

what they have done for Christ: 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungry?'

*Use.* To persuade us to continue in our christian course till we come to the end of the race. Some races are longer, some shorter; but the end of every man's race is the end of his life.

1. We that have gone so far in the way must hold out, though never so many difficulties and assaults: 'You did run well, who hindered you?' When you have gone so far in the way to heaven, do you begin to look behind you, as if you were about to change your mind? Have you fixed upon these hopes with so great reason and deliberation, and will you draw back and be slight in the pursuit?

2. Is the world and the flesh grown better, or God grown worse? Jer. ii. 5, 'Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?'

3. All former watching, striving, and praying is lost. The Nazarite was to begin again the days of his purification if he had defiled himself, Num. vi. 12; 2 John 8, 'Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward;' Gal. iii. 4, 'Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.'

[The doctor's sermon on the 15th verse being printed already among the discourses on peace and holiness,<sup>1</sup> the reader is referred thither. The sermon on the 16th verse never came to the publisher's hands.]

## SERMON XII.

*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample.—PHIL. iii. 17.*

IN this verse the apostle persuadeth the Philippians to agree in the imitation of his practice of forsaking all for Christ. There were differences among them; some were thus minded, and some otherwise minded. He would have them agree in one common rule, one common hope, and one common example, that they might avoid deceitful workers, whose walking was not so regular as to become a pattern to others, as in ver. 18. Therefore since all were not to be promiscuously imitated, they should follow the best, viz., himself who had taught them christianity, and those other servants of the Lord who hold on the same course and way of salvation as he did, and breathed out nothing but faith in Christ and holiness, 'Brethren, be ye followers together of me,' &c.

In which words the apostle propoundeth his own example, both at first and second hand.

1. At the first hand, in his own immediate practice, 'Be followers together of me.'

<sup>1</sup> See vol. ii. p. 56 of this edition.—ED.

2. At the second-hand, and in the rebound, as it was transmitted to them by the practice of others, 'And mark them that walk so, as ye have us for an ensample.'

1. For the first consideration, as his own practice was a pattern to them of sincere love to Christ. *Συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε*. The words may bear a double sense—

[1.] Thus do together with me; be followers of Christ as I am. Or—

[2.] Let not a few, but all of you together imitate me; which sense I prefer.

2. For the second consideration, 'Mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.' Where we have—

[1.] A description of the better sort amongst them, in opposition to the deceitful workers who did walk disorderly. If a man would imitate others, he should conform himself to the best, and not the worst of christians. Man is sequacious, inclined to do as others do. Now they should imitate them who were willing to suffer for Christ, rather than enemies to his cross.

[2.] The charge is *σκοπεῖτε*, 'Mark them.' In another epistle, Rom. xvi. 17, it is, 'Mark them which cause divisions and offences, and avoid them.' Here, mark these and imitate them.

Well, then, here is a double example propounded, Paul's and their fellow-christians'.

*Doct.* That it is the duty of christians to imitate those good examples which God hath set before them.

See this elsewhere: 1 Cor. iv. 16, 'Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me;' 1 Thes. i. 6, 'And ye became followers of us and of the Lord;' 1 Thes. ii. 14, 'For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.' So 2 Thes. iii. 7, 'For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us; for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;' and ver. 9, 'Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us;' Heb. xiii. 7, 'Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.' These and many other places show—(1.) That there are some to whom God hath given graces to make them holy and fit for our imitation; (2.) That he hath commanded us to consider them seriously, that we may imitate them, and follow them in holiness and patience, that our latter end may be like theirs. For the clearing this point, let me show you—

1. The several sorts of examples.
2. What is this imitation.
3. How far we are bound to imitate them.
4. Why we must imitate and follow them.

I. The several sorts of examples.

First distinction. There are the examples of the saints living in former ages, and the saints living in our times.

1. The saints living in former ages, whose faith and zeal and holiness is recommended to us in the faithful records of time, especially in the scriptures. We are often commanded to imitate them; as Heb. vi. 12; 'That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and

patience inherit the promises.' None went to heaven but they first met with occasions to try and express both their faith and patience. We must look for the like; they had faith, so must we; they had patience, we must be patient also if we would attain the happiness offered in the promises: Heb. xii. 1, 'Wherefore seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us.' The apostle had given us a spiritual chronicle in the former chapter, or a little book of martyrs, and then frameth his inference or practical deduction from that series of instances. Having such 'a cloud of witnesses;' he calleth them 'a cloud,' to show the number and multitude of these witnesses; for as a cloud is made up of a multitude of vapours gathered together and condensed into one body, so here there are many witnesses that concur in one testimony. So the expression is often used: Isa. lx. 8, 'Who are those that fly as a cloud, and as doves to the windows?' noting the multitude of converts. So Ezek. xxxviii. 7, 'They shall be as a cloud to cover the land.' Well, then, we are not solitary, nor is our condition singular. So James v. 10, 'Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering afflictions and patience.' They are examples of hard sufferings and great patience. We are not better than our fathers, and should not look for more privilege than the prophets. They have been cast into prisons and dungeons, and burnt and butchered, and sawn asunder, and shall we stick at a little sufferings? Surely, having such forerunners, we may go the more cheerfully. Now these examples should be regarded by us—

[1.] Because they are so many and various, and suited to persons of all degrees and ranks of men, and for all christian ends. In the word of God we have many examples on record fit for all persons to imitate. The prince in Josiah and Hezekiah; the counsellor in Hushai; the rich man in Abraham; the poor in the Shunamite; officers in court, in the eunuch of Candace; the captive in Daniel and the three children; the afflicted in Job; the banished in Joseph; the soldier in Cornelius; women in Sarah, 1 Peter iii. 6; the magistrate in Moses and Joshua or Nehemiah; ministers in the apostles of Jesus Christ, a zealous, self-denying company, who left their all to promote the gospel. And then of all graces, Abraham for faith, David for devotion, Job for patience, Timothy for temperance, Paul for diligence and activity in the Lord's work.

[2.] Because these show that there is nothing impossible in our duty, and nothing so difficult but hath been overcome, and may be overcome through Christ strengthening and enabling us. That which is done and hath been done may be done. Our duty is reconcilable with our frailty. The saints departed had the same nature with us, and we the same assistances and encouragements with them. They the same nature with us; flesh and blood as we are: James v. 17, 'Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are.' They had the same interests, relations, concernments, wants, weaknesses, doubts, fears; and we the same encouragements with them, the same cause, the same recompense of reward, the same God, the same Saviour; and did he not suffer as much for us as for them? and therefore we should follow them, and walk in their steps.

[3.] Their examples are a standing testimony to confirm by experience the truth and reality of our blessed hopes, therefore called 'a cloud of witnesses,' Heb. xii. 1. They all spake to future generations to believe constantly in God as they did, that we may receive the like reward. The scripture telleth us that every one that believeth 'hath put to his seal that God is true,' John iii. 33. Much more these eminent ones; they are an instance of God's fidelity to those that faithfully adhere to him and self-denyingly believe in him, and so they confirm our faith, and excite and quicken our hope and love.

(1.) It doth confirm our faith. Are the wisest and soberest that ever the world knew deceived? or were the comforts wherewith they were sustained in the most grievous sufferings fantastical impressions? They continually professed the certain knowledge of and comfort in the hopes of an unseen glory, and died in the Lord, Heb. xi. 13, commending their souls into the hands of Christ. And is not this to our satisfaction, that surely there is such an estate? And should not we believe to the saving of our souls? Heb. x. 30. That bringeth in the catalogue.

(2.) It doth excite and quicken our love and hope, or that desirous expectation of the promised glory which maketh us delightfully and patiently to continue in the love, service, and honour of God, that we may be where they are: Ps. lv. 6, 'Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest.' And may come to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 23. We are entered into that society now, and are companions with them in the faith and patience of the gospel, that at length we may be companions with them in heavenly glory.

2. The example of the saints now living; for God hath left us a continual succession of good examples. Every age hath its stars, or some that shine as lights in the midst of the crooked and perverse generation: Phil. ii. 15, 16, 'Holding forth the word of life.' We still have our examples of faith, and patience, and sobriety, and watchfulness, and self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness. And present examples are of great use; for though the ways of God be lovely in themselves, and worthy to be chosen, though few or none walk in them: Josh. xxiv. 15, 'Choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;' Ps. cxix. 126, 127, 'It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.' In the most degenerate times we should not slacken our zeal. Yet it is no small comfort and encouragement to have companions in the way to heaven. Woe to him that is left alone. The coals by lying together enkindle one another; and not we alone, but divers others, make the ways of God their choice and practice. Present examples add this above those that are past.

[1.] That they are in our eye. It is a saying of Seneca, that men live *non ad rationem sed ad similitudinem*, not by reason so much as custom and conformity to the practice of others; as beasts follow the drove, and consider not *qua eundum est, sed qua itur* not how all should walk,

but how others do walk. Certainly example hath a great force in evil, because it is before our eyes. There are two senses of learning—sight and hearing; and proportionably it is an encouragement in good to see others mortify those fleshly lusts which the greatest part of the world make it their business and work to please, and to rule their senses, appetites, and passions. Certainly it is a greater engagement and encouragement to us than barely to read of it and hear of it. We see *in facie Romuli*, in the very dregs of christianity, some can be self-denying, mortified, and heavenly. God expects we should profit by what we see, and go and do likewise; for these holy ones were raised up for this very purpose, to instruct the present age and reprove the present age. They are ‘the light of the world and the salt of the earth;’ Mat. v. 13, 14, to season and direct the world, if it grow unsavoury and noisome.

[2.] There is a greater provocation in the examples of the living; there is direction and confirmation in the examples of the saints departed, but more of excitement and provocation in the examples of the saints living: 2 Cor. ix. 2, ‘Your zeal hath provoked many;’ and Heb. x. 24, ‘Let us consider one another, to provoke to love and good works.’ There is *ἀγαθὴ ἐπίς*, a holy contention or emulation who shall most excel in godliness. When others are forgetful, negligent, cold, backward, we provoke them by the light of a heavenly conversation, which shineth into their consciences, and we stir them up to the love of the best things.

[3.] These are yet in the way, and not yet past the pikes, and so partly can the better help and pity us, as being within the reach of our commerce: ‘Remember them that are in adversity, as being yourselves also in the body,’ Heb. xiii. 3. We have the examples of the saints departed, but not their counsel. And partly, besides, they are yet filling up the measure of their hardships and conflicts: 1 Peter v. 9, ‘Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.’ They are under like trials; we are not dealt with more hardly than they; and so engage us to more patience.

Second distinction. There are the examples of the guides and pastors, and of ordinary and private christians.

1. Ministers are more bound to be examples to the flock. 1 Peter v. 3, ‘Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.’ To have such a conversation as may be worthy their imitation; and their example is more recommended to us: ‘I have begotten you to God, therefore be ye followers of me;’ 1 Cor. iv. 15, 16; Heb. xiii. 7, ‘Who have spoken unto you the word of the Lord, whose faith follow.’

2. Private christians. Not only public eminent persons, such as apostles or pastors, and public teachers, but those in a private sphere. They might have been discouraged if only the example of an apostle or the more eminent christians had been propounded; therefore those of a weaker sort are propounded also, who followed his example, who walked so as they had him for an example. The apostle giveth them his example at second-hand, to show that people of their rank and degree might attain this self-denial.

II. What is this imitation or following? It implieth three things

—(1.) *Factum* ; (2.) *Alieni facti expressio* ; (3.) *Studium et propositum imitandi*.

1. There must be *factum*, an action. To imitate is not to commemorate, but to walk in the steps of those whom we pretend to imitate ; not to admire and commend, but to do likewise. The Jews commended Abraham, and stood much upon the honour of Abraham. Christ tells them, ' If ye were Abraham's seed, ye would do the works of Abraham,' John viii. 39 ; as the pharisees, that honoured the dead prophets but persecuted the living, did not imitate the prophets, but their ancestors that persecuted them.

2. *Alieni facti expressio*. There must be not only an action, or something done, but a correspondent action, or a conformity to the example, both for matter and manner. We must walk as they walk, do such actions with a like mind. As John Baptist is said to ' go before Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah,' Luke i. 17, with the same affections of zeal and courage against sin.

3. *Studium et propositum imitandi*, a purpose and endeavour of imitating. Casually a man may fall on some things which another doeth, but then we propound them as a pattern when we fit and frame ourselves to be like him or them whom we imitate. Christ must be imitated principally ; secondarily, his choice servants, which is done when we study to express their graces to the life ; *σκοπεῖτε*, in the text, ' Mark them,' and so resemble them for zeal, faith, patience, and meekness. Well, then, here is doing, and doing that which others do, with an endeavour to resemble them. Thus should we look to any one that hath any good thing in him worthy of imitation ; as those that delight in a garden, if they hear others have any choice flowers, they will be sure to get a slip or a root, that they may also have somewhat of the kind ; the rather because the Spirit worketh uniformly in all the saints.

III. How far we must imitate them.

1. Not in evil things ; for the best have their blemishes, and the saints are not *mensura mensurans*, the rule measuring, but *mensura mensurata*, the copy, the instance, not the standard. Therefore the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xi. 1, ' Be ye followers of me, as also I am of Christ.' No farther than they agree with the original pattern. You may observe in the saints departed, whose memory is continued to us in scripture, that some of their practices were sinful, wherein they bewray human infirmity ; as we read of Noah's drunkenness by the power and strength of wine ; Lot's incest by surprise ; Abraham's dissembling about Sarah, as not being his wife ; Jacob's deceit in getting the blessing ; Joseph's swearing by the life of Pharaoh ; David's sin in the matter of Uriah ; Peter's denial of Christ ; Paul apt to be exalted, 2 Cor. xii. 7. In these things the saints are represented as spectacles of natural frailty, written for our caution, not imitation, set up as rocks that we may avoid them.

2. There are exempted cases, or some things done by special dispensation ; as Abraham's offering Isaac at God's particular command, Gen. xxii. 10 ; the Israelites spoiling the Egyptians, Exod. xii. 35 ; Phineas's slaying the adulterer, Num. xxv. 27 ; Elias's calling for fire from heaven, 2 Kings i. 10. So infallible gifts and the universal charge of all the churches were peculiar to the apostles. When the

disciples would imitate Elias, Luke ix. 54, 55, Christ saith to them, 'Ye know not what spirit ye are of.' This proposal of yours is an abuse of that extraordinary power which Elijah had, and contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and that meekness which should be expressed by christians. So that in things peculiar to their persons and dispensation we should not imitate them, for so we have not like warrant.

IV. Why we must imitate the good examples God hath set before us.

1. Because it is a great part of the communion of saints to profit by one another's graces, or to drive on a joint trade for heaven, wherein they may be mutually helpful to one another: Rom. i. 12, 'That I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.' We ourselves should provoke and encourage by our example and experience, and should be excited and encouraged by their experience and example, to be more obedient to God, and patiently and comfortably to wait for his salvation. Good is diffusive, and seeketh to propagate itself, as fire turneth all about it into fire. Christian society was appointed for this end and purpose. Temporal society tendeth much to the good of persons civilly associated; but spiritual society, or the communion of saints, is far more excellent and beneficial, that the good and holy may live together, to strengthen and quicken each other by their soundness in the faith, diligence in holy practice, which is a great advantage to poor souls seeking salvation. We are neither born, nor born again for ourselves, but that in several communities and societies we may edify one another in love.

2. It is one end of these graces; for God hath bestowed them, not only for the benefit of those that have them, but also for the sake of others, that by their example they might be gained, and quickened, and awakened: Phil. i. 11, 'Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus to the glory and praise of God.' We have not grace only that we may be saved, but grace that God may be glorified. Many make a hard shift to get to heaven, and may have grace enough for their own salvation, yet have not grace enough for the honour and glory of God in the world. But when it is so, and God hath raised up some rare choice spirits, surely this should be regarded, or an advantage to gain upon the world is neglected. Noah was raised up in his age to condemn the world, Heb. xi. 7, that is, of their sensuality, and laziness, and contempt of God's warnings; and in every age God raiseth up some to quicken the rest. Now this is lost unless we are alarmed and awakened thereby: Mat. v. 16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' The graces of the saints serve not only to please God, but to honour God thereby. They are as light that shineth to others, that God may be glorified in their conversion and edification: 1 Peter ii. 12, 'Having your conversation honest among the gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation;' that is, when it shall please him to visit them with his saving grace. Now if this end be neglected, one means of saving grace is received in vain: 1 Thes. i. 7, 'So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.'

3. Because they show us the way to heaven more clearly and compendiously. *Longum iter per præcepta, breve per exempla*—The way is long by precepts, but short by examples. Men can sooner understand an example than they can understand a rule. We see how religion is to be acted and carried on. The ignorant understand it by practice rather than description; and therefore Christ would not only give us a rule, but an example how we should walk in his steps. There are many disputes about the rule and doctrine, but Christ's example is obvious to every considering eye. So by proportion the example of the saints; it is not so exact as the example of Christ, but for the main they are such in the world as he was in the world; and therefore their example is instruction, so far as the rule is exemplified thereby. The apostle saith that many that are not won by the word may be moved by the example of those that profess it, 1 Peter iii. 1. In practice, they see the beauty and usefulness of religion; in the rule it is but in notion and idea. The best discourses will not reclaim them when example may reclaim them. Religion put into act is a less disputable thing than religion in the theory. The beauty, use, and excellency of it is seen in practice. Many suspect a rule when strangely surprised by practice. It affects their senses, and by their senses, their minds and hearts.

4. In the example of others we have encouragement as well as instruction. Indeed, this is the great use of examples; they do not bind so absolutely, as encourage, because men are not infallible or impeccable. We may be mistaken if we take them as a rule, but yet when the rule is clear they are a great encouragement. Though they do not prove a duty so surely, or that all is commanded which is practised by them, yet they are an encouragement, as proving that those duties required are not only possible but comfortable. We have nothing to do but what many thousands have done before us: Jer. vi. 16, 'Stand upon the ways and see, and ask for the good old paths, where is the good way? and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls.' And there is nothing to suffer but what they have suffered: 1 Peter v. 9, 'Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world;' 1 Cor. x. 13, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.' We want no grace, help, or comfort which they had; we seek and hope for the same glory which they possess: Heb. vi. 12, 'That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' If we were now to begin before the way were smoothed, it were more discouraging; but the ice is broken, the briars and thorns are cut down, the way to heaven is not untrodden. Others have ventured on the promise of the Mediator, why not we?

*Use 1.* To show us that good examples must be given and taken.

1. Given, and how exemplary we should be to others. To this end—

[1.] Consider what reverence we owe to weak christians, that we may not set them an ill copy. The poet could say, *Maxima debetur puero reverentia*—We owe more reverence to a child than a man. His meaning is, it is dangerous to let them be privy and conscions to any lightness of ours, lest they adopt it into their manners. Young be-



ginners in religion are apt to take offence, and it is a dangerous thing to lay stumbling-blocks in the way of young converts. Gehazi's crime is mainly aggravated upon this account : 2 Kings v. 26, 'Is this a time to receive money and garments?' A Syrian nobleman had newly experience of the goodness of the God of Israel, which was a means to gain him ; the master had refused a reward, and should the servant with a lie receive it, and prejudice Naaman against the true religion which he had newly begun to like?

[2.] We are to account for those sins we cause or draw others to fall into. It is often repeated that Jeroboam the son of Nebat caused Israel to sin by his command and example ; his idolatry outlived him. When Jehu destroyed the idolatry of the house of Ahab, or the worship of Baal, yet he kept up the idolatry of the house of Jeroboam, or the calves of Dan and Bethel. And so a man may sin after he is dead. His example surviveth him ; therefore, that none of us may be involved in more sins than his own, we had need be cautious. *Ab alienis parce servo tuo*, Ps. xix. 13. It is a mistake ; they read *zarim* for *zedim* ; but it bears a good sense. It is worthy the care of every good man not to 'be partaker of other men's sins,' 1 Tim. v. 22. What is done by our example will redound to our account. We were first in the transgression ; and then what is done by others is but a copy and transcript of our practice.

[3.] How severe God is upon his scandalous children. Though he may pardon their faults as to eternal punishment, yet they smart for it in the world : 1 Sam. xii. 14, 'Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme.' That sin cost David dear, because he had made others judge ill of the ways of God. His child died, his daughter was ravished, his son Amnon slain in his drunkenness ; Absalom driveth him from his palace royal ; his subjects deserted him ; his wives and concubines were ravished ; he forced to go weeping up and down, and forced to shift for his life. He was foretold these should be the effects of his sin, 2 Sam. xii. 10-12. There is no dallying with God ; though our eternal estate should be secured, our pilgrimage may be made very uncomfortable.

[4.] The office God hath imposed upon his people ; they are to show forth his praises, or his virtues, to the world, 1 Peter ii. 9, chosen out from the rest of mankind for that purpose, to be a mirror of divine virtues, or to be his image and representation to the world, that he is good, wise, and powerful ; and therefore we are to take heed what representations we make of God. By our sinfulness we blaspheme his goodness ; by our folly, his wisdom ; by our weakness, his power. So again, we are called his 'witnesses ;' Isa. xliii. 10, 'Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord.' They are to witness for God to the world, as having experience of his providence and of fulfilling of promises. We are to give a testimony for God to the prejudiced world of the reality of our hopes, and the excellency of our religion, and that purity and strictness which is necessary to everlasting happiness. If we discredit Christ and his profession, we are not witnesses for him, but against him : Isa. xlv. 8, 'Ye are my witnesses ; is there any god besides me?' Now, how do you convince, reprove, and convert the world? The best testimony given for God is by deeds rather than words ; by

holy example, and keeping his commandments, than by a loose profession, and empty complimentary respect.

[5.] It is a greater honour for us to be examples and precedents unto others, than to take example from others and be followers of them: 1 Thes. i. 7, 'Ye became examples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia.' To be a ringleader in evil is more damnable and evil than to be a follower; so to be the first beginner of any good is most commendable and beneficial: Eph. i. 12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ.' Difference of heavenly rewards are propounded for the same purpose. The disciple hath a disciple's reward, and a prophet a prophet's reward. The least measure of sound grace is saving; but he that is allowedly content with a little grace hath none at all.

2. If you would prove a motive and encouragement to others, let us take good example.

[1.] It is a shame to come short of those who are upon the same level with us, have the same rule that we have, the same hopes, the same spirit of Christ with we, to heal, and cure, and strengthen them. 'I profited,' saith the apostle, 'above many of my equals in the Jewish religion,' Gal. i. 14. And should we not do so in the christian? Surely what we do in religion we should not do negligently and lazily, but should advance and grow in religion, both as to knowledge and practice, and labour to be so far from coming short of our equals for time, age, and means, that we should rather outstrip them. Still our business is to excel.

[2.] There is none but may learn somewhat from others; for every child of God hath his distinct excellency, either as to knowledge, or judgment, or government of passions, or affections, or holy conference, for they have their peculiar gift to the use of edifying. Now their graces are ours, and ours are theirs, and thereby excite and quicken one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, 1 Peter iv. 12. All gifts or graces we have not as absolute owners, but as dispensers and stewards, that these various graces may make us helpful one to another, and we may learn from one another.

[3.] You lose the benefit of God's dispensation, who hath given us good examples, and set them before our eyes for this very end, that we may do as they do; and we are accountable for examples, as well as for other helps and means of grace. For examples of evil and punishment: Dan. v. 22, 'And thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knowest all this,' viz., God's punishment on his father for his pride. So examples of good: Mat. xii. 42. 'The queen of the south shall rise in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold a greater than Solomon is here.' The examples of such as have taken pains to get knowledge shall be made use of to aggravate their sins to deeper judgment, who do not make use of it to increase their faith and diligence. So also Dionysius and Damaris aggravated the unbelief of the Athenians, Acts xvii. 34. There want not self-denying christians in every age to condemn the laziness of the rest: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen, prepared an ark, by which he condemned the world.'

*Use 2.* To show us how cautious we should be that we be not infected by bad examples. Example is of great force either way.

Here I shall show you what examples are most forcible to draw us from God and goodness.

1. The examples of those who are near to us in kindred; as Ruth, chap. i. 15, 'And she said, Behold, thy sister is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law.' She spake this to try her, it being a great temptation to do as kindred. Leah gave Zilpah her maid to Jacob to wife, as Rachel had done, and Bilhah before, Gen. xxx. 9. So Lot's younger daughter committed incest with her father by the example of her elder sister, Gen. xix. 31, 32.

2. Who are gracious with us in friendship; as the disciples murmured against the woman that brought the box of spikenard, by the example of Judas: Mat. xxvi. 8, 'When the disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?' Compare John xii. 4, 5, 'Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot,' &c. One murmurer may infect a whole company, as Judas doth involve the other disciples in his fault: Num. xi. 4, 'And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?' They begun, and the other follow.

3. Who are great over us in power; we tread after their track: as the princes and nobles imitated David's liberality: 1 Chron. xxix. 6-8, 'Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king's work, offered willingly, and gave, for the service of the house of God, of gold, five thousand talents, and ten thousand talents of silver, and eighteen thousand talents of brass, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found, gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord.' And Hezekiah's piety: 2 Chron. xxx. 24, 'For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks, and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks, and ten thousand sheep.' And the king of Nineveh's devotion: Jonah iii. 5, 6, 10, 'And the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least: for word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he rose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.'

4. The examples of men eminent, learned, and gracious, are very powerful: Gal. ii. 13, 'And the other Jews dissembled likewise, inso-much that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.' This is of great force, and prevaieth not only over the weak, but over the strong also. Such as are endowed with grace and parts will be corrupted by it. We do not so narrowly examine their actions; all is taken for current that they do. A plausible error of theirs is not like a duel, but a war.

5. When examples are general and universal, an evil thing is as it were authorised. Public example is like an inundation, it carries all before it: Exod. xxiii. 2, 'Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.' Therefore we should follow Micaiah's resolution; when the messengers

entreated him to comply with the rest of the prophets in his advice to the king, he replied, 'As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak,' 1 Kings xxii. 13, 14.

Helps to make us exemplary.

[1.] Love to God, or zeal for his glory: Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.'

[2.] Love to the brethren's souls: 1 John ii. 10, 'He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.'

[3.] A sincere seriousness in our profession: Phil. i. 10, 'That ye may approve the things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.'

[4.] Watchfulness: 2 Cor. vi. 3, 'Giving no offence in anything;' 1 Cor. x. 32, 'Give no offence to Jew, nor gentile, nor to the church of God;' Luke xvii. 3, 'Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.'

[5.] Mortify your dearest lusts, deny and resist the pleasures of sense. Mat. v. 9; as Mahomet cut off the head of beautiful Irene, who was an occasion to draw him from public affairs, to the offence of his bassas. Carry a severe hand over all those affections which carry you to earthly things.

[6.] A heart in heaven, and a way with the wise above. The end shineth to us in all our actions.

### SERMON XIII.

*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.—PHIL. iii. 18.*

HERE is the reason given why they should be cautious whose example they followed, because there were crept into the church a licentious sort of christians, who framed and accommodated their principles and practices to the ease and indulgence of the flesh.

In the words there is—(1.) An introduction; (2.) The character and brand which he puts on these false teachers.

I. In the introduction three things are asserted—

1. The multitude of these deceitful workers, 'Many walk.'

2. His frequent giving warning of this pest formerly, 'Of whom I have told you often.'

3. His compassionate way of mentioning them for the present, 'And now tell you even weeping.'

1. The multitude of them. Error fretteth like a gangrene; and God suffereth seducers to multiply in a church, partly to punish the small respect that hath been given to his truth: 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 'With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved: and for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that