salvation. Look into the book of God, and you will find we are called upon to strive to enter into heaven, and required 'to work out our salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. ii. 12, with all holy solicitude, with all lively diligence, to be still employed in this work; 'To strive to enter in at the strait gate,' Luke xiii. 24; 'To walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory,' 1 Thes. ii. 12. Now they that are addicted to ease, pleasure, and sensual delights cannot endure to be held to this work; they do either openly refuse this work, or delay it, which is the more modest denial,

or else are cold in it. Some profane persons cast off all care of duty, as if religion were but a point of policy, heaven but a dream, and hell but a false fire, the gospel but a fable to busy men's heads with, and so resolve to please the flesh, and never trouble themselves about uncertain futurities. Many thus live in defiance of God and christianity, or else they delay to a more convenient season, they have no mind to the work : Acts xxiv. 25, 'Go thy way for this time ; when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee.' Lust must have present satisfaction, but Christ comes always out of season. When Christ makes an offer of heaven to their souls, hereafter they will be glad to hear of him, but now he comes before the time. As he said in Seneca, *A quinquagesima in otium discedam*—When I am fifty years old, then I will retire and study philosophy ; so when their youthful vanities are spent, then they will look after these things. When the heart cannot keep out light and conviction of our duty, it seeks to keep off care, and so by making fair promises for the future we elude the importunity of present conviction. Or else a heart addicted to present satisfaction is very cold in religion, for the heart that is diverted by other pursuits cannot make religion its work, but only minds it by the by. The world, that is their business, but religion, that is put in the place of a recreation, and 'they mind earthly things,' Phil. iii. 19. Their heads and hearts are full of the world, so that they have no room for God. Their time, thoughts, discourses are wholly swallowed up of present things and complying with their present lusts.

[4.] This addictedness to present satisfactions will make us shrink at the trials God exerciseth us with before we go to heaven : Acts xiv. 22, 'Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.' All good things are hard to come by, and God will show that heaven is worth something. When men have cheap thoughts of it, God will enhance the price of heaven. There must be striving and suffering before we get thither. The howling wilderness was the ready way to Canaan. The captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. We should else neither esteem the cross of Christ nor long for heaven ; but present ease, present safety, present wealth doth wonderfully enchant us, to have good days here, and a quiet life without any trouble. If we could compound with God for this world and heaven too, then we should like it ; but now, while we are so wholly inclined and addicted to present things, it must needs be a difficult thing to hear of trials and crosses that we must endure.

III. This difficulty must be sufficiently understood and seriously thought of by us. And here—

1. Negatively. We should so reflect upon the difficulty—(1.) Not to murmur against God because heaven is not to be had upon cheaper terms, and his ways lie so cross to our desires. Take heed of this ; as if he were envious, and had not a good respect for the happiness of his creature. It is but reasonable that we should labour for heaven, as we do for all other things that are good and excellent ; that which costs nothing is worth nothing. Besides, there are so many corruptions to be mortified, duties to be performed, and trials to be endured, that the faith of the elect 'may be found to the more praise and honour,' 1 Peter i. 7, and therefore all the pains, and shame, and loss, and trouble, is but

necessary. This is an ill use and end to murmur against God and repine against his sovereignty and dominion over the creature; and yet this is the use that many make of it: John vi. 60, 'Many of his disciples when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying, who can hear it?' What! nothing but mortifying our desires? nothing but thwarting our pleasing inclinations? nothing but performing such works which we cannot abide. Why hath God planted such desires in us if he would not have them satisfied? (2.) Not that we should despair or wholly despond, as those, Jer. xviii. 12, 'There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart;' and Jer. ii. 25, 'There is no hope; no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.' Well, I see my condition is helpless and hopeless, therefore I resolve to make the best of it. When men hear how hard it is to go to heaven, they throw off all in a despondency, they shall never bring their hearts to this work. But we should not despair; and think it altogether impossible *προαίρησις οὐκ ἐστὶν ἀδύνατων*; there cannot be a pursuit of that which is impossible. Past cure, they say, past care. Many, their affections are so strongly set upon carnal things, and they are so inveigled with the comforts of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, that they are discouraged, and so think it impossible to do otherwise than they do. Oh, no! that is not the use of it. Do not say, There is no hope of the world to come, therefore let us make the best of this life. God would have the fallen creature to despair of himself indeed: 'With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible,' as in the next verse.

2. Positive. Why should these difficulties be thought of and laid to heart? to what end?

[1.] To prevent slightness of spirit. There is not a greater bane to religion, nor a greater judgment lights upon a creature, than a vain, frothy, slight heart; and therefore, to prevent this, and that we may in good earnest mind the things of our eternal peace, it is good to understand sufficiently the difficulty of it. A slight heart thinks it no such great matter to get to heaven, there is no such danger of missing it as men talk of; though they be not so religious as preachers would have them, nor so strict in conscience as to abstain from every smaller matter, yet through the grace of God they shall do well enough. Hell is made for the devil and devilish men and outrageous sinners; if they live fairly, and do as their neighbours do, they shall do well enough, though they do not pine and whine over their sins, or busy their brains about clearing up their interest in God; though they be not so nice and scrupulous, and take God's word too strictly, they shall do well enough for all that. Christians, these conceits, with which most men are leavened, are the bane, and eat out the heart of all religion. It is no such easy matter to go to heaven as the world imagines. A cold faint wish will never bring us thither, nor a desire to enjoy it when we can live here no longer. No; there must be watching, and labouring, and striving; this must be your great business and employment: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.' Oh! whatever is neglected, this business must be looked after day after day, namely, in what posture

we are for the enjoyment of the blessed God: Phil. iii 12, *διώκω*, 'I follow after it, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ;' Acts xxvi. 7, 'Unto which hope the twelve tribes served God instantly,' some render it; but it is *ἐν ἐκτενείᾳ*, with all their strength, 'day and night, hope to come.' Now it is necessary men should be sensible of the difficulty of being saved, to quicken their endeavours, and to bring them out of this slight frame of heart which is so natural to us; they think there needs not so much ado that we make the way straiter than God hath made it; they will not believe it is half so hard as it is. We see how great is our sloth and negligence. Now, if after he hath told us it is as hard as to go through the eye of a needle, what would we do if all were easy? Think of the difficulty to prevent this slight heart.

[2.] To keep us in a due dependence upon and an admiration of grace, God would have us sensible of the difficulty. What carnal hearts have we! how hard a matter is it to guide and govern them in the fear of God that we may keep up an admiration of the power of God that is perfected in our weakness! 2 Cor. xii. 10, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' Alas! when we look to ourselves, we may cry out, when we think of these things, 'Who can be saved?' This awakeneth our prayers for special grace from day to day, and maketh us to look up to God for new supplies, because we find it is not in ourselves: 'The way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,' Jer. x. 23; 'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God,' 2 Cor. iii. 5.

[3.] That we may be forearmed with resolutions. They that take a walk for recreation do not prepare for all weathers, as they that resolve upon a journey; or they that go to sea for pleasure, if they see a storm coming, easily go to shore again, but they that go for business resolve upon all hazards to finish their voyage. Now, that we may resolve to make a thorough work of christianity, and to hold on our way in Christ's strength notwithstanding all difficulty, our Lord would have us to sit down and count the charges, Luke xiv. 28, to consider what it will cost us to go to heaven; not to discourage us, but to provoke us to put on the more resolution, lest we tire when we find more difficulty than we did expect, and that we may resolve to hold on with God, whatever it cost us.

Use 1. This shows us the reason of that presumption which is so common. We use to say that despair kills thousands, but presumption its ten thousands. What is the reason that many presume? Oh! the difficulties of salvation are not well weighed. True hope is a middle thing between presumption and despair; the object of hope is *bonum, futurum, arduum, sed possibile*. Hope considers its object as hard, for that which is easy to come by is as if it were already enjoyed; a man cannot be said to hope for that which he may have with the turn of his hand. Well, then, it considers the good to come as difficult, to awaken diligence and serious endeavours; but then it considers it as possible, for otherwise we are really discouraged from looking after it; for why should we look after that which is impossible? Paul's mariners gave over working when all hope that they should be saved

was taken away, Acts xxvii. 20. But now presumption leaves out the difficulty, and reflects only upon the possibility. Some may be saved; surely God will not damn all his creatures; therefore I shall be saved. But suppose the contrary, few are saved; then what shall become of me? On the other side, despair reflects only upon the difficulty, and leaves out the possibility. Oh! it is hard, it is impossible with men, therefore they give it over. I shall make no work of it, saith despair. Now the scripture, that would breed and nourish in us a true hope, doth all along lay forth the difficulty, to prevent slightness of spirit, and yet represents the possibility to prevent despair; the difficulties to quicken our endeavours, and the possibility to encourage men to hope for the grace of God.

2. It presseth us to mortify our addictedness to present things. O christians! if you could overcome the world, you pluck out the root of all temptations, and then the commandments of God would not be grievous: 1 John v. 3, 4, 'For this is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith;' the world is the great let which hinders us from keeping the command, from being so exact, punctual, and sincere with God. Overcome the world, and the work will be easy. Take heed of pleasing the flesh, or letting the world have too great an interest in your hearts; let it not seem a great thing in your eye. Until your hearts are drawn off from present things, and you are wholly baptized into that spirit that suits with the world to come, to make that your main care and desire, you will never prosper in heaven's way, until your thoughts be loosened from the world, and you are carried out more to heaven and heavenly things. Consider, why should you be addicted to present things? You that are strangers and not inhabitants, your happiness lies not here: 'If our hopes were only in this life, we were of all men most miserable,' 1 Cor. xv. 19. We are but probationers for heaven: 'Our conversation should be in heaven,' Phil. iii. 20.

3. To fortify us against the difficulties in the way of salvation. You must be at some pains and labour: John vi. 27, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat that endureth unto everlasting life.' Do not slacken your endeavours. To quicken you, consider—

[1.] If you love your salvation, you will be at some cost about it. It is a sign you make no reckoning of heaven, and have no great sense of things to come, when you grudge your pains; it is a sign you slight it when you are so slow in the pursuit of it: Phil. iii. 14, 'I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Oh! did you value heaven, or had you any esteem of heavenly things, you would not think much of a little pains, of striving with God in prayer, of wrestling, and denying your lusts, to bring your hearts to a readiness and cheerfulness in the service of the ever-living God. No trade in the world you can drive on by idleness. Who ever prospered in any course of living if he followed it with a slack hand? We cannot think to have those great invisible things of the Lord's kingdom and his glory if you will do nothing for it.

[2.] There is difficulty both in the way to heaven and hell. Lusts are ravenous things, and cannot be fed or kept without much self-denial. You must deny yourselves either for God or the devil. You

must deny your comforts, and your estate. Men will venture much for their lusts and for their sensuality; there must be a great deal of charge to feed this humour, to satisfy the pleasures of the flesh; it is costly to be an epicure. Worldliness wastes the spirits, racks the brain. For ambition, how many hazards do men run for their greatness in the world? how many men sacrifice their lives upon the point of honour, for revenge, and for a little vainglory! Now, if a man will take pains to go to hell, shall he not take pains to go to heaven? When men will be at such costs for lusts as to deny conscience and slight many of the comforts of the present world for lust's sake, shall we take no pains and exercise no self-denial for heaven?

[3.] If we be at a little labour it will not be in vain in the Lord: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' Whether you consider your vales or wages, your labour is not in vain. Your vales: Christ's servants have a great deal of comfort and sweetness: Prov. iii. 17, 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' And for the world to come there is a full and sure reward; therefore do not stick at a little pains; though it be difficult, yet remember it is for salvation.

4. Let us look to our own selves; how is it with us? are we in the way to hell or heaven? Let us look to our own standing; do we leave the boat to the stream? do we give up ourselves to the sway of our corrupt and carnal affections? or else do we row against the stream and current of flesh and blood? It is no easy matter to be saved. I do not ask now what will become of those that never minded salvation, that never busied their thoughts about it, but even in effect say, Let them take heaven that list; but I ask, what will become of those slothful perfunctory christians that count a little slight and formal religion enough, which is without any life, alacrity, and power? Will this do the deed? Such will fall short of heaven.

SERMON XIV.

And Jesus, looking upon them, saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.—MARK X. 27.

WE have seen the disciples' wonder returning. Christ, that is never wanting to his in their trouble and astonishment, graciously looketh upon them, and in words full of comfort giveth a solution of that which was such a riddle to them, 'And Jesus, looking upon them, saith,' &c. Here we have—

1. Christ's gesture, 'Jesus looked upon them.'

2. Christ's answer, by a distinction how it is impossible and how not. In the first part of the distinction there is a concession, 'That with men it is impossible.' In the second branch there is a correction, 'But not with God.' This latter branch is confirmed by a general reason, 'For with God all things are possible.' In this text three