

SERMON UPON PROVERBS VI. 6-8.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.—PROV. vi. 6-8.

MAN being fallen from God, and the primitive perfection of his nature, may be taught his duty by the meanest creatures; therefore in scripture we are often referred to the beasts of the field and fowls of the air. As, for instance, to cure our ingratitude, the prophet bids us consider the beasts: Isa. i. 3, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' And to cure our distrust, Christ sends us to the ravens: Luke xii. 24, 'Consider the ravens: for they neither sow, nor reap; which neither have storehouse, nor barns; yet God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls.' And to cure our insensibility and improvidence in the season of action, and to put us on using fit remedies, we are sent to the stork and crane: Jer. viii. 7, 'The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.' These creatures know the time of coming and going, but man is stupid and senseless. Now here we are sent to school to a far more inferior creature, the ant or pismire. Certainly there is a great deal of morality in the bosom of nature, if we had the skill to find it out. There are in most of the creatures shadows both of virtues and vices; and if I may speak my mind, these are the true layman's books, and the images from whence we may learn understanding and the knowledge of God.

Here, to shame him, the sluggard is sent to the ant—'Go to the ant, thou sluggard,' &c.

In which words we have—(1.) The learner, the sluggard. (2.) The teacher, the ant. (3.) The manner of address directed, 'Go, consider her ways, and be wise. (4.) The lesson to be learned, diligence and labour, or providence and foresight. Diligence and labour, in that 'she provideth her meat, and gathereth her food.' And providence and foresight, that this is done in 'harvest and summer;' in the time when it is to be had, when there is much grain spilt or shed. (5.) The enforcement of this lesson; that the ant doth this though she hath 'no guide, overseer, and ruler.'

1. The scholar or learner is the sluggard, who is averse and back-

ward to his necessary duty, both in temporals and spirituals; and so sins not only against the law of God, but his own nature; for a living soul was never given us to be idle. Nature made our faculties for use. All the world about us is in action; the sun runneth his course, the waters flow for our use and benefit, the winds blow, the earth bringeth forth, cattle labour for us; but the sluggard is the shame of the creation; every creature is a witness against him to condemn his sloth. But here the slothful are sent to the ant to learn to labour, and make provision for futurity. And thus, to correct our stupidity and folly, God sendeth us to the least of the dumb and unreasonable creatures.

2. The teacher is the ant, a sedulous and sagacious creature. Wonders are spoken of them in writers, which I list not to trouble you with; as what skill they show in framing their cells, that they may not be drowned by wet; what order and discipline they use among themselves; what diligence they use to get provision, not only by day, but by night, as *Ælian* tells us. In the full moons of summer and harvest they rest not. What sagacity they have in biting off the ends of the corn, that it may not grow; how they perish not, but live in the wettest and coldest winter. The grasshopper, that singeth away the summer, dieth whilst they supply themselves out of the store which they have gathered by their industry. To dilate on these things at large would savour more of the natural historian than the divine.

3. The direction, or the manner of address; in three things—(1.) Go; (2.) Consider her ways; (3.) Be wise.

[1.] For the first, 'Go;' as their fashion was to go to their doctors and teachers: 1 Kings xiv. 3, 'Go to the prophet, and he shall tell thee what shall become of the child.' In those days the party, if capable, did not send for the prophet, but went to him. So here, 'Go to the ant;' to shame the sluggard, as if he needed to perform that office to the ant which they showed to their eminent prophets. But when they come, what must they do?

[2.] 'Consider her ways.' This doctor teacheth not by words, but by example; and therefore the sluggard is not bidden to hear, but to see, and consider her ways; that is, see the great diligence of this creature, and their marvellous order in passing to and fro; not crossing one another, but if any be overlaboured, helping them, as your eye will easily inform you.

[3.] 'Be wise.' Be not a spectator only, but an improver; not more learned, or able to discourse of these things, but more wise, to cure idleness and improvidence.

4. The lesson to be learned; which is—(1.) Labour; and (2.) Foresight.

[1.] Labour. In the hottest times they are most busy, and endure the trouble of it. Their industry is a pattern to us.

[2.] Their foresight. They do this in the 'summer and harvest.' They suffer not the opportunity to pass. As we are to labour if we would attain eternal life (Acts xxvi. 7, 'Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come'), so we are also to redeem the season: Eph. v. 16, 'Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.' Means, and mercies, and life itself, lie upon uncertainties.

5. The amplification of this provident industry of the ant; and so it enforceth the lesson, 'Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler;' that is, the ant doth her duty by instinct, not as compelled thereunto by any that have power to check and control her. Naturalists tell us that the bees are a feminine monarchy, but the ants a democracy and commonwealth, where every one's natural industry prompts him to seek his own good, and the good of the whole.

But to the text. Three words are used; she hath no 'guide' to go before her and show her what to do; no 'overseer' to observe whether she doth it or no; no 'ruler' to punish her for idleness or miscarriage; yet she labours. All this is spoken to aggravate the sluggish improvidence of man. We have a guide, the Lord, who 'hath showed us what is good,' Micah vi. 8. We have an inspector; God is our witness as well as our guide: Prov. xv. 3, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' We have a lord and ruler, to whom we must give an account: Rom. xiv. 12, 'Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.' And shall we be idle and neglect our duty?

From the whole you see—

1. The argument is *a minore ad majus*, from the less to the greater, to shame us. If the creatures that want reason do for their own preservation with such diligence make preparation for time to come, how much more inexcusable are we, who are endowed with reason, and can foresee the end, and chose the means, bound to provide for the future, and forecast and foresee for those things that belong to our future happiness? And if we make not use of it to that end, we are highly culpable before God.

2. It is bound the more upon us, because this instinct of nature which prompts them to this is not their providence, but God's, who is the Creator of nature, and hath put this disposition into them. Now, hath not God put such a disposition and inclination into us much more? Surely man is made a nobler creature than the beasts, and is more fitted to his use and end; for it is said, Job xxxv. 11, 'Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.' Beasts have instinct, but men have the gift of reason and conscience bestowed upon them, and do not only understand their own duty, but may make wise collections from what God hath put into other beings.

3. That this is binding upon us, both as to the body and soul; for we consist of both, and must make provision for the welfare of both.

[1.] That we should provide for our bodily welfare will be easily granted, and is agreeable enough with the context, which speaketh of the inconveniency of asking, and borrowing, and engaging others in suretyship; and that we should rather by our diligence and providence live by our callings, that we may not need to borrow. This application maketh the context run on smoothly. Now though it may be presumed that in these things wherein common reason and sense inviteth men to this diligence and providence, all should have a quick and tender ear, yet some idle drones there are who live without a calling, and have nothing whereby to support themselves; who are not only worse than the ant, that by labour layeth up for the time of want, but worse than

the grasshopper, that have scarce a merry life for the present, but involve themselves and their friends in manifold inconveniences, living by borrowing when they have nothing to pay, which is but a specious kind of theft and robbery. Or, if they can support themselves for the present, tempt God to forsake them in their age, when they do not employ themselves as instruments of his providence, for their own private or the public good. They that be busy in an honest calling may have to supply their own necessities, and to give to him that needeth : Eph. iv. 28, 'Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.' By stealing is meant not only downright theft, but all those fraudulent and deceitful ways whereby a man doth wrong his neighbour in his outward estate. As a remedy, he prescribeth diligence in some good and honest calling, and then he may expect God's blessing, that he will give him a competency, not only to support him in his necessities, but also to enable him to relieve others. But when men will not labour, they are cast upon temptations to use sinful shifts to keep them in their straits. Therefore it is the Lord's will that every one should betake himself to some lawful calling and employment, and serve God therein with a good conscience; for God usually blesseth this conscientious diligence with such a measure of success, that they have wherewith to sustain themselves and be helpful to others. Whereas others cannot trust in God who neglect to use the means, for he never undertook to provide for us in our sins, or that laziness, carelessness, idleness, luxury, and neglect of our affairs should not be our ruin, for then his providence would run contrary to his word: 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the diligent hand maketh rich,' Prov. x. 4; and ver. 22, 'The blessing of the Lord maketh rich: and he addeth no sorrow with it;' implying that God's blessing goeth with man's industry. So that though our great business be to press men to look after eternal life, yet as idleness is a sin, and a great part of sensuality, and disposeth for other sins, we need to read the lecture of the ant to many men to awaken them out of their sluggishness, and indulgence to the ease of the flesh in temporal affairs, that they neither live without a calling, nor without industrious diligence in their calling; that they may not tempt God's providence to provide for them, when they take no course to live by; nor become drones and unprofitable burdens of the earth, and so prove a clog and disgrace to religion, and lie also open as a prey to Satan; for the devil employeth them whom he findeth not employed by God, or who refuse to be employed by him; and so they prove a reproach to providence by their want, and a disgrace to religion by their carnal shifts, lies, and devices.

[2.] That we should provide for our soul's welfare, the lesson of the ant is also useful to us; for if diligence and providence be recommended as necessary for christians, surely the best and greatest works call for most of our care: Prov. iv. 7, 'Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.' And those things which are of most absolute necessity, which must be done or we are undone for ever, must be despatched with the greatest earnestness and diligence: Luke x. 42, 'One thing is needful.' And besides, for those that are of most profit, that conduce to eternal life, and bring

a blessing upon our present affairs, these are to be most minded in their season and opportunity. Such are spiritual affairs: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God.' Therefore the contemplation of the ant concerneth these affairs. If we must 'consider her ways, and be wise,' surely we should mind these things; for the best wisdom is to be wise to salvation. And this doth chiefly become christians; for God that giveth instinct to the creatures, and reason to all men, hath given faith to those that live in the church: 1 John v. 20, 'He hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.' The knowledge of the true God directeth us to eternal life as our happiness. So that this life is our opportunity, our summer and harvest as to the means, the time of action, but hereafter is the time of retribution and reward. Therefore man, being born to labour, and having not only reason to guide him, but faith, and being to give an account of what he hath done in the body, he is now, while means and mercies last, to provide for the world to come. Therefore 'go to the ant, thou sluggard.' Thou careless christian, consider the manner and course of life of this poor creature, how vigilant, careful, and diligent she is in providing for the time to come, and do something proportionably for thy great hopes.

Doct. That serious diligence is required of christians in improving the present season in order to eternal life.

1. There is much work required of a christian. Christianity is not a loitering profession, but is always represented to us as a laborious thing: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;' John vi. 27, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life;' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.'

[1.] There is much diligence required to get into a state of grace: Luke xiii. 24, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for I say unto you, many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able.' Therefore, if we are yet unconverted, we are to bestir ourselves, and use all means that we may not come short of converting grace. If we miss it, it is long of ourselves; we forfeit it by our negligence and carelessness.

[2.] There is much diligence required to keep ourselves in a station of grace. There are many soul-endangering sins which we are apt to indulge; therefore David saw need to beg, Ps. cxix. 133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me;' and the apostle warneth converted christians, Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.' And there are many duties required to which we are backward and averse, at least remiss and cold; therefore we need to be exhorted, Rom. xii. 11, 'Not to be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' We cannot be zealous enough in our pursuit after eternal happiness. If it were about riches and honours, a cold desire and dull pursuit were not amiss; but about God, and Christ, and heaven, coldness is a contempt.

[3.] There is much diligence required to get grace evidenced: 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,' 2 Peter i. 10. Providing comfort against the hour of death: 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Where-

fore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.'

[4.] There is much diligence required to keep up assurance, as well as to get it. It is gotten with diligence, and kept with watchfulness: Heb. vi. 11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.' So far as we abate in our qualification, so far doth our assurance abate. Well, then, you see from first to last that there is much work required of a christian.

2. That the opportunity of doing this work is confined to this life; and when that is at an end, it presently ceaseth. There is no mending of errors in the other world. Now is the season, and therefore we should speedily, and without delay, set about our work: Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.' There is a time of finding, which, when it cometh to an end, all opportunity is lost. The Father's season is while he waiteth; the Son's season while he offereth grace; the Holy Ghost's season while he stirreth the waters. So, on the contrary, Luke xix. 42, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.' Men know not their day and time, and so show themselves more silly and brutish than the ant. A child of God is wise in time, and the sensual and brutish worldling is wise too late; when he is in the other world, then he wisheth that he had minded God, his soul, and heaven more. What will it profit us to think of working when it is too late to work, and we are *in termino*, in our final estate?

3. We have a guide, overseer, and ruler, to whom we must render an account of what we do, which is denied to the ant.

[1.] We have a guide. Our work is such as our Creator expects from us. Surely God made not such a creature as man for nothing. He sent us into the world, and hath appointed us our business, which we are to do here; as our Lord telleth us, John vi. 38, 'I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.' So none of us come into the world to live to ourselves, but to God; not to do our own will, but to finish his work; to love, serve, glorify, and obey him. Many live in the world they know not why, and they go out of the world they know not whither.

[2.] We have an inspector or overseer, who observeth how we spend our time, and what we are continually doing: Ps. cxix. 168, 'I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies; for all thy ways are before me.' God seeth what we do daily: he observeth with what posture of heart we rise in the morning, and converse all day, and go to bed at night.

[3.] We have a ruler that will call us to an account if we neglect our duty to him, and that provision that we should make for eternity. Unless we be found of him in peace, and without spot and blameless, we cannot enter into his kingdom; for 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Every man's qualification must be judged, and a strict inquiry made into our ways, what we have done in the body, whether good or evil: 2 Cor. v. 10, 'For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' Now seeing we know these things, or look for these things, what preparation

should we make that we may be accepted in the judgment, when we are to give an account of ourselves to our supreme Lord ?

Use 1. To press us to mind our work in this our day.

1. This life is our opportunity, and when that is over, there is no more working ; no praying, nor hearing, nor glorifying God upon earth : John ix. 4, 'Therefore we must double our diligence before all opportunity be lost. It must go with you for ever as you behave yourselves now.'

2. Consider how swiftly time passeth away, and we know not how soon it may have an end. The present life is always *in fluxu*, in motion ; like a stream or current, that runneth as fast from us as it cometh to us. That part which is past is, as it were, resigned up to death already ; that which is to come is not yet ours, nor can we make any sure reckoning of it ; that which we count present is usually divided between us and death. It wasteth as we are writing, thinking, speaking, or doing anything. So that we die as fast as we live : Job ix. 25, 26, 'Now are my days swifter than a post ; they flee away, they see no good : they are passed away as the swift ships, as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.' He sets forth the passing of time by a post on land, who is to make quick despatch ; and by a ship under sail before the wind in the water, and by an eagle in the air. Thus is set forth the fugacity of man's life. Now should any of this time be lost ?

3. We have lost much time already : 1 Peter iv. 3, 'For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we lived in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.' We lost much time in childhood, when we were not in a capacity to express any act of love and thankfulness to God ; much in youth, when we followed after vain pleasures ; and in our riper age, we are too careless and mindless of eternity. Now as travellers that set forth later ride the faster, so should we double our diligence, and be more hard at work for God.

4. Consider how comfortable it will be when we die that we have made preparation, known our season, done the things which God hath given us in charge, thought of this hour, and made provision for it before it come upon us. This was our Lord's plea : John xvii. 4, 'I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.' This was Hezekiah's prayer : Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'And he said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' This was Paul's confidence : 2 Tim. iv. 6-8, 'For I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day ; and not unto me only, but to all that love his appearing.' Now we should be able to comfort ourselves in like manner. The remembrance of a diligent, well-spent life will be a great cordial to us in such an hour.

5. After death we shall have the fruit and benefit of it : Rev. xiv. 13, 'Their works follow them ;' that is the reward of their works. They

enjoy the comfort and benefit of whatever they have done and suffered for Christ; in another world, they are fully satisfied.

Use 2. Is by way of inquiry.

1. To inquire what should be the reason why men should be so silly and neglectful, when they have such great things in view and pursuit, and do no more in order to the obtaining of them, which concerneth not only the carnal world, who wholly neglect these things, but also the children of God, who are so cold in them. You see sense teacheth the ants, and reason should teach men, and grace inclines the saints, but yet they are slight and overly.

The reasons are these—

[1.] They forget or consider not what God is, or how great and good a master they serve; for if they did, they would earnestly address themselves to serve and please him. How great is he! Poor, sorry service is a contempt of his majesty: Mal. i. 14, ‘Cursed be the deceiver that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts.’ So also how good is he! Who hath done so much for them: Col. i. 10, ‘That ye walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing;’ 1 Thes. ii. 12, ‘That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory.’ And he will do more: Heb. xi. 6, ‘He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’ These are the considerations that may serve to cure our neglect, and show we can never do enough for God; surely never too much for him.

[2.] They do not consider the end and consequence of their work. Eternity should quicken and put life into the dullest creatures. It is hell you are avoiding, heaven that you are seeking after: Prov. xv. 24, ‘The way of life is above to the wise, that they may depart from hell beneath.’ Now in the case of heaven and hell, flight and speed is always necessary, or the most serious and earnest diligence that we can use: Mat. iii. 7, ‘Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’ Heb. vi. 18, ‘Who have fled for refuge to take hold of the hope set before them.’ Now it is not a wet winter that we provide against, but everlasting torments.

[3.] They do not count negligence and slothfulness so great and so dangerous an evil. If they do not oppose God, or break out into open sin, they think no great harm will come of it; but, Heb. ii. 3, ‘How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.’ Oh, there are millions in hell lamenting their carelessness! And the great fault of the world is to make light of those things: Mat. xxii. 5, ‘And they made light of it;’ and Mat. xxv. 30, ‘Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ How many poor creatures knock and cry when it is in vain. They neglected their season, got not oil in their lamps while it may be had. When their lamps should have been burning, their oil was to buy; and so they perish for ever.

[4.] They are diverted by worldly business, providing for the bodily life. They are too much like ants in one thing; all their care is what they shall eat and drink, and how they may live in pomp, and ease, and honour; and then by the cares of this world and voluptuous living, ‘they bring forth no fruit to perfection,’ Luke viii. 14. They have

some religion, but not such as is carried on in the way of sincere and serious diligence.

[5.] There is not a sound belief of the world to come. When the apostle presseth to diligence, 2 Peter i. 5, 'And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue,' &c. ; and ver. 10, 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure ; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall ;' he urgeth this argument, ver. 16, 'For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ;' implying that men will see a reason for their diligence if they have a sound persuasion of the truth of religion ; and if we do not with zeal and constancy seek to add to faith virtue, and to make our calling and election sure, to enter abundantly into the kingdom of heaven, we dishonour the gospel, as if it were but a fable. Sense teacheth the creatures to shun misery and seek their happiness, and reason doth much more teach man, who can foresee the good and evil to come ; but where the good lieth in the other world, there faith must interpose. Now if faith be either none or weak, so will our endeavours and pursuits be. Most men have but a weak persuasion of the world to come, and the truth of eternal life, and therefore their endeavours are so overly.

2. To seek for a remedy of this.

[1.] Live in the continual remembrance of God, who is our guide, overseer, and ruler. It is his work we do, as well as our own, for he hath appointed it, and he always looketh on to see how we do it. And will you loiter in his sight, when a very eye-servant will work while his master standeth by ? Besides, in the close of our life we must give up our account ; that should be oftener thought of : Job xxxi. 14, 'What then shall I do, when God riseth up ; and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him ?' Such an eye should we always have to God's approbation and condemnation, and entertain frequent, serious thoughts of being called to an account by God, and the inquiry that shall be made, how we have spent our time, how we have improved our talents and interests, what our ways have been. This is as the cold water cast into the boiling pot, to stop the fervours of youthful lusts : Eccles. xi. 9, 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes ; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.' This bindeth the whole duty of man : Eccles. xii. 13, 14, 'Fear God, and keep his commandments ; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment,' &c. This maketh God's servants more careful to do their work in its season : 2 Cor. v. 10, 11, 'For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,' &c.

[2.] Whenever we feel a loathness and backwardness to our work, let us set about it the more earnestly ; for the more we give way to it, the more we contract an habit of idleness and sloth. It is an industrious creature that is here set before us to shame us, a creature always busy ; so should we be. Therefore when you find any sluggishness, let not the ease of the flesh overcome you, but do you overcome it. This evil

is best avoided by resistance ; and a duty recovered out of the hands of difficulty is the sweeter, and maketh labour for the future more easy to us ; for the more we stir up ourselves, the more we get a sedulous disposition : Isa. lxiv. 7, ' There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' It may be at first you will have much ado with a backward heart ; but urge it on, and you gain upon it, and what seemeth impossible or difficult at first becometh easy afterwards. The way to godliness is by godliness, and duty fitteth for duty.

[3.] Think oftener of heaven and hell, what we shun and what we seek after. We are so dull and lazy because we see not the rest we hope for, nor the torments that we fear. If both were before our eyes, we should be other manner of christians in all holy conversation and godliness. But what we see by faith should in some measure affect us, as if it were before our eyes : 2 Cor. iv. 18, ' While we look not to the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen,' &c. ; and 2 Peter iii. 14, ' Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blemish.'

[4.] Consider the great sin of negligence. Not to do good is to do evil ; for it is an omission of necessary duties : ' Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down,' &c., Mat vii. 19. If you had a servant, though he did not steal, nor answer again with contradiction, nor drink with the drunken, &c., yet if he should sit always idle, and not do those things you require of him, he would be counted a bad servant : Mat. xxv. 30, ' Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.' Not the thief, the drunken, but ' the unprofitable servant.' If you hire a man to labour in the vineyard, will you be contented if he doth not steal your fruit, though he standeth idle all the day, and neither destroyeth the weeds, nor pruneth the vines, nor manureth the ground ? Much more must neglect of God's service be a great sin.

[5.] To overcome worldly affections, consider not only how sure and near, but how great our reward is. This will make us more diligent : 1 Cor. xv. 58, ' Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord ;' that is, this will oblige you to the utmost industry and diligence in God's service. If a poor man will work so hard for a shilling a day, shall we be so sluggish when we seek after the kingdom of God and eternal happiness ? Alas ! what are all our labours to the glory that shall be revealed in us ? Our reward is great in itself, and is greater according to the proportion of our labour : 1 Cor. iii. 8, ' Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.' So Eph. vi. 8, ' Whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord.'
