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AN

EXPOSITION OF THE PARABLES.



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EXPOSITION OF THE PARABLES,

AND

EXPRESS SIMILITUDES

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WHEREIN ALSO MANY THINGS ARE DOCTRINALLY HANDLED AND IMPROVED BY
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TO THE IMPARTIAL READER.

THE officers who were sent to take or apprehend our blessed Lord, being demanded why they had not brought him, answered, "Never man spake like this man;" that is, as to the matter or depth of divine wisdom, and with that authority and evidence of truth. But when we consider that almost all which our Lord spake to the multitude, he spake in parables, (and in them being hid the rich treasure of his heavenly doctrine, or such things that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets) it may seem strange that none of our learned modern divines, nor others, have been stirred up to write an exposition upon all the parables and similitudes spoken by our blessed Lord in the four evangelists. Though it is true, some of them have most excellently written upon, and opened a few of them; but no one author (as I can learn) hath in one or more volumes written upon them all, if the greatest part, nor any exposition as I can meet with of many of them: yet what large and learned expositions have they written upon divers books of the Old and New Testament! So that what is here presented to your view, hath not been done by any before; and it might have been wished, that some now better capable than I am, had been stirred up to have undertaken it. And (considering that the parables contain the substance of our Saviour's ministry, and the profound mysteries couched therein,) the sense of my great weakness, or inability to manage so great a work, hath caused me not to undertake it without tremblings of heart, and many prayers and cries to God, that my heart, tongue, and pen, might be influenced and guided by the divine Spirit: though the want of those attainments that some have arrived at, beyond what I pretend to, hath been no small discouragement to me. Though I am persuaded I have not been left without the gracious assistance of the Spirit of Truth; nor have I omitted searching into what authors I could meet with, who have either written upon the parables, and on the customs of the Jews, to which in many things contained in them our Saviour doth refer. Moreover, I have had regard to those four rules mentioned by the learned in opening of the parables, viz., their Properties, Qualities, Effects, Operations. And that with special respect to their constitution, natural, civil, or moral, and have laboured to draw forth suitable propositions, which are raised and prosecuted from the scope or principal matter contained in one or another parable; though perhaps I may vary from the directions given by one or two authors (I have met with) about opening of and drawing propositions from parables, who insinuate as if no propositions nor answerable applications ought to be made, but from the general scope of the parable. Now in this I am not of their opinion, for some things that may (perhaps) not so clearly appear to lie in the direct scope, may contain in them much instruction, and profitable truths may be raised therefrom, and improved. I remember one very learned author (Mr. H. Knollys), gave direction or allowance that in opening metaphorical or parabolical Scriptures, we may enlarge so far as there is a clear analogy of faith; yet all authors agree, that parables run not always upon all four; that is, there are in parables some great disparities, some things being brought in or mentioned for illustration sake, which cannot be spiritually applied parallelwise. Indeed, some I find who have written on some parables, have given such a general exposition of the sum and scope of some, as renders their exposition quite different from the exposition our blessed Lord gave himself of those he unfolded unto his disciples: see Matt. xiii. about the Sower, and that of the Wheat and Tares, in which he opens every particular part, and applies it. Now can any directions given by learned men be so safe a rule to follow in expounding the parables, as that rule our Saviour hath left in the way taken by himself.

One saith to this purpose, speaking of the parables; viz., who will or ought to force from an author such things which he himself never dreamed of? To which I answer,

1. Who knows directly how far the intentions of our Lord in his parables do or may extend, in many words, and parts of a parable, besides the general main scope thereof?

2. I would know whether he that draws propositions from a parabolical text, may not be allowed the same liberty others take in preaching upon any other Scriptures (that may not be tropical or parabolical) provided he keeps to the true analogy of faith? And pray do not some ministers preach from one or another text of Scripture almost all the whole Gospel, and in doing so are they certain the Sacred Author, I mean the Holy Ghost, directly intended or comprehended in those texts (as his main scope and design) all those things which they drew therefrom; and perhaps very safely and profitably. I must confess I perceive that some men render many things (spoken by our Lord in many parables) very insignificant or to little or no purpose mentioned by him, and so not to be improved by us to our spiritual profit; which to me seems to cast a kind of contempt upon the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as it clearly contradicts his own exposition of those parables He Himself explained.

Moreover, I think those expositions of the parables of some men, who only (or principally) improve them to instruct people into practical duties, or rather only how they should live, than how they should believe, are worthy of blame; as if our Saviour chiefly designed by speaking so many parables, to teach us how to lead our lives, and not so much to open to us the great doctrine of the Gospel, or to show us the necessity of faith in himself, or to instruct us into doctrinal truths; whereas the latter seeming directly to be the main scope of our Lord in most of his parables. As is clearly held forth in these words recorded by the Evangelist St. Matthew, chap. xiii. 34, 35, "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." Were the duties of morality, or the rules of a godly life, kept secret from the foundation of the world, until our Saviour came? No, certainly, for the law of the Lord is perfect in that great case; but they were the mysteries of the Gospel, or the mysteries of our salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, which He mainly designed to instruct us in, by speaking his parables.

Certainly nothing is more necessary to understand the Scripture (whether metaphorical or parabolical, or not) than the help, teachings, and influences of the Holy Spirit, which some of late (as well as formerly) as it seems to me, have cast contempt upon, to the dishonour of God, his Blessed Spirit, and to the scandal of our sacred religion, intimating as if without the knowledge of the tongues or school-divinity no men are capable, truly and profitably, to preach the Gospel nor understand the Scripture. I must confess I think it a great blessing God hath raised up learned men among us, and readily grant the knowledge of the tongues is very useful, but not of necessity in a minister, nor of such great use in order to understand the Scripture (as some talk of), provided it be granted that the sacred Bible be truly translated (which none dares deny,) and also if a man stores himself with all such books that open in English, the different reading of many of the Hebrew and Greek texts, which are extant, particularly those Bibles that have best quotations or marginal notes. Sirs, the knowledge of the tongues is none of the qualifications laid down of one that is to be chosen an overseer, or pastor of a church, 1 Tim. iii., and Tit. i. Besides, how ignorant of the doctrine of the Gospel, and of the Holy Scriptures, are some learned men! "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 11. Men by the knowledge of the tongues and other human arts, may understand the things of a man, or attain to more clear knowledge of things that are merely human; but none have a true and saving knowledge of Christ, the Gospel, or of spiritual things, but by the Spirit of God. "Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual," ver. 13.

Let men take heed how they cry up man's wisdom, though the simple knowledge of the tongues none will or can deny to be useful. Therefore it is that stress which is by some laid upon it, rendering it essential in a Gospel minister, that gives the offence. Pray, see what our learned annotators observe, viz., That they do not preach or argue philosophically, like an Athenian philosopher, but use a familiar, plain style, giving forth the naked truths of God, without any paint or gaudy phrase.

Moreover, I think it not amiss to recite here what a late bishop of the church of England hath written upon the knowledge of the tongues, viz.,

"There hath not (saith he) been a greater plague to the Christian religion than school divinity, where men take upon them the liberty to propose new questions, make nice distinctions, and rash conclusions of divine matters, tossing them up and down

with their tongues like tennis balls; and from hence proceeded all the dangerous heresies, and cruel bickerings about them, falling from words to blows. The first divinity school we read of, was set up at Alexandria, by Pantæus, and from thence soon after sprang up that damnable heresy of the Arias, which overran all Christendom, and was the cause of the destruction of so many millions of Christians, both of body and soul; which before this were so gross and sensual, that none took them up but dissolute or frantic people, and soon vanished. But after this school, subtle way of arguing was brought into Christianity, heresy grew more refined, and so subtle, that the plain and pious fathers of the church knew not how to lay hold of it; the school distinctions and evasions baffled them; and so those sophisters proud of their conquest, triumphed, and carried away a specious appearance of truth as well as learning, or rather cunning, insomuch that many godly persons were deluded and fell into them, and many of their heresies continue unto this day."

I would advise all Christians who are so bigotted to human learning, so as to think none ought to be allowed to preach but such who have been trained up in schools or universities, and have the knowledge of the tongues, to read Rev. Dr. Owen on the Hebrews, chap. v, who shows, that teachers were trained up in the primitive churches only, as being endowed with grace and ministerial gifts by the Lord Jesus, every church being then the great seminary for preachers. Also let them read Mr. Cranston's answer to Mr. Baxter's Aphorisms, who tells us human learning is of no force to decide, judge, and conclude any questions merely evangelical; and that no men have done more mischief or hurt to the church of God, than learned men, by their nice scholastic and philosophical distinctions. Indeed, by this wisdom the Apostle shows that the world knew not God, nor can they know thereby the Lord Jesus Christ, nor the great doctrine of justification by his righteousness; for this lies above the art and wisdom of man, let his knowledge of the tongues, or other human learning, be what it will. Moreover, he gives several arguments to prove that God hath not ordained philosophical learning to be instrumental for the promoting of the Gospel, and also shows by such learning many heresies came into the church, and were defended to such a degree, that unlearned men were hard beset to confute them.

But further he shows how the Holy Ghost slighteth, and uttereth invective terms against human learning or man's wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 18, 21, &c. And also how God blessed, the preaching of the Gospel by the unlearned, and blasted such who have used (or rather say I, abused) philosophical learning: he also shows how the Gospel spread in the next ages after the Apostles, when most, if not all gospel ministers were unacquainted with human learning.—Yet let none think I speak against grammar learning, or the knowledge of the tongues, for certainly the usefulness thereof (as I hinted) is considerable: and what cause have we to bless God, that he raised up such learned men in the church, as Dr. Owen, and multitudes more I might mention, to defend the great fundamental truths of Christ against hereties; and let us be thankful that we have still such who are considerably learned amongst us, and I wish that worthy young men, to whom God hath given ministerial gifts, might be furnished with such learning, which some others want. What I have here said, is because some lay too great a stress upon human learning, and cry against all such ministers who have it not. But yet I must say, that it is very evident, that the allwise God chose some men, who were counted "foolish and base things of the world, to confound the wise, &c., that no flesh should glory in his presence," 1 Cor. i. 7—30.

Moreover it ought to be noted, how Paul looked upon the use of the tongues in the church, though they were those tongues that were the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, to capacitate the Apostles and first ministers to preach the Gospel to the people of divers languages; "I thank God I speak with more tongues than you all, yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue," 1 Cor. xiv. 18, 19. The truth is, in preaching, to speak in a language the people understand not, it seems to serve for nothing, unless it is that the preacher would let them know he is a scholar. How ready is man to glory in his human attainments! therefore Christ made use of very few, if any, who were learned in the primitive time; I know none, except Luke and the Apostle Paul; yet, on the other hand, it ought to be the care of our churches to see that none but such men are allowed to preach, to whom God hath given competent gifts, and such also who are able to speak proper English, for the contrary exposeth the Gospel to contempt.

But to say no more to this reader, I shall not in this epistle speak much as to the nature and usefulness of the parabolical and metaphorical Scripture, because I have spoken to it

in the introduction, being the substance of a sermon preached upon that account ; only let me add, what Mr. Caryl hath said concerning parables ; he saith, the original word signifies to rule or govern, as a prince whose righteous precepts and commands his people ought to obey, viz., (Caryl on Job 27. 1. p. 6, 7, 8).

Speeches or sentences full of wisdom and of truth are called parables, for a threefold reason.

“ 1. Because a wise sentence rules over the spirits of men,—Parables carry convincing light, and so great authority, &c.

“ 2. Parables are so called, because such speeches came usually from the mouths of princes and great persons.

“ 3. Because whether men will submit to such speeches and truths, or not, yet their judgments, actions, and opinions must be tried and ruled by them. Parables are as touchstones of truth, they are rules, and therefore ought to rule.

“ Moreover, he (with other learned men) says, that parables are similitudes, because they resemble and bear (as it were) the express image of their wisdom, gravity, modesty, and truth, who spake them. All words should be the image of the mind, and parables are the beautiful image of a beautiful mind.—A parable is taken several ways in Scripture.

“ 1. For any divine maxim, axiom, or principle.

“ 2. A Parable is a dark and hard saying, and is opposed to a plain speech ; ‘ I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old,’ Psal lxxviii. 2.”

3. A man’s judgment or opinion in any case, is his parable, &c. As to the power and efficacy a parable hath upon a man’s heart when understood, evidently appears in David’s case, when he understood Nathan’s parable : and touching the nature and usefulness of them, read the introduction.

Reader, thou art here presented with the labours of near twelve years, not that I preached every Lord’s day in the morning upon the parables ; no, but generally for so long time I so did ; and I hope not without some gracious success. You will find I have enlarged much upon some of them more than on others. Moreover, but short enlargements upon most particular heads, which make the sermons short ; and if I had not done so, it would have swollen to another volume as big as this. Also you will find many great Gospel truths improved in one parable, which are also mentioned with some alterations or additions in another. And, now, to close with this epistle, I cannot expect to escape the censure of many in writing upon the parables. Many men so much differ from others in respect of the sense and meaning of our Lord in divers things contained therein, but generally in the main I hope all will receive satisfaction, that the Lord hath helped me in opening of them, to whose most gracious blessing I shall commit these and all poor labours of mine. I shall, reader, during the time my dear Lord hath appointed me to remain on earth, subscribe myself,

Thy servant in the Gospel for his sake,

BENJAMIN KEACH.

From my House in Horsleydown, Southwark,

Aug. 20th, 1701.

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AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PARABLES AND SIMILITUDES

OF OUR

LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

SERMON I.

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION.

All these things spake Jesus in parables, and without parables spake he not unto them ; That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.—
Matt. xiii. 34, 35.

MY BRETHREN,

IN these words the ministry of our blessed Saviour, in speaking in parables, is magnified, i. e., they fully discover, that in his parables are contained the profound and deep things or mysteries of the Gospel ; and therefore the opening of them by the help of the divine Spirit, must needs be of no small profit unto the souls of God's people. Now my purpose at this time, is not to speak to the distinct parts of these words, nor to raise any doctrinal truths therefrom ; but to speak something of parables in general, as an introduction to the great work before me.

1. I shall show you the difference between typical and tropical Scriptures.
2. Show what a parable is.
3. Show what advantages we have by parables, above what we have by some other Scriptures.
4. Lay down some rules, to know tropical Scriptures from Scriptures that are to be taken literally.
5. Show you why our Saviour might speak so much in parables.

First, Types suppose the verity of some real history, as to matter of fact ; as the first Adam was a type or figure of Jesus Christ : so was the high-priest, and many other persons under the law. Jonas being in the whale's belly, was a type or figure of our Saviour's lying three days in the grave.

The difference between typical and tropical Scriptures.

2. Types look only to matter of fact, or things done under the law; to matter of fact, or things under the Gospel: as Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, the paschal-lamb, &c.

3. Types are only historical, as such, the truth agreeing with the Antitype makes them up, and fulfils them as to the design of God therein; as the brazen serpent in its perfect signification was fulfilled, when Jesus Christ was lifted up upon the cross: the like in respect had unto the rock that was pierced in the wilderness, was (as to its signification fully completed), when our Lord was pierced on the cross.

4. Types in the Old Testament respect only some persons and things, with their proper antitypes under the gospel; as Christ, the gospel, and gospel-church, together with the spreading of the gospel; and nature of the grace, blessings, and privileges of the members thereof.

2ndly, Tropical Scriptures, as parables, metaphors, allegories, and similitudes, do not require such a necessary supposition as to matter of fact. (1.) As that of the rich man and Lazarus; there is no necessity to conclude, it intends or shows there were two such particular persons; but by the rich man, may any ungodly rich man, that is of such an evil temper, be held forth, and such to be his state at death: and by Lazarus, may be showed, the state and condition of such that are very poor and afflicted ones, that are truly godly; and that at death their souls go all to heaven, or into the bosom of Jesus Christ the true Abraham. See more in the exposition of that parable.

2. Parables and allegories take in words, sentences, and doctrines, containing matter of faith and manners; and are used for illustration-sake, to open and explain some hidden mystery that lies covered in them; which would be hard to be understood unless so opened.

3. Therefore parables, &c., in their main scope and design, intend not matter of fact (as types do), but are principally doctrinal, and are brought to open the mind of God the better to our weak capacities, move upon our affections, and convince the conscience, as the parable of Nathan in David's case. That parables do not always (if ever) contain matter of fact, is evident in respect of Jotham's parable of the Trees going to choose a King, &c.

4. And whereas types in the Old Testament respect only some persons and things, (as I said before) and their antitypes; so they are such persons and things, which none but whom God himself made use of as types; men are not to frame, or make types, nor ought any to attempt once so to do; for after that rate men may turn all historical Scriptures into allegories, as some will have Pharaoh a type of the devil. I am satisfied that all persons and things that were types under the Old Testament, God hath somewhere or another given us grounds to believe, that they were types or figurative.

But now as to parables, allegories, &c., they take in almost every thing, that belongs either to doctrine, instruction, faith, and practice. Moreover, a minister may use other parables and similitudes of his own framing, besides what are mentioned in the Scriptures for illustration sake; which is found by experience very useful to the hearers: (yet what are they to Christ's parables and similitudes?) so that tropical Scriptures, and the use of parables, are more extensive and comprehensive in their use, meaning, and application, than typical Scriptures are: so much as to the first thing propounded.

Secondly, I shall show you what a parable is, and the nature thereof.

What a parable is. 1. A parable signifies no more than a similitude, which is to make use of natural things by way of allusion or comparison, to open spiritual things, the better to our understanding; "If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" John iii. 12. That is, if I should without using earthly things and similitudes, speak of the sublime nature of heavenly things, how would you understand them?

Take what you have in our Key to open Scripture Metaphors: a parable is called *παρεγω παρεβολήν*, which beside other significations which the subject is unconcerned in (for it signifies *objicere, conjicere, detorquere, committere, appropinquare, transmittere*, &c.) denotes conferring, comparing, or the collocation of different things.

Jerome calls it a similitude, *Παραβολα*, because as a previous shadow of truth, it represents it; it answers to the Hebrew *maschal*. Properly and strictly it signifies an artificial narrative of a thing done, to signify another thing. So Glassius.

2. In parables, it is not necessary that all the actions of men mentioned in them should be just actions: I mean morally just and honest, for the unjust Steward is not mentioned

by our Saviour to justify his injustice ; but to show his care and wisdom in providing for the future time.

3. Therefore in parables, if we would understand the mind of God in them, we must always take care to consider the main design and scope of them ; or which way the sacred story tends, or what our Lord chiefly designs therein.

“ For parabolical texts one cannot well explain them (saith a French minister) but he must remark and observe attentively, the proper scope unto which the parable tendeth ; there must be great care, especially in handling them well, to consider what the parable aimeth at principally, and less principally, or primarily and secondarily ; for there may be divers ends, one general and principal, and others particular and subalternate.

“ Then, secondly, when the scope is discovered, we must narrowly observe what the parable is taken from, and what it tends unto the general end, and what unto the particular ; examining how far every thing in the parable tendeth and serveth ; for though there are some things which are principally of the end of the parable, and others which are not expressed, but serve only to enrich and beautify the parable ; nevertheless we must not in examining the principal things, neglect the other ; as in the study of the law, so of a parable ; we must make the things which are of the greater importance the main of our labour and application, yet we must not neglect or leave out the lesser, &c.

“ There are some parables propheticall, as that of the ten virgins ; Mat. xxv. But commonly they are dogmaticals, and therefore are so to be handled ; but it must be done in the light of the similitude, for the matter of parables have these advantages.

“ And though (saith our French author) in the explanation of parables, nothing is to be mentioned, but that which is properly of the end and scope of them ; yet in the application we may enlarge these reports more particularly.”

4. I know (as he and others observe) such that handle the parables of our Saviour, ought to have the knowledge of natural, moral, and civil histories, and consult classic authors, &c. ; which so far as I am capable I have endeavoured ; together with the customs and practice of the Jews and the eastern countries, also their plants, seeds, &c., some of which differ from ours.

5. Moreover, the main scope or design of a parable, is commonly to be understood, either from our Saviour's more general or more particular exposition of it, or else from his main and principal design, which may be gathered from the preface to it, or else from the conclusion thereof. As for example, in the parable of the Vineyard let out to husbandmen ; Mat. xxi. 33. See what precedes and what succeeds in that parable, so also in the parable of the rich man.

6. It is not always to be expected, that every particular thing, passage, or action, mentioned in a parable, should be answered by something in the explication thereof. Some for want of considering this, run into many errors, and say the soul hath a tongue, because in the parable of the rich man, Luke xvi. When his soul came to lie in hell, he speaks of his tongue, and wanted a little water to cool it. Yet that may afford much instruction ; it may be that that ungodly man (or such that are represented by him) had greatly offended with his tongue, either by swearing, blaspheming, or railing on the poor ; or reproaching the godly, or by lying ; and therefore that member is mentioned, as being grievously tormented in those flames.

7. Though the scope of a parable be the chief thing we should attend upon, yet more generally many other things may be made use of to the advantage of the hearers ; even so far as it bears a clear analogy of faith, as in metaphorical Scriptures ; as is showed in my Key to open Scripture-metaphors.

Thirdly, we have by parables divers advantages above what we have by some other Scriptures.

1. They greatly tend to help the memory ; we are more apt to remember stories, than other things delivered in a sermon. Besides, people when they see these natural things before their eyes, which the Holy Ghost makes use of to explain heavenly things by, they presently are the better enabled to call to remembrance what they have heard ; as when they see a sower sow his seed, and the like.

2. They greatly help the mind and thinking faculty, to study the meaning of what they have so heard delivered unto them.

3. They are profitable to stir up, or to excite the affections, and to awaken the conscience ; as when hell in a parable is set out by a furnace of fire, and conscience by a gnawing worm ; and heaven and glory above, is represented by a glorious kingdom, and by a crown of glory.

4. Also to inform the judgment of the weak ; indeed what could any of us do, to understand the deep things of God, if they were not thus opened and explained unto us ? Yet parables have one great disadvantage to some who hear them, that they being not explained to them, understand them not ; as it was in our Saviour's days, it being not given unto all to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ; therefore it must needs be no small blessing to have those parables of our blessed Lord opened unto us ; so that we may be helped rightly to understand them.

Fourthly, I shall add here some rules, how you may know tropical and parabolical Scriptures from Scriptures that are to be taken literally.

How to know figurative scriptures.

1. When it is directly called a parable, "He spake a parable," &c. Yet because some scriptures are to be taken parabolically or figuratively, that are not directly called parables or similitudes. Therefore,

2. Know and be assured, that all Scriptures are to be taken figuratively or parabolically, when the literal sense would be absurd ; as when Christ says, "This is my body," and when he said, "I am a Door, a Vine," &c., John xv., and when it is said, "And that Rock was Christ," 1 Cor. x. 4. As also when our Lord saith, "Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you," John vi. 53. Also those sayings, "Pluck out thy right eye, and cut off thy right hand." Should these Scriptures be taken literally, how absurd would they seem to all !

3. When the literal sense would not reach to the great design of edification, as when Christ speaks of sowing ; certainly, none can suppose, our Lord went about to instruct them in husbandry, but in higher matters.

4. Those Scriptures must be taken figuratively, when the literal sense would obtrude clear falsities upon the sacred texts : As for example, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again ;" "Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man," &c.

5. When the literal sense would not agree with, but be repugnant unto other Scriptures ; as when we are bid to heap coals of fire on the heads of our enemies ; seeing it is said, "Revenge not yourselves," &c.

6. When the literal sense would render the Holy Ghost to speak impertinently ; as when John Baptist says, "Now is the axe laid to the root of the trees, every tree therefore that brings not forth good fruit ;" compared with Luke xiii. 7, "Cut it down, why cumberest thou the ground ?" Those texts refer to unfruitful persons under the means of gospel-grace, not of external trees ; therefore should such places of the holy Scriptures be taken literally, it might seem to all an impertinent way of speaking.

Why Christ spake in parables.

But to proceed to the last thing propounded,

Fifthly, Why did our blessed Saviour speak in parables ?

Ans. 1. I answer, because some persons (as the Jews in our Saviour's days) were so averse to divine knowledge, and they having contemned the means of grace, God in judgment gave them up to blindness of mind. "And the disciples came and said unto him, why speakest thou unto them in parables ? He answered and said unto them, it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given ; therefore speak I unto them in parables, because they seeing, see not, and in hearing, hear not, neither do they understand," Matt. xiii. 10—13.

There is a twofold knowledge of divine things : One notional, the other an effective and experimental knowledge. Now some men only hear the mysteries of the gospel, out of curiosity to fill their heads with knowledge : this sort therefore attain to as much knowledge as they desire and covet after ; they do not improve to their spiritual profit what they hear ; therefore "in hearing they hear not, and in seeing they see not." But unto others it is given to understand, and embrace the truth, in the love and saving mystery and power thereof. When a people have despised the knowledge of God's word in its spiritual efficacy, and so sin against knowledge ; they find the Gospel as a sealed book to them, and many truths are delivered unto them in parables, which they either seek not after the true knowledge of, or else think their own wisdom and learning, to be sufficient to unfold the mysteries of them ; and God, for their great wickedness in contemning the more clear and visible appearances of truth, (as the Jews did, who contemned those mighty works our Saviour wrought) it caused him to speak to them in parables, without affording them the help of his Spirit, in opening them to their understanding. "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables," Mark iv. 11. Unto them that are without the pale of the church, or are not in the election of grace, or who are without any saving knowledge of God, or desire to attain thereunto, all things seem riddles, paradoxes, or empty notions, or fruitless parables.

2. Christ might speak often in parables, because he would have men be studious and industrious to search out profound wisdom, like as Sampson, who, to try the wisdom of the Philistines, put forth his riddle. For as nothing is more difficult and hard to understand than a parable, until it is opened and explained, so nothing is more clear, when it is fully understood. A parable is like a golden mine, you must dig and search with all pains and diligence, that would find the true vein thereof.

3. It may be to discover the great need men have of the teachings of the Holy Spirit to understand divine truths; notwithstanding their greatest human learning, or clearest natural or acquired parts, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," I Cor. ii. 11. God has revealed some things concerning himself more plainly, but there are deep things of God, or great mysteries in the Scripture; and many such are contained in these parables, which, until the Spirit of God hath revealed them unto men, they understand them not. To what a degree of light and true spiritual knowledge, did the disciples of Christ attain, by the teachings of the Holy Ghost (who were but "fishermen or unlearned and ignorant persons,") John vii. 47, 48, Acts iv. 13, above what the learned Scribes and Pharisees arrived at, that contemned the Holy Spirit's teachings.

4. No doubt but our blessed Lord spake so often in parables, to illustrate and open sacred truths in the mystery of them, to the understandings of those that are spiritually wise. Because (as you have heard) heavenly things are, in their own primitive and sublime nature, so hard to be understood.

5. Moreover, one reason why our Lord spake in parables, was to fulfil the prophecy of Scripture, Psal. lxxviii. 2, compared with Matt. xiii. 34, 35. "Without a parable spake he nothing; that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, I will open my mouth in parables," &c.

6. And lastly, It may be, that the Lord's own people might the better improve all natural things unto their spiritual advantage, as to instance in some few particulars; viz.

1. As when you light a candle, and put it into a candlestick, say within thyself, thus must God by his Word and Spirit, light my dark heart; and thus must not my light be hid, but shine forth to the profit of others. And thus of like benefit to the world, is the church and people of God. Also,

2. When you taste things unsavoury for want of salt, say, O how unsavoury are such Christians or professors, whose words and conversations are not as becometh the Gospel; or when you taste things very sweet and savoury, say, O how savoury should I be in my life, or in all my words and actions! Also, O how good is grace, to season my heart and life!

3. When you see men dig deep, to lay the foundation of a house upon a rock, say, O how careful should I be, to see that my soul is built upon that rock, Jesus Christ, whom God hath laid in Zion.

4. When you, good women, leaven your bread, and you see in a little time the whole lump is leavened; say, thus will the true grace of God, if I receive it into my soul, leaven my heart and every faculty in me, and never cease until I become a new lump.

5. When you dig up new ground for to turn it into a garden, and find there much filth, stones, worms and vermin of the earth; say within thyself, thus naturally, in me and in all men, there was much filth and abominable corruption, and loathsome vermin undiscovered, until God by his Spirit, by powerful convictions, ploughed up the fallow ground of my heart.

6. When you see weeds, for want of care and pains, to grow up in your garden, which spoil your herbs and choice flowers; say within thyself, how will the weeds of sin and unbelief, spoil the growth of the good seed of grace in my soul, if I by faith, repentance and godly care, do not daily strive to weed them out, or get these base weeds up by the roots.

7. When you see the fire burn the wood, or consume all combustible matter; say within thyself, thus will the Spirit of God, when it hath kindled in my soul, burn up and consume every sin in me; as pride, vain-glory, the inordinate love of this world, wrath, envy, malice, revenge, undue passion, slavish fear, unbelief, hypocrisy, and all things that are of a carnal and combustible nature.

8. And when you see one coal kindle and enliven another, and the fire to burn more fervently by stirring it up; say within thyself, O what a mercy is it to be in the company of, and daily to converse with lively Christians! How doth their zeal heat, and warm, and enliven my soul; and O what need have I to stir up that grace and gift of God that is in me, by fervent prayer, fresh acts of faith and holy meditation.

9. When you see the wind blows, by which means the ship you behold before your eyes

sail swiftly before a prosperous gale, say within thyself, thus shall I sail swiftly along through the troublesome sea of this world, when the wind of the Spirit blows upon my soul.

When you see the sun in the spring, to cause the grass, herbs, trees, and flowers put forth and smell fragrantly, say within thyself, thus it will be with my soul, if Jesus Christ draws near to me by the powerful influences of his Spirit, all grace will put forth, bud, and blossom in me; so that I shall become fruitful to God in righteousness and true holiness, and be of a fragrant scent in his nostrils, to the delighting the heart of Jesus.

10. When you see a great shower of rain fall on the earth, say within thyself, O how fruitful would this world be if God would send that great shower of the Spirit upon the souls of men, promised to be poured forth in the latter days! And when you see a small and gentle rain fall upon the tender herb, which softens the mould, and causes the flowers and herbs to sprout forth and smell sweetly, say to God, O send the sweet rain and dew of thy Spirit upon thy word, people, and ordinances, and upon my soul; so shall we grow and flourish in thy courts.

11. When you see the sun to shine bright and clear, and dispel all fogs and thick clouds, say within thyself, what glorious times will they be, when the Sun of righteousness will break forth in all nations, and disperse all the dark clouds of Popery, errors, heresy, Paganism, and Mahometanism, which now cover all kingdoms and people, making it a dismal world. And when you see the sun to shine bright and clear into your house, whereby you discern what dust and filth is therein; say within yourself thus, when Jesus Christ began to shine into my heart by his Spirit, I came to see the filth and the abominable evils, and pollution of my heart, which humbles my soul, and lays me mourning at his feet.

12. When you go to bed (death being compared to our going to rest,) say within thyself, it will be but a little while, before I shall lie down in the grave, and rest there until the morning of the resurrection.

13. When you rise in the morning, say within thyself, over a little time I shall arise out of my grave, and meet Jesus Christ in the air.

14. When your dearest friend is displeased with you, and comes not to visit you as in former times, say, ah! what have I done? Oh! how sad is it, that my dear Jesus has hid his face, and withdrawn himself from my poor soul!

15. When you are in a dark night, or in a dark room, say, O how dismal will the blackness of darkness be, to the ungodly for evermore! O Lord, let me never be shut up in eternal darkness.

16. When you see a furnace of fire, or a hot oven, think of hell or the lake of fire, into which the wicked shall be cast; and admire God's free grace in Christ, who hath saved thee from that burning lake.

17. When you see a man or woman very crooked, deformed, and full of filthy sores running on them, say, such a crooked, filthy, and loathsome creature was I, before God changed my heart, and cleansed and healed all the stinking sores which were in my soul; which rendered me more loathsome in the sight of God, than this deformed and loathsome person before mine eyes is.

Lastly, When you see a sower sowing his seed, and some of it falls on the highway side, and some on stony places, and some among thorns, and some upon good ground, that is well ploughed and manured; call to mind what our Lord speaketh in the parable of the sower; and say within thyself, O how few hear the word, and bring forth the fruit thereof into eternal life. O Lord, prepare my heart to receive thy word, that it may be like the good ground, or I shall be undone for ever. Let my heart be broken up and prepared by thy plough. O that I may have a good, an upright and sincere heart. Thus parables and metaphorical Scriptures may be improved every day, by each particular Christian, to his great profit and spiritual advantage.

APPLICATION.

1. I infer from hence, of what great use parables are: behold, my brethren, take notice and ponder well what has been said.

2. This also justifies such ministers, who labour with what wisdom God hath given them, to open and explain the truths of the gospel unto the people, hid in these parables and similitudes spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, and it justifies those who, in their preaching, do make use of apt similes to illustrate the matter they are upon, to affect the hearts of the people; yet it greatly concerns them all to see they use fit and proper allusions, lest they darken counsel with words without knowledge; and so instead of giving more light, expose the gospel and name of God to reproach.

3. It also tends to reprove those, who turn literal, plain, or historical Scripture into allegories; as well as it reproves such, who, like the Papists, take figurative Scripture literally; as when Christ saith, "This is my body;" they say, he speaks of his real body, and not figuratively. Moreover, all such who through their gross ignorance affirm, God is in the form of a man, because eyes, ears, a mouth, hands, and feet, are attributed to him.

4. Exhort. Learn to be studious, search into the spiritual meaning and mysteries of allegorical and parabolical Scripture. O be wise and experienced bearers, and be sure you do not despise men's preaching on these parables, since the substance of our Saviour's ministry to the world is contained in them.

5. Yet let us all take heed (which I shall endeavour to do), that we strain no metaphors or parables, beyond their due bounds, beyond the clear analogy of faith. But so much shall serve, as to the nature of similes and parables in general.

SERMON II.

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the Salvation of God.—Luke iii. 5, 6.

THE evangelist Matthew, Mat. iii. 3, bath the same passage, but he speaks more briefly unto it; "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Saint Luke repeats the words of the prophet Isaiah, almost word by word, it being a clear prophecy of John the Baptist; "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert, a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of God shall be revealed together, and all flesh shall see it," Isa. x. 3.

For the better coming to open these words take notice,

1. We have the time of John's ministry.
2. His call unto his office, "The word of God came unto John," Luke iii. 2.
3. An account of the places where he preached: "He came into all the country round about Jordan," preaching, &c. ver. 3.
4. The subject-matter of his preaching, viz. "The Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," ver. 3.
5. The occasion which might prompt him to enter on his ministry, viz., the ancient prophecy of Isaiah; Isa. xl. 3. The Holy Ghost, no doubt, bringing this into his mind, and discovering it to him, that he was the person there prophesied of, and that it was now in him to be fulfilled.

6. The end and grand design of his preaching, which was, "To prepare the way of the Lord;" and make a people ready to receive our Lord Jesus Christ, and to make known what great things our Saviour should do: viz., level mountains, and exalt valleys, &c.

From the main scope of these words, and design of John's ministry, it appears that he was an harbinger to Jesus Christ, and was to proclaim his near approach, &c. The scope of the words opened.

From hence we may note, that this clearly showed to all, that Jesus Christ is a most glorious person, yea, a great and an almighty Prince; in that he had such a renowned person and prophet as John Baptist was, to be his harbinger, to usher him into the world: (Though our Lord veiled his glory at his first coming, that he might, in the days of his humiliation, the better accomplish the great work he came to do.) For our Saviour speaking of John, saith, that among all them born of women, there had not risen a greater prophet than John the Baptist; and that he was more than a prophet: He said more than any of the prophets could do; viz., that the Messiah was come, pointing to him, said, this is He.

2. From the whole matter contained in these symbolical expressions, we may clearly gather that the way of our Lord and Saviour, in order to the doing of the great work he came about, was rough and untrodden, even like a way through a wilderness; and that he must fill up vallies, and bring down mountains, and make crooked things straight, and rough ways smooth; that so the glory of God might be revealed.

3. John was ministerially to signify these things must be done, but not that he was able to do them; no, no; but saith he, every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, &c. Meaning that the Lord Jesus Christ should do these wonderful things; and he was to give warning to the people, and tell them the Messiah was come, who should do these things, and so prepare them the better to look for him, and endeavour to find out the mighty things our Lord was to perform.

Therefore, they who call John the Baptist a pioneer to Jesus Christ; or, one that was to fill up ditches, and throw down hills, &c. certainly greatly mistake the meaning of John in those metaphorical expressions. Could John level mountains, and fill up or exalt vallies? no no; it was to discover what our Lord Christ should do. Other ministers may as soon accomplish such mighty works as John Baptist; as will appear, in opening what may, and doubtless is meant, by "Every valley being exalted, and every mountain and hill being brought low, and the crooked made straight, and the rough ways made smooth," viz.

1. And that I may come to speak hereunto, no doubt these things more generally signify, the removing of all those obstacles, difficulties, impediments, and stumbling-blocks out of God's way unto sinners, in order to their peace and reconciliation; and also all obstacles and stumbling-blocks out of the sinner's way unto God: "Make straight a highway for our God, every valley shall be exalted," &c. For in both these respects there was such mountains of difficulties in the way, which none but Christ Jesus could remove; but unless all those things were done of which John speaks, sinners could not be saved, nor the glory of God (personally considered) and also in all his attributes, be revealed. For evident it is this was the end and design of God; in and by Jesus Christ as Mediator, by his "Levelling mountains and exalting vallies," viz. "That the glory of God might be revealed."

Therefore let not any once think, that the bare opening the scope of these metaphorical words is enough (and so in other symbolical and parabolical Scriptures) and that it favours more of wit than any solid judgment, to attempt to show, what and Parables may rationally be thought to be meant by mountains, hills, vallies, crooked to be opened, things and rough ways.

1. Because it would render the Holy Ghost to multiply terms and words to no purpose. For why might not John rather have said all impediments or obstructions shall be removed out of God's way of saving of sinners, and not have told us of mountains, hills; and vallies?

2. And also, that our Saviour himself used needless allusions in all those mysterious similitudes and parables he uttered, and indeed in which the greatest part of his ministry to the world did consist. It is not sufficient to open only the chief scope and design of our Lord in speaking of every parable; for any so to say, it doth doubtless cast great contempt upon his sacred preaching.

3. Moreover, did not our blessed Saviour in all those parables and similitudes which he was pleased to expound unto his own disciples, open every part of them, as being significant? See the, "Parable of the sower," Mat. xiii., and that of the wheat and tares.

4. Consider what St Matthew saith about Christ's speaking in parables, similitude, &c. "All these things spake Jesus in parables, and without parables spake he not unto them; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world," Matt. xiii. 34, 35. By this it appears, that under our Saviour's parables and symbolical allusions, that those mysteries of the gospel which were hid from the beginning of the world, are comprehended; and therefore ought to be opened.

5. There are in parabolical Scriptures (as tropical writers observe) three things to be considered.

1. The root.
2. The bark.
3. The sap or fruit.

1. The root is the scope to which parables tend. (2.) The bark is the similitude itself. And, (3.) The sap or fruit; is the mystical sense, &c.

Now according to these learned men some would have us to be contented with the root, and bark, without the fruit; as if those fruitful trees were barren, dry, and sapless.

See the introduction. In opening parables, or such like dark Scriptures, we ought (I say again) well to eye the scope and drift of the Holy Spirit, which may be known from foregoing or subsequent things mentioned; and we cannot err much, if our exposition of them agrees with the analogy of faith.

6. Though we readily grant, as the proverb is, metaphors and parables do not always

run on all four; also, in some parables there are disparities; as, when Christ's coming is compared to a thief, not like a thief unrighteously to rob and steal, &c. So much I thought good to premise, to make my way the easier in speaking to this dark similitude, or these metaphorical expressions.

2. I shall endeavour (God assisting) to open all the parts of these words, not straining any thing beyond the analogy of faith, though I will not presume to affirm every thing I may observe, is the direct meaning of the Holy Spirit, nor dare others in their expounding Scriptures less doubtful; yet so that none shall see just cause to conclude, it is not the mind or sense of the Spirit.

3. I shall observe some propositions, or points of doctrine, from some of the chief parts contained therein.

1. But before I proceed, let it be considered (as I conceive) that the grand obstructions or obstacles which lie in the way of God's being reconciled to sinners, and of sinners' reconciliation unto him, are comprehended by these metaphorical expressions.

2. And that John foretels what our Lord Jesus Christ came to do; "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low;" that is, it shall be done by him (as if John should say) whose way I came to prepare.

3. Now what doctrine did John the Baptist preach, as Christ's forerunner? Did it not end to exalt God's mercy to penitent believers? Some poor sinners lay under the apprehension of God's severe justice, and they could not see mercy raised up, but that divine justice was so magnified, that they saw not any ground to expect forgiveness by the mercy of a gracious God; he declaring the soul that sinneth shall die, and they saw that they had sinned, and were become guilty before God; and he saith, he will in no wise clear the guilty.

Every valley shall be filled; that the people might know what our Lord would do, to exalt the mercy of God to undone sinners, who, like vallies, lay very low under despondency of spirit; John bid them repent, which the law did not admit of: this word repent is a most sweet word, and tends to advance mercy and God's free-grace, and so to fill up those vallies, I mean despairing and desponding sinners. When God sends a messenger to rebels, and commands them to repent and believe, a sweet pardon be sure is comprehended therein; and this tends to fill up or exalt two vallies.

1. The lowly and desponding soul.

2. The mercy of God is exalted, which was one grand design of God in sending of his Son to satisfy divine justice; for mercy, and divine goodness, could not be raised to run level with justice, until our Saviour had made a complete satisfaction for our sins.

Every mountain and hill shall be brought low. Certainly by mountains and hills may be meant,

1. The haughty Jews and Pharisees, who were swelled with pride; yea, like high mountains and hills; how did the Pharisee glory, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men, nor as this Publican?" How did they boast of their own righteousness; they not understanding the purity and holiness of the law, it never being opened unto them in the spirituality of it, they sought justification thereby; "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness." Rom. x. 3. Paul tells us, he was alive once without the law; that is, when he was a pharisee. How without it? had he not the law in the letter of it? Yea, he had the law in that sense, and was not without it; but he means, he was without the true knowledge of the law: I thought (as if he should say) I was safe enough, and a justified person, because I had not broken the law in the letter thereof, being no swearer, drunkard, adulterer, extortioner, &c. But now he saw every sinful thought and lust of the heart, was a breach of the law, and laid the soul under God's wrath and curse. And that no righteousness save the righteousness of God, can justify a sinner before him: but this the Jews and pharisees saw not, but thought themselves righteous, and condemned others," Luke xviii. 9; and from hence were like lofty hills and mountains in their conceit: and these mountains John showed should be brought low, either in a way of mercy, as Paul was; or else in a way of judgment, as the Jews and Pharisees who believed not.

2. They were like mountains, in respect had to their legal privileges, being God's covenant people, boasting "They had Abraham to their father, and never were in bondage," John viii. 33. John Baptist in his ministry strove to level these mountains, when he saw them coming to his baptism, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father"— "Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree," Matt. iii. 7, 8, 9. He strives to cut them off

by the root; namely, from having any spiritual advantages by the covenant with Abraham, as they were his natural offspring, as such.

Cotton on the
Covenant,
p. 21, 22. Mr. Cotton, speaking of John Baptist, saith, "The ministry of John the Baptist did burn as an oven, and left them neither the root of Abraham's covenant, nor the branches of their own good works; he cutteth them off from the covenant of Abraham, and by cutting them off from the root, he leaveth them no ground to trust to."

Thus he says, God hath cut us off from the righteousness of our parents, and from boasting of his ordinances.

This John Baptist declared, and thus he laboured to prepare the way of the Lord; who indeed utterly threw down these hills and mountains of the Jews' confidence, in their glorying of their legal covenant and birth-right privileges.

For, my brethren, what became of these mountains and hills, who were lifted up (by pride and vain boasting, that they were the church of God, the only people of God) when our Lord at his death took away that legal covenant and covenant-privileges; utterly dissolving their national, legal, and typical church-state, and in its room erected his gospel-churches, his congregational churches? These hills and mountains were then brought low, and that people were levelled with the Gentiles, who before were as vallies, but by our blessed Lord were filled up, and exalted, and made fellow-heirs of the same grace, that the Jews that believe partook of.

3. The Jews and Pharisees might be compared to mountains and hills, in that they boasted they had the key of knowledge, and were the only teachers and masters of Israel, and that all besides themselves were ignorant and foolish persons. Do but read what holy Paul speaketh of them, to bring them down level with the ground; "Behold thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God. And knowest his will and approvest things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law. And art confident thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth of the law," Rom. ii. 17—21. See here how they were lifted up, and what mighty confidence they had of their knowledge and learning: but how low did our Lord bring these mountains and hills, and what contempt bring upon them, by his leaving lawyers, and pharisees, and learned Rabbins to themselves, and to the carnal confidence of their vain and fleshly minds, in rejecting of them, and not choosing one of them to be a disciple of his, and choosing poor fishermen, toll-gatherers, and such that were accounted unlearned and ignorant men? "And when they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus," Acts iv. 13. No men who have not been with Jesus, or have not received ministerial gifts and graces from the Lord Jesus, is a true minister of the Gospel. My brethren, who were more ignorant of Christ, and of the mysteries of the Gospel, than the learned rabbins among the Jews? "Nay, God hath hid these things from such, and hath revealed them to babes," Matt. xi. 25. And thus Christ brings low the mountains and hills, and exalts babes and contemptible persons (who are like vallies) to the honour of being his great ambassadors, and stewards of his sacred gospel mysteries. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," &c. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. And thus Jesus Christ exalts the low, the humble person, who is like a valley, and brings the proud and haughty, (like mountains and hills) low; making good or fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, "The lofty looks shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down. And the day of the Lord shall be upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low: and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up," Isa. ii. 11—14. See here how the Holy Ghost compares proud and haughty men to hills and mountains.

Secondly, sin (as Mr. Caryl notes, speaking of this very text) may be also meant by our sins these mountains. Our sins and unworthiness, which is as a mighty mountain and unworthiness a mountain, in our sight, when God opens our eyes; nay, the mountain of our sins reached to heaven, calling for wrath and divine vengeance: yet our Lord Jesus Christ hath levelled this mountain, and hath thrown it into the sea. "Thou wilt cast our sins into the depths of the sea," Mich. vii. 19.

1. Jesus Christ hath removed the guilt of our sins, by bearing them upon his own body on the tree; this part of this hill is brought low in our justification and free pardon. Oh, what a mountain of guilt lay upon us! 1 Pet. ii. 24.

2. He hath also removed the filth of our sins in sanctification, by which he hath washed us by the operations of his Spirit, and by sprinkling of the virtue of his own blood upon our consciences. So that our sins and unworthiness (though like to great mountains) cannot hinder us, nor any poor sinner that comes to Christ, to doubt of pardon, justification, and eternal life.

Thirdly, By mountains here also may be meant, or refer unto those great oppositions our Lord Jesus met withal, in his working out our salvation. (1.) From men. (2.) From the devil. These stood in his way like mighty mountains, like as Sannabai stood as a mountain in the way of Zerubbabel (a type of Christ) "And who art thou, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain," Zech. iv. 7.

Men and devils are like mountains in Christ's way, but are brought low.

Fourthly, As vallies may refer to despairing sinners, so mountains and hills may refer to haughty and presumptuous sinners; I speak not here of self-righteous persons, but of profane and ungodly persons, who, though they are ungodly wretches, loving and living in sin, being swearers, drunkards, covetous persons, and idolaters, yet boast and glory in the mercy of God; that since Christ died for sinners, they say, they doubt not of being saved. These are swelled with a faithless confidence, a fond credulous presumption, arising from a groundless persuasion of the mercy of God and the merits of Christ. Yet, it may be joined with some sense, and convictions of sin and the dangerous consequences thereof; but presently all is salved with the common air and breath of a promise misconstrued, and falsely applied; they not experiencing the nature of the faith of God's elect, but are such whom God denounceth wrath and eternal death against.

Therefore this is more a fancy than faith, or a sure hope; and but a vain imagination that deludes them into a belief and expectation of that, which they are in no likelihood of enjoying; for that promise that gives us Christ, gives us also a new heart, but they find no thorough change in them; Christ came to save his people from their sins, not in their sins; or to "Redeem us from all iniquity," Tit. ii. 14, I Pet. i. 18, and from a vain conversation; but they are not thus redeemed; therefore they are but as mountains lifted up, or presume their state is good, and that they shall be saved, when they are at present in a state of death and wrath; and these mountains Christ came to bring low, and will level them with the ground, if ever he manifest his love and favour to them. They say, they are Christians, they believe in God the Father, and in his Son Jesus Christ, and rest on him; but yet are swearing Christians, lying Christians, drunken and whoring Christians, which is a direct contradiction. A Christian is one that is like Christ, a disciple of Christ; but they are more like the devil than Jesus Christ; yet nevertheless, though they are so notorious in sin and wickedness, doubt not of their salvation, but "Say in their hearts they shall have peace, though they add drunkenness to thirst," Deut. xxix. 19, 20. But see what God saith, and how he will bring these hills down, "The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man," &c.

Fifthly, Vallies may refer to the low estate of mankind, or of God's elect, as considered dead in the first Adam, or as under the law and curse thereof: Mankind naturally like a valley. and mountains may refer to Satan, or those evil spirits, who were filled with pride, and were exalted on high in their hellish and diabolical power and kingdom over mankind. These spirits had man down under their feet by reason of the fall and their natural pravity, weakness, and inability that is in them, to withstand the force of this prince of the power of the air, who rules in all the children of disobedience, and hath all men naturally in his chains and fetters. O how high are devils exalted by means of our sin, over us naturally; and how low are we laid thereby! What dominion have the evil angels over all mankind until renewed! But now our blessed Lord came to bring these "Cursed mountains and high hills low;" i. e., to divest them of all their power, rule, and authority, which they have in the hearts of God's elect, while they abide in their natural state. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," I John iii. 8. This was the end of the Son of God, or one design of his, in taking our nature and becoming Mediator betwixt God and man; viz. To pull down these lofty and haughty mountains and hills, or utterly to destroy the power of the devil, and the very basis and whole frame of his kingdom, and that "By his making an end of sin, and by bringing in an everlasting righteousness," Dan. ix. See what Paul saith, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it, that is, by the blood of his cross," Col. ii. 15. By this means he hath brought these mountains and hills low, he hath Satan and all evil spirits under his feet; Jesus Christ hath absolutely conquered, and disarmed all the whole infer-

Devils like hills and mountains.

nal lake, or vanquished the power of all these cruel enemies of our souls. "By death he hath destroyed death, and him that hath the power of death, which is the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage," Heb. ii. 14, 15. And as these mountains are brought low, so poor man, (I mean God's elect, or all that believe in Jesus, who were like to vallies) are filled or exalted: how high are the lowly, nay, poor fallen men and women, lifted up and exalted?

- (1.) From a state of wrath to a state of grace.
- (2.) From a state of death to a state of life.
- (3.) From a state of condemnation to a state of justification.
- (4.) From God's fearful curse, or curse of the law, to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Jesus Christ.
- (5.) From being the children of Satan, or children of wrath; to become the children of God, sons and daughters of God.
- (6.) They being under the power of Satan, are brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son.
- (7.) And being obnoxious to the wrath of God in hell, they are made heirs of eternal life, and of eternal glory in heaven.

Sixthly, mountains and hills may refer to every lofty imagination and high thought, that exalteth itself in believers, or that magnifieth itself against the knowledge of God, 2 Cor. 10. These mountains Christ doth and will bring low, and all those dejected spirits, who by reason of sin, and sense of their unworthiness, think themselves not worthy of the least bit of bread; and can hardly lift up their heads, being so oppressed and afflicted with the plague of inward corruption, or by means of that body of sin and death that is in them, they like low vallies shall be filled and exalted. "When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, there is a lifting up; and he will save the humble person," Job xxii. 29. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted," Jam. i. 9; and such who were in a lowly condition are lifted up. By being in Christ he is a brother, and equal now in dignity and spiritual honour with the highest, and most noble, and richest Christian in the world, nay, if the poorest saint hath more grace, is most like Christ, he is lifted up higher than that brother who is rich in the world, that hath not arrived to his attainments. "But let the brother of high degree rejoice, in that he is made low," ver. 10; not made low as to his worldly riches, but low and humble in spirit. Riches make wicked men proud and haughty, they are like mountains, but when Christ comes and changes their hearts, though they be rich, yet are humble and lowly minded.

Seventhly, I might add, that mountains, &c., may in a remote sense refer to the proud and haughty monarchs of the earth, or to tyrannical kings and princes, whom the Lord Jesus will in the latter days bring low, and divest of all their power and kingdoms, and will lift up poor Sion, or exalt his church and people, who have been a long time as low vallies: "The mountains of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills," &c., Isa. ii. 2. They that are now in the valley, or are like vallies, shall then be like mountains, they shall be exalted; or such who are now like mountains and hills, shall then become vallies: God will turn the world upside down, Isa. xxiv. 1, 2; the wicked shall then be the tail, and the saints the head. The government of the world shall be in Christ's hand, and the people of the saints shall take and possess the kingdom to the end; yea, and all the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given unto them, Dan. vii. 27. So much as to vallies being exalted, and mountains and hills brought low.

"The crooked things shall be made strait."

What is meant by crooked things. 1. Crooked may refer to men's crooked opinions: they speak not right of God; they do not judge according to the straight and equal glory of all the perfections of God's holy nature; nor according to the strait rule of his holy law, but magnify the glory of his mercy, to the eclipsing the glory of his justice: and of this crooked opinion are the Socinians, and all that magnify the pardoning grace of God, without having respect to a plenary satisfaction, made to the justice and law of God by Jesus Christ. 2. The strait rule of the law is, that "He that doth those things shall live in them;" i. e., he only that never sinned, nor doth sin, shall be justified; so that none can be justified by the works of the law. But the Scribes and Pharisees, though their righteousness lay not even, or in a straight line with the law of God; but was crooked, sometimes much short on one hand, and wide on the other. For in many things they did not what the law required, and in other things they did what the law forbid, or commanded not; yet they thought none (in their opinions and lives) were more straight and even than they, when indeed none were more crooked: but these Pharisees, who

were in opinion, principles, and practices, very crooked, Christ came to make straight; and such of them that believed, were set straight, both in faith and practice by him.

2. Crooked things may refer to those false and crooked ways of worship which many walk in; ways which Christ never instituted or appointed: the word of God is the only rule for worship, and administration of ordinances; now all pretended ordinances and divine worship, that doth not exactly agree with this rule, but vary in matter or manner from it, are crooked ways.

3. Crooked may refer to the lives and conversations of men, the law of God (as it is in the hand of Jesus Christ,) and the glorious gospel, is the only rule of our lives; and all whose lives and conversations do not agree with that rule, are crooked ways. Therefore in all these respects, we should lay men's opinions, their doctrine, their worship and lives to the line and plummet; and if they agree not, or lie not strait with the rule, line, and plummet, they are crooked things. Sin is a missing the mark, an erring from the rule, or transgressing God's law; and so sinful ways are crooked ways. And as the gospel also is our rule in respect of our conversations, in its precepts, so also in what it holds forth. (1). In that hatred God thereby shows against sin, in punishing it in his own blessed Son. (2). In God's infinite love: O how are we taught of God to love him and one another, by the love of God to us in the gift of his Son! (3). In pity and bowels of compassion to one another, when in want, sorrow, and afflictions; for what pity and bowels of compassion doth the gospel hold forth was in God, to such who were in distress, want, and misery! (4). In humility: what condescension and humility hath the Son of God showed! "Who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross:" Phil. ii. 6, 8. Hence he says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," &c. Matt. xi. 29. (5). In holiness: the gospel holds forth the infinite holiness and righteousness of God's nature; in that without a perfect and complete righteousness no man can be justified in his sight; as also in sending of his Son to wash away all our sins and filthiness in his own blood; and in that the gospel also shows, that without regeneration, sanctification, and holiness, no man can enter into the kingdom, nor see his face. (6). In forgiveness: the blessed God hath laid down a rule in the gospel (in his free pardon and forgiveness of great sinners) for us; that we might learn, how to forgive them that trespass against us: I might proceed to many other things; and as what things the gospel holds forth, should be a rule to us how to walk in this world, towards God and man; so the life of Christ and his apostles, is our pattern. And all men, whose lives and conversations do not accord, or agree with the precepts of the law in Christ's hand, nor according to what the Gospel holds forth, nor according to our holy pattern, they walk in their own crooked ways; and Christ came to make men's lives straight, and that they might leave all their own crooked ways.

4. Crooked may also refer unto men's crooked spirits; how cross and uneven are some men's hearts and spirits to the word and will of God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. But Jesus Christ, by the power of his Spirit, makes their hearts and spirits to lie straight and even with the word and will of God.

"And rough ways shall be made smooth."

Rough ways may denote, or set forth, those many obstructions and stumbling-blocks that are in the sinner's way; their paths are rough, many obstacles and stumbling-blocks being in their way, in coming to Christ, and in closing with his church and people; which Christ by his word, gospel-ministry, and by the operations of his Spirit, removes, and so makes their way smooth and even. "Cast up, cast up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-blocks out of the way of my people, Isa. lvii. 14; which words may refer to the ministry of John Baptist, and to gospel ministers.

My brethren, God caused the ways to the cities of refuge under the law, to be very smooth, plain, and easy, for the man-slayer; and ordered all stumbling-blocks to be taken up, and rough ways to be made plain; which was a type of Christ's making the way of sinners easy in coming to him, and to the Father by him.

"And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

This is the design of God in his levelling mountains, and filling or exalting valleys, and in making crooked things straight, and rough ways smooth. viz.

O that all flesh, that is, all men that believe, may, 1. See the glory of God's wisdom in his contriving the way of our salvation by Jesus Christ.

2. The glory of his infinite love, mercy, and divine goodness.

3. The glory of his infinite justice and holiness, in that his justice is as much exalted in and by Christ, as his love and mercy.

4. The glory of God's power, and his Almighty arm; "Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 24. All the divine attributes being united, or meeting together in sweet harmony in Jesus Christ; how Almighty is God in him to save lost sinners!

5. The glory of his truth and faithfulness.

6. The glory of his free grace, being exalted alone in our salvation, and sorry man utterly debased and laid low.

7. The glory of the holy law of God; how is the law magnified and made honourable in Christ, who was born under it, and came to perform all that righteousness and obedience which it required of us, and in dying for us, to satisfy for our breach thereof! Thus in respect of all the glorious attributes of God, the glory of God is in and by Jesus Christ revealed.

Secondly, take the glory of God here, for his glory personally considered, (1). How doth the glory of God the Father shine forth herein, or what revelation is there of it in the gospel! (2). How is the glory of God the Son revealed also! and, (3). How is the glory of God the Holy Ghost likewise revealed and magnified! And all this is done and displayed in Jesus Christ the Mediator. And all flesh shall see it; that is, not the Jews only, but also the Gentiles, or all nations; i. e., some in all nations; nay, the whole world at last.

From the opening these metaphorical expressions, two or three propositions or points of doctrine may be raised.

The Doctrine raised. 1. Doct. That there are many obstructions, stumbling-blocks, or difficulties that Jesus Christ must remove, to make the way of sinners plain and smooth unto everlasting life.

2. Doct. That the grand design of Christ in coming into this world, was to discover, reveal, and manifest the glory of God.

To fill every valley, and bring low every hill and mountain, &c.

I shall begin with the first of these propositions.

First, I shall show you further concerning those obstacles, difficulties, and stumbling-blocks, which lie in the sinner's way in respect to their justification before God and eternal life, which render the way rough, &c. Also show how the Lord Jesus Christ doth remove these stumbling-blocks.

First. As to the Jews, there were several stumbling-blocks in their way, as there are also now in the way of many persons in respect of their justification before God, and of eternal life, which tend to make the way rough.

1. The law and justice of God as a mountain of difficulty, Who could get over it? Mount Sinai was a burning mountain, from whence proceeded fire and smoke, blackness, and darkness, and tempest, Heb. xii. 18, shadowing forth the terrible storms of God's wrath and indignation; which pursued the breakers of that law, to the lowest hell; which made "Moses exceedingly to fear and quake," verse 21.

But Jesus Christ by his obedience to the law, and, in bearing that wrath, punishment and curse due to us for the breach thereof, hath removed this stumbling-block or difficulty out of the way.

But the Jews did not (as many now a-days do not) see how this obstacle is removed, but they thought it possible to get over this mount, and it seemed to them but as a mole-hill, they thinking by their external conformity to the letter thereof, and so by their own legal righteousness, to be justified; not knowing that it required a perfect or sinless obedience, and that one sinful or evil thought was a breach thereof.

This was their ignorance, viz., they understood not the end, purpose, and design of God, in giving forth that ministration of the law upon Mount Sinai; which was not given to the Jews (nor others) after sin entered, for life, to justify them before God. But,

1. To make "sin appear exceeding sinful," Rom. vii. 13, and to discover how they (who were under that law) as well as the Gentiles, by violating the law, or works of the law, written in their hearts, were found guilty before God. "Now we know that whatsoever the law saith, it saith unto them that are under the law, that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19.

2. To show the need and absolute necessity of a perfect righteousness, which every way answered the strict requirement of the moral law; and by the types and sacrifices of the ceremonial law, God showed the necessity of a sin-atoning sacrifice: "For it was

impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin, as to the conscience," Heb. ix. 13.

3. Therefore the law in both respects served as a school-master, to lead sinners to Christ; but neither of these they understood, but sought to be justified by their own imperfect righteousness. And that the law was a stumbling-block to them, is evident by what Paul saith, "But Israel that followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness, Rom. ix. 31. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone," ver. 32.

Whosoever seeks justification or righteousness to justify them, by doing or by working in obedience to the law, or any law, and not by Christ's righteousness alone, in a way of believing, stumble; the law is a stumbling-block to them, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, as the Jews were. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. It is, as I have often told you, when the conscience of a sinner is awakened, and he sees his horrid guilt; O then he seeks for help and relief by his prayers, tears, reformation of life, and not in and by Jesus Christ; and at this stumbling-block many stumble and perish, this makes the sinner's way rough, which Christ in the ministry of the gospel makes smooth; telling all both Jews and Gentiles, that by the "works of the law shall no flesh be justified," Rom. iii. 20. "For had there been a law," (any law) "that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. iii. 21. Again, he saith, "If righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. 21.

Secondly, Jesus Christ himself was a stumbling-block to the Jews. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block," 1 Cor. i. 23, not intentionally; Christ is not the cause of their stumbling, but the object at whom they stumbled.

Quest. How came this to pass?

Ans. 1. They thought, that the Messiah when he came, would appear in great outward grandeur, as a mighty temporal prince, to save them from all their earthly enemies; they not knowing, they needed a Christ to come to die for them, to save them from their sins, wrath, and all their spiritual enemies; yet it was said in Daniel, the Messiah should be cut off.

2. And as they stumbled at his person, so also at his shameful and ignominious death; they could not believe nor once imagine, that they could be justified from sin by the obedience and righteousness of Christ, or by a person that they hanged on a tree; they could not see how their sins should be laid upon another, or one in the sinner's stead.

The person of Christ a stumbling-block to the Jews.

The Scripture saith, that the soul that sins shall die; so that they could not see, how another should die in the stead, or room of the guilty criminal, or that God would accept of a surety, the just for the unjust.

Thirdly, the word of faith was another stumbling-block to the Jews, "Even them that stumble at the word;" (1 Pet. ii. 8.) or at the preaching of the Gospel: our Lord told them, "That unless a man eat his flesh and drink his blood, he hath no life in him—And when they heard this, they said, This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" (John vi. 53, 60). By this eating, the Jews thought our Saviour meant a corporal eating; "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (ver. 52.) The papists say, it refers to a sacramental eating his flesh, of which our Lord speaks not; men may eat of that bread, and drink of that cup in the sacrament, and perish; but this eating is a believing in Jesus Christ, or apprehending, or receiving of him by faith, who only is the object of that faith, which is called justifying faith; but this believing to righteousness, and justification, was a mere stumbling-block to the Jews; and so it is to many in our days, who would eat their own bread, and drink their own drink, and wear their own apparel.

The word of faith a stumbling-block.

Fourthly, sin is another grand stumbling-block in the sinner's way, which makes their way rough: O my sins are great, my sins are many, I am a vile and a polluted wretch; were I a righteous, a holy, and spiritual person (saith an ungodly man) I could believe I might be justified. If I had a holy heart, and a holy life, or were I truly humbled, and broken for my sins, then I could venture my soul upon Christ.

Sin is a stumbling-block in the way to salvation.

Ans. 1. Now to remove this stumbling-block, and to make the sinner's way smooth, Jesus Christ shows us in his word, that original sin, Adam's first sin,

This stumbling-block removed.

brought wrath and condemnation upon all mankind, or "Judgment came to all men unto condemnation, and so death passed upon all men," Rom. v.

2. Moreover, that the least actual sin is enough to damn the soul for ever; yea, one evil thought, as well as ten thousand of the greatest sins, it being a breach of God's law.

3. Nay, if a sinner could live and not commit one sin, yet he could not be justified thereby; for "I know nothing of myself, yet am I not thereby justified;" or if Paul should say, admit I did not know any sin was in me, or now lived and sinned not; yet my old sins, my former sins would condemn me, without I have the righteousness of Christ to stand in before God.

Sins, all our sins, original and actual, before grace and after grace; small sins as well as great sins, were laid upon Jesus Christ; he bore the sins and punishment due for all the sins of God's people, both past, present, and to come; all the whole debt is paid for God's elect, and this thou must believe, God in Christ is reconciled and pacified towards all that believe in Jesus; and this is the way, by which he makes the sinner's way smooth, and removes this stumbling-block out of his way, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19; Rom. v. 10.

4. Sinners must not believe, that their forgiveness lies in their repentance and sorrow for sin, nor in their inherent holiness. I mean, it is not for the sake of their repentance, nor for the worth of their faith, nor that their inherent holiness is any part, or matter of their justifying righteousness before God; or for the sake and worth of which they are pardoned and justified; but only by the active and passive obedience of Christ. "Be it known unto you therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things," Acts xiii. 38, 39.

5. Consider that repentance, sorrow for sin, and humiliation, faith itself, are the effects of Christ's death and merits; and that all sense of sin, and such a believing or confidence, which an ungodly person may have, before he obtains a vital union with Christ, are but dead works, and profits no man to justification; and know also, that true repentance, &c., is the immediate product of saving faith, though faith itself is a fruit of God's Spirit, Gal. v. 22. The sense of divine love in free forgiveness, works brokenness of heart, and true sorrow for sin. Can a malefactor be melted into tears, for his treason and rebellion against his lawful sovereign, when he sees he is condemned to die? No, no, he is rather hardened against him; but when he hears that there is a proclamation come forth of a free pardon for all his rebellion and abominable treasons, then he is melted and falls down at the feet of his gracious sovereign. So it is here.

6. To make the way yet more smooth and easy, God pronounceth a free pardon to the rebellious and stout-hearted ones who look unto him, "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness; for I bring my righteousness near unto you," Isa. xlii. 12. Yea, such that are not only void of righteousness, but enemies to true righteousness and holiness of life, that despise God's counsel, and hate instruction and the knowledge of God. Sure this may tend to remove this stumbling-block, or raise these vallies, and level this mountain.

7. The blessed God is so gracious in Jesus Christ, that though he afflict thee for thy sins, and thou art never the better, but rather worse; yet his free grace comes leaping over this mountain, and all impediments and unworthiness in us whatsoever. "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and I smote him, and hid me, and was wroth," Isa. lvii. 17, 18. Well, and was he humbled? No. "And he went on frowardly in the way of his heart;" and what will God do now with him? Will he not pour forth his anger, and consume him for ever? No, no. "I have seen his ways, saith the Lord, and will heal him, and restore comfort to him." Ay, but saith a poor believer, I cannot pray, I have almost given quite over praying; such a temptation thou mayest be under, and so it was with some of God's people of old: nay, and they were also weary of God's ordinances and holy worship; yet see how God's free grace levels this mountain and removes this stumbling-block. "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with thy money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, and hast wearied me with thine iniquities," Isa. xliii. 22, 23, 24. Thou hast (as if Christ should say) made it necessary for me to take upon me the form of a servant, that I might bear the weight and carry away the load of thy sins; see how our

Lord aggravates the sins of his people, not to magnify his justice, but to exalt his mercy in his free pardon. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own Name's sake, and will not remember thy sins," v. 25.

9. O what promises hath God made to great and notorious sinners! "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," Isa. i. 18.

"I say unto you, all manner of sins and blasphemy, against the Father and the Son, shall be forgiven unto men," &c. Matt. xii. 31.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," or the man of iniquity, "the vilest man, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 7.

Let him believe in Jesus Christ, for there is no other way to return to God; and then all their wicked, unbelieving, presuming, or despairing and blasphemous thoughts, shall be forgiven, and all acts of gross transgressions whatsoever.

10. What horrid and vile sinners hath God in a way of free grace through Christ pardoned! What a sinner was Manasses, Mary Magdalene, the Jews that cried, "let his blood be on us, and on our children," and who murdered the Lord of life and glory! Paul, who persecuted the saints to death; nay, what a sinner was Adam? and yet was pardoned.

What did God do for him? what power had he to withstand all temptations! what a common head was he made to all his whole offspring! what a stock had he in his hand! and what ruin did he bring upon the whole world, as well as on his own soul! what a God did he disbelieve, contemn and despise!

what a holy and blessed image did he deface! what a vile devil did he obey, and set on his hellish throne! And what a curse did he by his sin bring upon the whole Creation! Moreover, what were some of the Corinthians? 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11.

11. And lastly, what kind of sinners are invited to come to Christ, or to fly to God in him? Such who are heavy laden with sin and horrid guilt, Matt. xi. 28. Backsliders from God, and such that had done as evil things as they could, Jer. iii. 5. And why is all this, but to magnify free-grace without works; and to fill up vallies, and bring mountains low, and remove all stumbling-blocks out of the sinner's way, that the glory of God might be revealed? But no more at this time.

SERMON III.

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and rough ways shall be made smooth.—Luke iii. 5.

THAT there are many mountains of difficulties that Jesus Christ must remove, and several stumbling-blocks which he must take up, to make the sinner's way smooth unto eternal life.

I have spoken already of four things, which are as mountains of difficulty or stumbling-blocks in the sinner's way, and have showed how Jesus Christ doth remove them. I shall now proceed,

Fifthly, there is another stumbling-block which must be removed, or as a great impediment, taken out of the sinner's way; and that is, despair of the pardoning grace of God in and by Jesus Christ.

1. I shall show what despair is.

2. Discover from whence it is, that this stumbling-block comes to lie in the sinner's way.

3. Show the great evil and danger thereof.

Note, despair, I have intimated, in opening these metaphorical expressions, is like a valley, and presumption as a mountain; so it may be considered as a stumbling-block in the sinner's way.

2. Despair of any sufficiency in ourselves, of any worth, power, and strength of our own, is a holy despair; and this valley of humility and self-abasement must never be

filled up; we must by no means allow of self-exaltation. "No flesh must glory in his presence," 1 Cor. i. 29. This I do not mean.

Despair of God's pardoning grace in Christ is that I speak of, which is either (1.) Private, a total privation of the habit of faith or hope; or, (2.) Negative, a cessation of the act or exercise of faith and hope, at least for a time, in the sense and discerning of the soul itself, arising through temptation, or weakness of grace, or from the want of the exercising of faith and hope in God. It is despair in this sense, I chiefly purpose to speak to.

1. Despair refuseth all manner of comfort, or hope of mercy, under those strong convictions the sinner hath of sin, wrath, and misery; he urgeth the sentence of the law, not considering the greatness of the grace of God in Christ; whereas faith and hope have to do with the promises.

2. Utter despair takes off the soul from inclining to embrace the free favour and rich grace of God in Jesus Christ; Faith and hope take hold of it, knowing "Where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded." Rom. vi.

3. Despair sees more sin in the soul, than there is grace and pardon in Jesus Christ; but faith sees more virtue in Christ's blood, and favour through him in the heart of God, to justify and save the soul, than there is demerit in sin, to damn and destroy it.

4. Despair always pores upon sin, or on the disease of the soul; and sees not the cure; faith and hope eyes the Lord Jesus Christ, as that full and blessed remedy. "They said there is no hope," Jer. xviii. 21.

Despair (as one observes) is very peremptory and positive in concluding against itself; it is resolved upon nothing but death, sin he thinks being greater than can be forgiven to a lost and undone creature; as in the highest degree of faith and hope, there is assurance of salvation, so in despair there is a dismal and uncomfortable apprehension and persuasion of eternal damnation. But hope, though it may be accompanied with many fears and doubts, yet hath some grounded expectation of future happiness, and therefore in a patient and felicitous manner waits on God in the use of means for it.

Secondly, I shall show you from whence this stumbling-block comes to lie in the way of sinners.

From whence despair arises. 1. It ariseth from a sense that the sinner hath of the breach of God's holy law, and his severe sentence against all men thereupon, who saith, he will by no means clear the guilty. Now to remove this, consider, that the guilt of our sins was charged upon Christ as our Surety, and he hath made a full satisfaction to the law and justice of God; so that every soul that believes, shall be acquitted in a way of justice and righteousness, as well as in a way of grace and mercy.

2. But, saith the despairing sinner, I find naturally such pravity, such inward filth and corruption in my heart, that I may see there is no hope for me.

The woful state of sinners by nature. Ausw. 1. It is true, there is in all unrenewed persons a privation of power, an absence, a total privation; an absence not in part but in degrees; it is not only a suspension of acts, as may be in a man that is asleep, but in a man that is dead, when we were without strength; Nay, without life; not as an absence of power, as in sickness, but a total privation or absence of power.

Clarkson, p. 75. Also (as one notes) not only a total privation in the respect of power, but it is universal in respect of the subject of power, every part, every faculty is impotent, and depraved, yea, wholly deprived of power to act, do, stir or move, in a true spiritual manner; the will, the understanding, the affections, memory, conscience, &c.

3. Nay, and the soul is incapable in a natural way to receive power as a branch that is cut off from a tree, and is withered, is incapable to become fruitful; it is such an incapacity as are in stones to become children unto Abraham; or that in dry bones to live, to be joined together, and to be animated, and made instruments of vital acts; nothing but infinite power can bring them together: regeneration is a new creation, it is God's workmanship.

It is not (as worthy writers observe) 2 Cor. v. 17; Eph. iv. 24, only a physical want of power; but a moral privation, a want of will, both unable and unwilling to be able, and also unable to be willing, without infinite power incline the will, and make it willing; "Ye will not come to me," John v. 40.

Life must be given before a sinner can breathe, stir, or move, in a spiritual manner; either to believe, repent, love God, subdue sin; faith, repentance, and love to God, &c., are given to a sinner. Sinners are in a wretched state. "Their thoughts are only evil, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5; their lusts have power over them, they have eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin. Moreover, they are all in Satan's chains, he hath them under his feet. But what of all this? Is there no hope? Must a sinner de-

spair because he cannot help himself, quicken himself, renew himself, and change his own heart? Though he may change his outward course of life, yet his heart will remain vile and filthy still. Yet sinners ought not to despair. For,

1. Consider, is not God able to put a principle of life into thee? Cannot he quicken thee, and put a new spirit into thee? How this stumbling-block is removed.

2. And hath he not promised to take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh?

3. Were not such who have got a new heart, and are renewed and do believe, once in the same condition thou art in, being dead, blind, depraved, filthy, carried away with folly and vanity as thou art?

Object. You say right, saith the despairing soul, I do not only want power, and am prone to all evil, but I find that I love vanity, and my vile lusts; and I find in me an indisposition to that which is good, and thus stumbles me: sin is sweet, the world is pleasant, carnal company desirable. But I find no propensity, no desire, no love to, nor any delight in spiritual things; nay, and not only an indisposition to good, but also an averseness, a hatred thereunto; "There is enmity in my carnal mind against God and spiritual things," Rom. viii. 7; so that such things are wearisomeness to me, therefore I give up all hope, and cannot believe.

Ans. To answer this, suppose thou art as bad as sin and the devil can make thee. Encouragement to sinners to believe in Christ.

1. Yet is not God able to change that vile heart of thine? Cannot he destroy that enmity that is in thee, and cause thee to love him, and hate all sin?

2. Were not those St. Paul speaks of, as bad as thou art? viz., "Thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate persons, abusers of themselves with mankind; and such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

3. You can be but sinners, and not worse than the chiefest of sinners, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save such. This is a "saying worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," 1 Tim. i. 15. But why, Paul, didst thou obtain mercy? see ver. 16, "That in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them, which hereafter should believe on him to everlasting life. Were not his sins as great as thine, and his heart as much depraved, his will as rebellious? O then look up to God for help, and cry for faith to believe, and resolve to venture on the Lord Jesus Christ. I told you the last day, what great sinners (besides Paul) found mercy.

4. God hath sent me to you in this place, to treat with you as a poor despised ambassador, and to offer peace to you, though you have been long rebellious against him, and what though you "Have spoken and done as evil things as you could?" Jer. iii. 5. So had they God offered mercy to, Jer. iii. 5. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." 2 Cor. v. 20. The ministration of the gospel is ordained to that end, that sinners might believe; and God hath promised it shall accomplish that for which he hath sent it, Isa. lv. 11. It shall come to some in "power and not in word," only, 2 Thes. i. 4, 5. And why not so to you? Cannot you say with the poor man in the gospel, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief," Mark ix. 24. The more impotent you are, the more need to look to Christ for help: "For without him you can do nothing," John xv. 5.

5. If ye perish, it is not only because you are great sinners (though sin is the procuring cause thereof) but it is because you refuse to look to Christ, or refuse to accept of Jesus Christ, or despair of God's mercy in him, even as they perished in the wilderness, who refused to look up the brazen serpent; "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. What, neither believe God, when he saith there is life in his Son? Not believe Christ, who saith, "Whosoever cometh to me I will in no wise cast them out," John vi. 37; nor believe his ambassadors? But what cause or reason have you to conclude there is no Christ, no grace, no faith for you? Is there not less cause or ground for you to despair or to doubt, than the Jews had that put our Lord to death, and many others I have mentioned?

6. Consider how soon God was reconciled to Adam; and whose sin was worse than his? Who was made ruler and lord of this nether creation; who had no spot, no stain of sin, nor inward pollution in him, who had power to stand; he was a free-willer indeed, and none but he had power of himself to will and do that which was good; he was set up as a common head of all his posterity. If thou sin, thou dost but murder thyself, or destroy

thine own soul; but he by his first sin murdered millions of millions, even the whole world; yet he believing the free promise of God in Christ, was pardoned.

7. That God should be reconciled in Christ, fully reconciled; so that all his wrath is over, and "No fury in him" (Isa. xxvii. 4.) to all that fly to Jesus Christ, who hath borne all God's vindictive wrath and justice. God is not in Christ only reconcileable, (as some speak) but he is reconciled; if it were not so, what can reconcile him, or what can appease his anger? Can any thing but a sacrifice? And is there any other sin-atoning and wrath-appeasing sacrifice, to be offered up to God? Can men's believing, repenting, or obedience, reconcile God to sinners? Doth Christ's obedience make God reconcileable, and sinners' obedience reconcile him? Which then ought to have the greatest glory, Christ, or sinners? Come, a free pardon is offered to you once again, upon your acceptance of Jesus Christ; for God is so reconciled in his Son, that he doth discharge, pardon, and acquit all those that believe in him, without a satisfaction made by sinners to his law and justice, and without any foreseen faith or obedience (to any such end or purpose) done by them, and without anything wrought in them: faith does not make the obedience and death of Christ satisfactory unto God, it adds no worth to Christ's merits. Oh! admire free grace, what love and favour is this!

Should a sinner lie a thousand years in hell, and bear a part of God's vindictive justice, and yet then through Christ's blood and satisfactory sacrifice, be discharged and redeemed out of it; all must say that would be great grace; but such that believe, bear no part of his vindictive wrath; we pay not one farthing of that debt (nor were we able) which we owed to God's justice: no, Christ hath borne it all, he hath paid all that we stood charged with.

8. God is reconciled for ever to such that believe, and no new war shall ever arise between God and them; the league and covenant of peace can never be dissolved, never be broken, "Sion's warfare is accomplished, her sins are pardoned, for she hath received double for all her sin," Isa. xl. 1, 2. Christ's satisfaction was a double payment, nay, (as Mr. Caryl notes) it was an hundred-fold more than enough, considering the infiniteness of the worth of his person. Our comfort is this, our warfare is ended, and the fruits of Christ's death is not only pardon of all our sins, but a double favour; not only a discharge from hell, but grace, adoption, sonship; nay, a marriage with Christ, and glory in heaven for evermore.

Thirdly. It is not only from the sense of God's law being broken, or their sins very great, and their state deplorable, that some despair, "But by reason they have found all

Some stumble and despair because the means of grace hitherto have been ineffectual to them.

means of grace hitherto ineffectual, or insufficient to them, to this very day."

I have (saith a doubting and despairing sinner) heard many most excellent sermons, I have sat under a powerful ministry, and yet I find I cannot believe, I am still in my sins, and as bad as ever: nay, I have had strong convictions sometimes, but they are gone off; I have sinned against light, promises, and solemn covenantings with God, when under his rod, &c.

Ans. To take up this stumbling-block.

1. May be thou comest to hear men, and not Christ, speak to thee; or hadst too great an eye upon the instruments by whom the gospel is administered; alas! what means this great noise that is abroad, of crying up one, and crying down another free-grace preacher? The people of this age are carnal: one is for Paul, and another for Apollos. Sirs, the efficacy of the word lies not in the gifts, learning, eloquence, or abilities of ministers, but alone in the agency of the Holy Spirit; "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," 2 Cor. iv. 7.

2. Or may be, you looked for the efficacy and divine power to lie in the bare word; alas, the Word is like Christ's flesh, without the Spirit it quickeneth no man, it profiteth no man. John vi.

3. Or may be, you have heard the word out of curiosity, or to feed your heads only with notions and speculative knowledge.

4. Or (perhaps) never prayed to God before you came to hear, that he would bless the word to your conversion; for though God will do all that he hath promised, yet he will be sought unto by poor creatures, that he may do it for them. "I will cry unto God most high, to God that performeth all things for me," Psal. xxxvii. 2. Or,

5. May be, the day of God's power was not, is not yet come: you must wait (as the poor man did) at the pool though it be thirty-eight years; the time of healing may come at last. "In the day of God's power," John v. 2, 3, 4, 5; Psal. ex. 3; conviction shall never finally go off.

Fourthly. Despair may arise from Satan's temptations, he hath many ways to cause doubts and fears to rise in the mind of a poor sinner, and be sure all despairing thoughts that rise in the heart are from Satan.

Despair
arises from
Satan's sug-
gestions.

I. May he thou dost believe and hast hope, but because thy faith is small and weak, the devil will call it despair; he would make thee believe a little grace is no grace; he will argue from thy weakness in grace, thy total want of it; as he persuades some that are strong in faith, that their confidence is nothing but presumption.

2. Consider all true faith is mixed with some doubts; is our faith, our love, our patience, our humility perfect? Who can say he believes, and has no unbelief, and has no want of love to God and Jesus Christ? Who is so meek, that never was angry, or so patient, that he never did unduly complain, or so humble, that he never had one high thought of himself? I shall now proceed to the next thing proposed.

Secondly, viz. speak a little to that great evil and danger of despair and unbelieving thoughts.

I. Consider, that despair casteth contempt upon the word of God, and upon the ministers of Christ; for both declare how ready, able, and willing God is to embrace and save all that come to him by Jesus Christ; such that despair, render the word and ministers of Christ liars, and not to be regarded in what they say and testify.

The end and
danger of
despair.

II. But this is not the worst, for despair and unbelieving thoughts cast contempt upon God himself, and on most of his holy attributes. (1.) On his mercy in Christ, which is infinite. (2.) On his justice, which is fully satisfied, towards all them that believe. (3.) On his power, who is able to do more abundantly than we can conceive or think. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," Heb. vii. 25; and the like might be said in respect of his wisdom, love, truth, and faithfulness."

III. Despairing and unbelieving thoughts, cast contempt upon that fulness that is in Jesus Christ, on the fulness of his merits and righteousness, and upon the efficaciously of his blood; also it casteth contempt upon the faithfulness and gracious promises of our Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. The evil of despairing and unbelieving thoughts are aggravated by the clearness and fulness of that testimony God hath given of the freeness of his grace, in the pardon of sin to all that believe.

1. The Father bears witness.

2. The Son bears witness.

3. The Holy Ghost bears witness, that whosoever cometh to Christ, "Believes in Christ, shall not perish, but have everlasting life," Mark xvi. 16, John iii. 16.

4. And Christ's faithful ministers bear witness also, how ready God is to receive all such.

V. Despair is aggravated, by God's gracious performance of his free promises to the greatest sinner, to thousands of sinners; yes, to every individual sinner that ever threw himself upon his mercy, believing in Jesus Christ; multitudes have tried God's faithfulness in his promises, and have found his word a sure word, a tried word; who had no other ground to believe but what you have: if never any sinner who cast himself upon God in Christ in a right manner, missed of pardon and free justification, what a sin is it for any to say, as to me, there is no hope?

VI. The evil and danger of despair is also aggravated, in that those very persons will and can believe mortal men, who are faithful in respect of their promises; and yet will not believe and trust a faithful God, and the ever-blessed Redeemer, who cannot lie; so that the credit and reputation of God (it seems) is gone with these persons; men in this case are greatly enraged and wounded, *i. e.*, if they cannot be believed nor trusted, who are both able and faithful persons.

VII. Such that despair, or believe not, give more credit to Satan, or believe the devil more than God: Satan puts these despairing and unbelieving thoughts (as you heard) into their hearts. O sinner, sinner, will you believe the Devil, rather than the most high and faithful God of heaven and earth?

VII. Despair exposeth a sinner (as it hath many a one) to destroy both body and soul for ever; how many in despair have destroyed themselves, by self-murder, by hanging, drowning, and by cutting their own throats?

IX. It renders preaching vain, as to them "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Can God spread a table in the wilderness?" Can God, or will he pardon my sins? Such that believe not, profit not under the word.

X. Despair upholds and strengthens Satan's kingdom in the sinner's heart, and in the world, and binds the guilt of all sin, the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, upon the unbelieving and despairing person.

To remove this stumbling-block, I shall but add one or two things more.

The greatest sinner is allowed to believe on Christ.

he is come

He is invited to come and eat.

Nay, commanded to believe.

1. Consider, O sinner, that thou art allowed, or admitted to believe in Jesus Christ, whosoever thou art. If meat be set upon a nobleman's table, with a free admittance of all that come to eat; certainly, no hungry man need to fear, but fall on and fill his belly: why should he say, I shall perish with hunger, when to such a plentiful banquet?

2. And not only are all allowed to eat and spare not, but they are invited by this great God, to come and feed on his dainties.

3. Nay, which is more, they are not only allowed to eat, and invited to this feast, but commanded to eat, and drink abundantly: if thou art a sinner, thou art commanded to believe, commanded to eat; "This is his commandment, that ye believe on his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23.

4. And thy refusing to eat, or to come to Christ, or to believe on him, will grieve him; and know it is the greatest sin not to believe on Christ.

5. Besides you must eternally perish if you do not believe, therefore endeavour to come, labour to believe; at your utmost peril, see you do not refuse to do it. Do not say you cannot believe, but exercise such a faith as you can, or are able to do.

How a weak christian may be re-
lieved. Secondly, as to such who do not utterly despair, but are attended with doubts and fears, or who are betwixt hope and despair. I shall add a word or two by way of direction to them.

1. Consider, it is not the degree of grace, but the truth of grace to which salvation is promised: therefore.

2. Put a just value upon the lowest degree of faith, and let it not seem contemptible in thy sight; let it not appear as nothing, though it be as small as a grain of mustard-seed, for it is of more worth than the whole world.

3. Labour to distinguish between the weakness of grace, and grace itself under that weakness; and whilst you are mourning under one, be sure that you rejoice in the other. Do not cast away a bit of bread because thou hast no more, nor throw away one corn with the chaff; if it be but a lost groat, do not sweep it up with the dust behind the door. Christ came to seek a lost groat.

4. Consider the many promises, which are made to the weakest degree of grace; Jesus Christ will not quench the smoking flax, nor the bruised reed. If there be in thy heart a hatred of sin, and a sense of the want of righteousness, thou being taken off from resting on any thing short of Christ, thou hast no cause to doubt.

5. Consider, to deny the least degree or measure of grace in us, against clear demonstrations and evidences brought to convince us of it, is to be cruel to our own souls; nay, and (as one observes) it is a kind of denying of Jesus Christ. I have (saith he) sent in provision into such a soul, and have often bid him eat; and he says, there is nothing before him. Is not this an affront put upon the Lord Jesus?

6. Christ will make weak grace victorious, all the devils of hell cannot quench the least degree, smallest spark of true grace in the soul; and it shall in due time become strong and mighty through God.

7. All graces are mixed (as I have often told you) with their contraries; no faith but is mixed up with some unbelief at first; no hope without some kind of despair; nor humility without some pride; no grace is perfect; that which is perfected, is not yet come: because thou hast a weak eye, wilt thou say thou art quite blind. And to accept of a small favour, is the way to receive a greater.

U S E.

1. Let us dread all despair and unbelieving thoughts, about God's mercy, free grace, justification, and pardon in Christ; since the evil and danger of this sin is so great.

2. We infer also, that God is infinite in his patience and forbearance towards sinners in preserving of such, and calling to them, and in crying after them who cast such horrid contempt upon him; yea, and upon his goodness, power, truth, and faithfulness.

3. Admire the grace and goodness of God, in his continuance and renewal of the offers of pardon, to such unbelieving and desponding sinners; also admire the love of Jesus Christ, who is come to fill the vallies, and level the mountains; and to remove all obstacles and stumbling-blocks out of the sinner's way.

4. O what encouragement is here for great sinners, old sinners, backsliding sinners, Jer. iii. 12, to believe in Christ! What though thou art the worst of men, the greatest of sin-

ners, and under matchless guilt; let it be so, and thou art under the blackest character, yet there is hope; "Thy scarlet sins shall be made as white as snow," Isa. 1, 18. i. e. they shall be washed away in Christ's blood that very moment that thou believest in him. What though thou art without Christ now, without God, and without hope; so were they Paul speaks of, Eph. ii. 12. Christ is offered to sinners as sinners, he came to call sinners. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; and such that believe not, sin grievously.

5. Let all tremble who believe not, because their sins are so great, and they are not humbled enough, as they say; such are digging up the foundation of God's free grace, as much as lieth in them; the greater your sins are, the more need you have of a Saviour: the more polluted, the more need you have to go to the fountain to be washed; the sicker thou art, the more need thou hast of a physician.

6. You can have no true and well-grounded hope, until you believe in Christ, or come to him; nothing can secure you from God's divine wrath and vengeance; no, not your praying, not your hearing, not your sorrow for sin, not your tears, not the reforming your lives; all is vain, until you believe in Christ, or rest on him.

Lastly, you that do believe, strive for a greater faith; some see not, and yet believe: O give all the glory unto God, and to Christ; let us assume none of it to our selves, nor ascribe it to faith; but to him, who is the Object and Author thereof.

SERMON IV.

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain shall be brought low, &c.—Luke iii. 5.

DOCT. That there are many mountains of difficulties that Jesus Christ must remove, and several stumbling-blocks taken out of the way of sinners, to make their way smooth to eternal life.

The last day I spoke of despair, which is a great stumbling-block in the way of some sinners, and showed how the Lord Jesus removes that.

Fifthly, presumption is another mountain Christ came to bring low; or, as it is a stumbling-block, to take up out of the sinner's way.

Some are so far from despairing, that they are very confident of their salvation, and doubt not, but pretend they wholly rest upon Jesus Christ, and yet go on in a wicked course of life; are earthly, covetous, proud, loose, vain, and carnal; find no change of heart, no regeneration, no sanctification; yet say, they doubt not of being saved: and it may be, there are more that stumble here than fall into the ditch or valley of desperation: though Christ says, "Except a man be born again, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," John iii. 3. And "that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14; which consisteth in a spiritual conformity to God, and is peculiar to all God's elect that are called; is the result and quintessence of all the graces of the Spirit, and effects of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and fruits of true faith, and of our union with Christ. Moreover, as the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without proper fruits is dead also. See the opening of the words, page II.

I shall here speak of this stumbling-block, I mean presumption; in respect had to four sorts of people, besides them I have mentioned.

1. Some like the Jews (of whom I have spoken) presume on their own righteousness; and what is that? Why, a sober and moral life, doing to all men as they would be done unto; or by living up to the light and dictates of natural conscience; this is good, but such that depend on this, trust to this, make faith void, and intimate that Christ is dead in vain. To this sort I may add and rank all those, who pretend to a Christ within; they give a new name, a blasphemous name to this inward light; but their whole religion is no more than that of a sober moral man's (and some of them have not that) yet presume and boast of an absolute perfection in themselves, by the light within, casting contempt on a Christ without, and on his imputed righteousness in justification.

Moreover, there is among these, another sort near of kin to them (who are like mountains lifted up, that God in due time will bring low) who magnify natural religion, light and knowledge of Christ crucified, and like the Greeks of old, call it foolishness; nay, decry all revealed and supernatural religion. They pretend

Presumption is a stumbling-block in the sinner's way.

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to own and acknowledge a God, but deny he is such a God as his holy word declares him to be; viz., one infinite, simple, and entire essence, subsisting in three distinct Persons; they deny Christ and the Holy Spirit, to be God equal with the Father; and also affirm, that God is made up wholly of mercy and goodness, and that they believe not, that justice is such a property of his very being, that he cannot, will not pardon sins, as a simple act of mercy, without a satisfaction to his law and justice.

Yet they seem to commend moral virtue, like the old heathen, saying, God will reward it here with inward serenity of mind; nay, and will also eternally, seeing it so well suits with his goodness and benignity: but that it doth not suit with his goodness nor justice, to punish sin with eternal torments. Because (say they) there is no proportion between temporal guilt and eternal punishment, they neither consider the nature of God, against whom sin is committed; nor the nature of the soul of man, who offends and sins against this God; nor will they give credit to the testimony of his unerring word.

And from hence these wretched persons, who are swollen up with pride and presumption, intimate that wicked men need not fear any hell, but only an incapacity for heaven, thinking that natural religion is a sure title for it, and that which makes men meet for it also; so that according to them, the vilest sinner can but only expect a sentence of being eternally annihilated, or cease for ever to be, or lose their beings; and thus they open a door to all profaneness, by exempting sinners from hell flames, and strokes of God's divine vengeance.

These men boast of human reason, and will believe nothing but what they can comprehend, or give a reason of; and say that there is no mystery contained in the gospel, though the Holy Ghost testifies that "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16, &c. And strange it is, that they should affirm they will believe nothing in divine things, that is above their reason and comprehension; and yet are forced to confess, that there are many things in nature they cannot, nor could any mere man comprehend, or give a reason of.

Above reason (as one notes), is an equivocal expression, and signifies two things.

1. It signifies a thing which does not exceed our powers of understanding; but is concealed from us, and lies out of our reach, by some accidental impediment or obstruction, which is impossible for us to remove. And in this sense, it is above our reason to know certainly what is the centre of the earth, or the cause of the flowing and ebbing of the sea, or the true motion of the heavenly bodies, and what order they observe amongst themselves, and the different configuration of the little parts of matter, &c. That which makes those things above our reason, is not something essential to them, but it is that ignorance that is in us; therefore our knowledge of them is improved by the help of glasses, &c., so that we may say they were above our reason, before such helps were found out.

2. Things may be above our reason in their own nature, exceeding our capacities, and are no proper objects of those faculties of knowledge, which we are now endued withal: and in this sense the nature and being of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, in one entire and individual essence; the mystery of the union of the two natures in the person of Christ, and that of the incarnation, and the manner of the operation of the Holy Ghost; as also the mystery of the resurrection, and many other things, are more properly above our reason, than earthly things are; as eternity than time; a spirit than a body; the joys of heaven, than sensual pleasures; the eternal generation of the Son, than the ordinary procreation of man; the operations of the Holy Spirit, than the nourishment of our bodies: there is as yet no proportion between these objects and faculties of knowledge. Our intellectual powers are not yet formed and so adapted to them, as they are for those things in nature; and though the Spirit reveals to believers greater knowledge than any mere natural man hath of them, yet St. Paul himself saith, "He knew but in part, and saw darkly, as through a glass," 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of a man that is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 11. "For the natural man receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," ver. 14. From hence it appears, these mere natural men are ignorant of gospel mysteries, and being under Satan's influences, they speak thus, and fain would overthrow the whole of the Christian religion: but their folly is made manifest, and these mountains and hills Christ will bring low. "They professing themselves to be wise, they become fools," Rom. i. 22.

How could God then in justice afflict and punish his own Son for our sins, in his body and soul?

Mr. Peter Brown.

II. There is another sort, who have greater light and knowledge, as touching the Christian religion, and the necessity of Christ's obedience, and dying to satisfy divine justice; yet conclude Jesus Christ having made a full compensation for the breach of the law of works, or the law of perfect obedience, hath abrogated that law, and taken it away, and hath merited a mild law of faith and sincere obedience; so that faith in the largest sense, viz., faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, through Christ's merits, is that righteousness which justifies us before God, even so far as we have attained; for they declare that justification is imperfect, as well as inherent sanctification, until death.

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Thus these men presume upon their own inherent righteousness, and so go about to overthrow the doctrine of free justification by the righteousness of God. To level these mountains, the Holy Ghost declares,

1. That the righteousness that justifies a sinner, is a free gift; "But the free gift is of many offences to justification. They which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness," &c. Rom. iv. 16, 18. How can a righteousness wrought out by us, be a free gift?

2. It is the righteousness of one, not of many, not every man's own righteousness; "For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous," ver. 19. Adam's sin was counted to us, or imputed to all men, as he was a common head of all his seed; so Christ's righteousness is counted to us, or imputed to all his seed, as he is their common head.

3. That righteousness that justifies a sinner in God's sight, is imputed, not inherent in us, but put upon us, counted or imputed; "Blessed is the man to whom God imputeth righteousness," &c., Rom. iv. 6. And that righteousness might be imputed to them. Also "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. Now Christ was not inherently a sinner, but by imputation of the sins of the elect to him; even so that righteousness by which we are justified, is not inherent in us, but imputed to us.

4. That righteousness that justifies us is called the righteousness of God, in contradiction to the inherent righteousness of a mere man: it is called the righteousness of God, because Christ is God as well as man; it is not the essential righteousness of God, but the meditorial righteousness of God-man, Christ Jesus: "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. Though these swelling mountains would, yet "Paul would not be found in his own righteousness, but in the righteousness of God," Phil. iii. 8, 9.

5. That righteousness that justifies a sinner, is a righteousness without works; works are works, whether legal or evangelical. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputeth righteousness without works: to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5, 6; that is, Christ's righteousness received by faith, faith objectively, not subjectively taken.

6. The righteousness that justifies a sinner is a perfect righteousness, answering to the pure nature of God, and his holy law; but our inherent righteousness is imperfect and as filthy rags; therefore must these mountains be brought low. A new law! Why did not God give this law of faith and sincere obedience at first? And so have saved the precious blood of his Son from being shed, to purchase a law of imperfect obedience; but pray did the law of perfect obedience only result from the sovereignty of God; and not rather from the rectitude of his holy nature? if from the first they may conclude, God repenteth he gave such a severe law, the removing of which cost him so dear.

Take what a learned man speaketh on this occasion, "Could not man keep the law of works? Then it seems, the first law was too strict; this reflecteth upon the wisdom and justice of God: it must be granted, that perfect man could observe a perfect law, had God given him grace and assistance sufficient to his state and necessity; and so there was no need the law should be altered, and the obedience, the condition of it changed from perfect to imperfect. For if perfect man could not keep the law of perfect obedience, with sufficient grace, how should sinful man perform the law of sincere obedience, having no more than sufficient grace to assist him? Did not God foreknow that man would break the law of works, and so was necessitated to make a new and more easy law? Or, did not God both foreknow and permit the fall of man, or could he not have hindered it? Why then should he give way to the abrogating the

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command of perfect obedience, to bring in that of imperfect. Surely (as Augustine saith) God is so just, that he can allow of no evil; and so good, that he can permit no evil; except it be with a design to bring greater good out of it. If God permitted the first covenant to be broken, that thereby he might abase man, and magnify his own grace and his Son; in bestowing heaven freely on him, and in bringing him thither by the continued power of pardoning and sanctifying grace; hereby God indeed doth advance his own glory, by changing of the covenants.

“But that the condition of perfect obedience, being broke by man’s sin, the law therefore should be disannulled, and a new way of treating with man set up, wherein still man should be something, and his works bring about his own salvation, and God be contented with few and very imperfect acts of obedience; this certainly is a prejudice to his honour; nor doth this make it up, *i. e.*, that our obedience is accepted for Christ’s sake; for Christ only made way for removing the old covenant (say they) and the granting a new, but he did not obey in our stead; nor doth add any worth to our obedience; unless they will say, that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, the righteousness of Christ making up the defect of it; and so our own righteousness will be a co-ordinate cause of our justification with the righteousness of Christ.”

7. We are justified by grace alone, or by such a righteousness that man should not boast, nor have any ground or cause to boast; but the way that these men speak of, *i. e.*, that we are justified by our sincere obedience, makes way for boasting. “Being justified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth, &c. To declare his righteousness, that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,” Rom. iii. 24—26. That he may appear just, or that we may know the purity, justice, and holiness of his nature; that no righteousness, but that which is perfect, can justify us before him. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.

If it be by grace we are justified, it is not of works, any kind or sort of works whatsoever, either wrought in us or done by us, either to the law or Gospel; But it is of grace, &c. “And if it be grace, then it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work,” Rom. xi. 6. There is no mixing God’s grace and our works together; for one of these will destroy the other, it must be by works alone, or by grace alone; by Christ’s righteousness only, without ours, or else by our righteousness alone, without his, and then we may glory in ourselves, and not in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And thus these bold presumptuous, or high and lofty mountains, are brought down.

Alas! Sirs, the law of perfect obedience remains the same in Christ’s hand, as firm as ever; though it is abrogated as a covenant of work; yet it abides as a perfect rule of obedience. For it is still our duty to love God with all our hearts, souls, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves; yea, to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Though this perfection we have only in Christ to justify us before God; yet notwithstanding,

ing, it is our duty to press after it, and not to obey sincerely only.

A third sort of persons carried away by presumption.

III. There is another sort of presumptuous sinners, who are lifted up with a mighty conceit of their faith, and persuasion that they are in Christ, believe and doubt not of their salvation.

1. Some of this sort are they, that tell you they believe the whole revelation of God’s Word and Gospel of Christ, and do not deny one truth contained therein, such is the assent of their understanding.

2. And not only so, but they conform to all the external rules, commands, and precepts of Jesus Christ, and are brought into a visible profession of religion, and so walk that all true Christians take them for sincere believers; they are baptised, break bread, give to the poor, &c.; of this sort were the “foolish virgins,” Matt. xxv. 1—3: who presumed their state was good, but had not one dram of saving grace in their hearts, but only had a form of godliness without the power thereof; now some of these empty professors may perhaps be more confident than many true believers.

1. Because they have but little to do with their own hearts, but labour to wash clean the outside of the cup and platter; or keep their outward conversation as spotless as they can; so that men may see no just cause to suspect them, and thus they go on and doubt not.

2. Because Satan does not disturb and perplex them as he doth sincere Christians, he having (as a curious observer) found all their religion is but in show or appearance only; they harbouring the love of the world, or some sin or another in their hearts.

3. Because perhaps good men, nay, pious ministers, take them for sincere Christians; nay, may be, a whole congregation; and this tends to deceive them, and make them conclude all is well, when indeed Satan hath them in his chains.

4. They never look to God for converting grace (as great sinners are forced to do, when awakened) because they think they are renewed already, and thus they are lifted up, or exalted, like hills and mountains, which Christ in due time, will one way or another bring low; as those under despair are like vallies who shall be exalted, though the work is difficult on either hand, *i.e.*, it is as hard to fill up vallies, as it is to level hills and mountains.

Pray note, that either ignorance of God's nature and of his law, or the The causes of presumption in men. ignorance of the Gospel, and the design of God therein, or else ignorance of the state men are in, are the causes of presumption; together with self-love, and that good opinion men are too apt to have of themselves.

Therefore (as one well observes) "a faithless confidence, a foud credulous presumption, ariseth from a groundless over-easy persuasion of the mercy of God towards us." To which I might add, also it riseth from mistaken apprehension about the death of Christ, and the extent thereof; and from ignorance of the nature of true faith and regeneration. Sirs, if it be a difficult thing; nay, impossible for us to persuade a profane person, to believe his state is bad, how much harder and more impossible is it to persuade a Pharisee, or a zealous professor, and self-righteous, and a self-deceived man or woman, to believe that their condition and state is as bad, if not worse?

But to proceed a little further, to open the nature of presumption, and to bring these hills and mountains down, if Christ will put his hand to it.

1. Presumption in most persons is, I say, no more than a strong fancy or vain imagination, that carries them away into a belief of the goodness of their present condition, without any true ground thereof. They assure themselves of that which they possess not, nor God ever gave to them, crying, peace, peace; when God hath not spoken peace to them in such a state. The nature of presumption opened.

2. They do not rightly distinguish between the working of conscience, and natural afflictions towards that good propounded in the Gospel, and the real and efficacious actings of faith in Christ, in order to the obtaining of it; they may find some sense of sin, and the dangerous consequents of it, but the promises are misapplied. We must distinguish between the working of natural conscience and true faith.

3. They catch at the promises with a presumptuous faith in their own sense, like as did the Jews in another case; we have "Abraham our father," John viii. 39; not considering that the promise ran to the spiritual seed of Abraham only. Thus they cry we are God's elect, I believe Christ died for me, concluding that faith is nothing but a confident persuasion that they are elected, and that Christ died for them; Jews should have counted from their having Christ, they were Abraham's seed, and not his seed because by natural generation they proceeded from his loins; so these persons do not regard the effects and nature of true faith, nor the fruits and effects of God's "everlasting love," Jer. xxxi. 3; election, nor of the death of Jesus Christ. A man that presumes does but catch at the promises.

4. Presumption in these persons fastens on some promises only, and little, or not at all on others, viz., the promises, and privileges of pardon of sin and justification, and freedom from condemnation, and eternal life. But mind not, (or very little) the promises of "A new heart, a new spirit, grace, and sanctification," Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. Now it is much if the pressing of such promises be not called by them a legal doctrine. One that presumes is only for some particular promises.

5. Presumption in them, is so strong and so sweet, that it gives them no taste of the bitterness of sin, as true faith always doth; true faith makes sin bitter to the soul, and causeth us to loath, and abhor ourselves in the sight of God; thus did Job, (Job xlii. 5), and thus did Isaiah (Isa. vi. 5), and holy Paul, (Rom. vii. 18, 24); and thus God saith shall all do when he hath taken hold of them. "And then ye shall remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and you shall loath yourselves," Ezek. xx. 41. And again he saith, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord," Ezek. xvi. 63. This all those do who have true faith; because of the nature of sin as it is against God. Shall we not bewail ourselves for our sins, because Christ hath borne it, borne the guilt and weight thereof, for us? Yes, they do it the more upon that account, "They shall look up Sin not bitter to a presumptuous sinner.

unto him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn, and be in bitterness because of him," Zech. x. 12, considering what sorrow he underwent. But these presumers and self-confident persons, look upon sin as a small thing, and speak slightly of repentance, though it was the first doctrine John preached, Matt. iii. 1, and the first that our Saviour preached, Matt. iv. 17, and the first doctrine that St. Peter preached upon his receiving that great measure of the Spirit, Acts ii. 37. But alas these seem above repentance; "They are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked;" Laodicean-like, Rev. iii. 17.

6. Such who have this presumptuous confidence, are chiefly set upon comfort; they are for cordials, when indeed corrosives are more proper for them; they cry up the free grace of God in justification, and pardon, more than the free grace of God in regeneration, faith, and new obedience; whereas the former more refers to our good, to our happiness, and to our title to heaven; they are wonderfully affected with such things, but the latter refers more directly to the glory of God. True, the glory of God is wonderfully raised by Jesus Christ in our

free and eternal justification, but in regeneration, holiness, and new obedience, we by the Spirit show forth the praises of his glory; and hereby we bear his likeness, and magnify the nature of grace, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. "Hereby is my Father glorified, that you bring forth much fruit," John xv. 8. "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise," Isa. xliii. 21. And this it appears is the end of God in creating us anew in Christ Jesus; nay, to this end were we chosen, "that we might be holy," Tit. ii. 14. And to this end we were also redeemed.

These people think that the riches of free grace appears only in justification, or at leastwise they are most affected with that; but see what Paul saith, "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love," 1 Tim. i. 14. Our vocation and sanctification, our faith and love, doth abundantly set forth the free grace of God; and this all true believers as much admire, which these persons take but little notice of.

7. Presumption is easy; it is no hard thing to presume on the mercy of God, and on the death and merits of Christ; Satan will help them here, and not any ways hinder them; but to believe truly in Christ, this is a hard and difficult thing.

Satan labours to oppose us in resting in a right manner on Jesus Christ; faith is not easily had; no, but after much crying to God, and beating down a man's own self; no man believes, but self dies; sinful self, and religious self also. Faith is the death of sin, the death of the old man; but sin and self too, live in a presumptuous person. Unbelief is contrary to faith, and makes head against it; despair is contrary to faith, and makes head against it; and also presumption is contrary to faith, and makes head against it. Sin is opposite to faith, and a man's own legal heart is opposite to faith, and self is opposite to it, and Satan is the grand enemy to it; therefore it is no easy thing to believe.

8. Such who are carried away with this presumptuous confidence are commonly very negligent in the use of the means God directs unto, in order to the obtaining of saving faith, as prayer, hearing of the word, &c. They are little concerned about praying, they do not say, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. Mark ix. 24. Alas, they have no doubts, no unbelief; that faith that is attended with godly fear or doubtings, it may be contemned by them, but if there are no true believers but such who have a full persuasion, or full assurance that Christ is theirs, then there is no little, or small faith, nor any weak believers, no babes in Christ, Matt. vi. 30, Heb. v. 12. Nor indeed can there be any further growth in faith. What is a higher degree of faith than a full assurance? Moreover, to press the duties of religion upon men's consciences, is a very unpleasant doctrine with these men.

9. Such who have this presumptuous confidence, talk much of what Christ has done for them, but very little of what he hath wrought, and done in them. A true believer is as much affected with the work of the Holy Spirit, in renewing him, as with the love of the Father in electing him, or as with the love of the Son in redeeming him. For there is equal love and grace in all the three Persons of the blessed Trinity; nor indeed can we know that we were elected by the Father, and redeemed by the Son, until we are effectually called, and renewed by the Holy Spirit. Therefore they love, adore, and admire the grace and goodness of the Holy Ghost, without whose divine operations the death of Christ is not, cannot be made effectual or efficacious to them. It is Christ in us the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. To depend upon Christ for life and salvation by his righteousness, and yet never feel, nor experience the effects of his death, is but a bold piece of presumption.

A person carried away by presumption is most for comfort.

That presumption is easy.

A presumptuous sinner little in prayer or other duties.

A presumptuous person more affected with what Christ has done for him than what he has wrought in him.

10. Faith is grounded upon the promises of God by the Spirit rightly applied to a proper subject ; a lost, undone, a sick, and wounded sinner : not only lost in himself, but absolutely lost in the first Adam, and a child of wrath, even as others. Presumptuous sinners have no such promise by the Spirit applied to them, and perhaps think their state was as good before their pretended calling, as after, though they did not know it, and never were indeed children of wrath in their conceit, though the Holy Ghost asserts the direct contrary, Eph. ii. 3.

A presumptuous person doth not rightly apply the promises.

11. Those who are carried away with a presumptuous confidence, do not love to be tried by the marks, and characters of true faith ; no, they cannot endure such a doctrine that comes so close to their consciences ; though this was Christ's doctrine. " A good tree brings forth good fruit," Matt. vii. 17. And Paul's doctrine, " They that are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 5. " If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. " They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. And this was James's doctrine, " Shew me thy faith without thy works, I will shew thee my faith by my works," Jam. ii. 18. And this also was John's doctrine, " We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 14. Moreover, how often are we required to try our selves, prove our selves, and to examine our own selves ? Now which way can we do this, if all signs or marks of a true believer must be decried, and by no means regarded ?

A presumptuous person loves not to be tried by signs of grace.

Fourthly, There are another sort of presumptuous sinners, who, like hills and mountains, Christ will bring low, and they are such who glory that they are true to the church, and abide in that religion in which they were born, and in which their forefathers walked, who are zealous perhaps for such rites, ceremonies, or modes of worship that are nowhere found in God's word, nor were indeed instituted by Jesus Christ.

Formal protestants like hills and mountains lifted with a presumptuous confidence.

Not but that there are many good Christians amongst this sort ; but O the vain confidence of the most of them ; they believe in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son, and in the Holy Ghost ; this is very good, were their faith the faith of God's elect. Nay, more, they in their baptism are (they say) made the children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven ; and being then (as they are taught to believe) regenerated and born again, they presume they shall be saved, though never brought indeed under a real change, but live in sin, serve sin, and the devil, and hate all such who are truly religious ; they are Protestants, they say, and good Christians, yet many of them are guilty of all gross immoralities ; and yet presume through God's mercy and the death of Christ, by saying their prayers, and coming to church, they shall be saved. But the time will come when Christ will bring down these mountains, and remove all these stumbling-blocks out of the way of these sinners, and all others I have mentioned.

APPLICATION.

This may serve to awaken all sorts of persons to consider what a state and condition they are in ; and to take heed their hope at last prove not as the spiders' web.

The application.

2. Moreover, it may inform us what a subtle devil we have to do with ; O how many ways hath he to deceive and eternally ruin poor sinners ; some by their despairing of God's mercy in Christ, and others by a vain and faithless confidence that their state is good, when it is very bad and dangerous.

3. It may also serve to stir up all true Christians to praise the blessed God, who hath helped them over all these stumbling-blocks, and hath made their way smooth and plain before them.

4. It may likewise be a caution to all to take heed what principles they do embrace, and to pray they may not swerve to the right hand nor the left ; it also shows what a blessed thing it is to be found in the true apostolical doctrine, and to have true faith and a holy life.

5. Happy are they who sit under a clear gospel ministry, and understand how Christ doth fill up, or exalt every valley and bring low every mountain and hill ; making the crooked straight, and rough ways smooth ; so that the glory of the Lord may be revealed.

6. Know assuredly that the levelling of mountains, is the raising up of valleys ; and that when man is abased, God's free grace, and the believing soul is exalted.

7. Also, when all mountains, all obstructions are finally removed out of the way of believers, then they shall arrive to a perfect state, and be glorified ; which will not be effected in this life ; for we shall meet with some obstructions from within and from without, whilst we are in this body.

SERMON V.

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.—Isa. xl. 5.

Doct. That the grand design of Christ coming unto this world, and in exalting every valley, and in bringing low every hill and mountain, and making that which was crooked straight, and rough ways smooth, was to discover, reveal, or manifest the glory of the Lord.

My brethren, in my opening of these words, I showed you what I understood by the revelation of the glory of the Lord.

I shall now insist a little further upon the opening of it. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it: the design of Christ in his filling every valley, and in bringing low every mountain and hill, it was to reveal the glory of Jehovah;

1. In all his blessed attributes.

2. The glory of all the three sacred Persons in the blessed Trinity.

3. I shall speak to both these, and briefly apply it, and so conclude with this metaphori-

cal text. The great God designed from eternity to magnify his glory, in permitting the fall of man, and in bringing in a Saviour, but it was never so fully and clearly revealed, until Jesus Christ came, and removed all those mountains of difficulties, and takes all stumbling-blocks out of his and our way. I say, the supreme end of God in the contriving of our salvation, was chiefly and principally his own glory. 1. In all the perfections of his nature, and more

particularly the glory of his wisdom. 2. The subordinate end was the recovery of lost sinners, and the overthrow of Satan and his kingdom. The glory of God's wisdom is revealed in his works of creation and providence: "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord," Psal. xix. 1. but not so conspicuously, not so in every one of his attributes, nor so resplendently in any of them, as in the work of redemption is revealed, and wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ. And,

I. The misery of fallen man was great, and mercy pities him, and was ready to restore him; but justice, like a high mountain interposed, and requires satisfaction; and whatsoever plea mercy had, justice had every way as great. Mercy might say, shall such an excellent creature as man was, who was created in the image of God, be lost, and mercy and divine goodness in God be veiled and eclipsed? Justice might say, shall not such guilty criminals be punished, and shall not God be just? Shall holiness and justice be veiled and eclipsed, and lose their glory? Now divine wisdom is manifested, in finding out a way to reconcile infinite mercy and infinite justice, that they might meet in sweet harmony, and the glory of both be equally magnified. Divine goodness and mercy is exalted to the wonder of men and angels, for the divine justice receives double for all the injury the sin of man hath done to it; considering the worth and dignity of the person that wisdom found out to bear our sin, and pay our debts.

II. The wisdom of God is revealed in and by Christ in an astonishing manner, in taking occasion from the sin of man, to bring so great glory to God; sin it is true, in its own nature, hath no tendency to the glory of God, but is most hateful to him, and the greatest dishonour is thereby done to him imaginable; but O see the wisdom of God. God can bring good out of sin and the fall, the highest glory to his name: he therefore permitted man to fall,

III. That we might see the glory of God's wisdom, in restoring of poor sinners, and his mercy, which was hid before. (there being no proper object that the sovereignty of God was resolved to let it towards) until his wisdom suffered man to fall under misery to a lamentable degree.

My brethren, the lower man was fallen, the higher is wisdom and divine goodness exalted, in raising of him up again. "God's wisdom is seen (saith a worthy writer) in bringing good to the creature out of sin; he hath ordered sin to such an end as man never dreamed of, and the devils never imagined, and sin in its own nature could never attain; sin in its own nature tends to no good, but that of punishment, it hath no relation to the creature's good in itself, but to his mischief; but God by an act of infinite wisdom, brings good out of it to the creature, as well as glory to his own name; contrary to the nature of the crime, the intention of the criminal, and design of the tempter. God willed sin, that is, he willed to permit it, that he might communicate himself to the creature in the most excellent manner. He willed the permission of sin as an occasion to bring forth the mystery of the incarnation and passion of our Saviour;

The glory of the wisdom of God revealed by Christ's undertakings.

Mr. Char-nock on the Attributes. p. 239.

as he permitted the sin of Joseph's brethren, that he might use their evil to a good end. Because of his holiness;—he never willed sin as an end, but in regard of his wisdom, he willed to permit it as a means and occasion. And thus to draw good out of those things which are in their own nature contrary to good, is the highest act of wisdom.

And thus, my brethren, from the occasion of sin, God brings the greatest glory to himself, and the highest good to lost creatures, that ever any were blessed with.

Some measures of wisdom were given out in creation and providence, but the infinite treasures of it are opened in redemption, or revealed in Jesus Christ; and hence he is called "the wisdom of God," and the gospel is called the wisdom of God, yea, "the hidden wisdom," 1 Cor. i. 24; that is so called, because it reveals God's glorious wisdom that was long hid as to its clearest discovery.

IV. The wisdom of God is revealed in and by Christ, or in that glorious contrivance of his in the after disappointment and overthrow of the design, and work of the devil, in drawing man into sin to his undoing; no doubt Satan read his own fall in the first promise, the seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head, though he know not what seed God intended thereby; he is conquered by that nature he had cast underⁿ ^{Charnock} wrath and the curse. The flesh of old Adam infected us, and the flesh of the second Adam cures us.

Secondly, The glory of the divine goodness, love, and mercy, is revealed in and by Jesus Christ.

1. Mercy and goodness was the spring of our redemption; it was that which stirred up wisdom to contrive the way, that goodness and mercy might flow forth.

2. It is called the riches of mercy and goodness; God who is rich in mercy.

The glory
of mercy,
love, and
goodness,
revealed.

3. It was free and undeserved goodness, there was no obligation lay on God to pity fallen man.

4. It was sovereign goodness, why should God show his love and mercy to fallen man, and not to fallen angels?

5. It is infinite and incomprehensible love, mercy, and goodness; what, save a vile rebel, to give his own Son! could God show a greater love? certainly no greater demonstration of love and goodness could be manifested, considering who the Redeemer is, what he suffered, and for whom, and what we are delivered from, and what raised unto, by this blessed Redeemer; it was greater love and goodness (saith one) than was for a time manifested to Christ himself; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," John iii. 16.

Thirdly, The glory of divine justice is hereby also revealed, in that man is not raised out of this lapsed state, as a simple act of love and mercy; but to the highest exaltation of his justice, in that blessed satisfaction Christ hath made by his active and passive obedience to the law and justice, in doing and suffering what we were to have done and suffered. Mercy might plead, if man be ruined for ever, the creation is in vain, and that sweet property of God's nature, divine mercy and goodness, for ever covered and remained obscure to any created being. Justice might plead, if man be not sentenced, the law is in vain, and God appears not just nor true, in his threatening; grace abets mercy, that pity might be showed, yet justice will be injured if man be not punished; now in Jesus Christ the plea of justice is answered in punishing, and the plea of mercy in pardoning. Justice (saith one) shall not complain for want of punishment, nor mercy want in pardoning sins; the love, grace, and goodness of God in Christ, is to the honour of God's truth and justice; he preserves "the righteousness of his law, and the counsel of his mercy, not by changing the sentence against sin, but the person; laying that upon his Son as our Surety, which by the rigour of the law we were to endure in our own persons; whereby God appears just, and justice is satisfied with the punishment due to the sinner, and mercy is satisfied with the merit due to our Saviour, and the truth of God preserved in the execution of the sentence pronounced."

Fourthly, The glory of divine power is also revealed in and by Jesus Christ, who is called "the power of God, and the arm of the Lord," 1 Cor. i. 24, <sup>Glorious
power re-
vealed.</sup> Isaiah liii. 1.

1. "In that all the divine attributes are united, and meet in sweet harmony, in and by the Lord Jesus, and thus God is said to be made strong, by the man of his right hand;" not that Christ added any strength to the essential power of God; no, that could not be; but hereby he exerts or puts forth his united and wonderful power.

2. His power is revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who was born without sin, and yet partook of our nature; he did not take the person of any man into union with his own divine person, but the nature of man.

3. His power is revealed in his divesting, and utterly destroying the power of Satan, and the power of sin, both for us and in us.

4. In his vanquishing of death by the death of his own Son, that "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage," Heb. ii. 14. 15.

5. His power is revealed in his bringing low and removing of all those mountains of difficulty and stumbling-blocks that were in the way of God's being reconciled unto us.

6. In his quickening of all his elect "who were dead in sins and trespasses," Ephes. ii. 1; and in preserving grace in them, which though it be but as a small spark of fire, yet no enemies within, nor devils without, can finally quench or extinguish it; and in raising those who are fallen so low, to a higher, and more firm state, and to greater glory and happiness than man had before he fell. These things are ascribed to God's almighty power, 2 Thess. i. 11, Eph. i. 19, Isa. xii. 1.

7. And in raising the dead at the last day.

Glorious holiness revealed. **Fifthly,** The glory of the holiness of the Lord is revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. No judgment, no punishment which God ever brought on the wicked in this world, no, nor that burning wrath in the consciences of any, nor the torments and groans of the damned in hell, discovereth the glory of divine holiness, like that marred countenance, bloody agony, bleeding sides, and dying groans of the blessed Jesus, considering who he was, or the dignity of his person, the eternal Son of God, or the only-begotten of the Father.

2. The glory of holiness is revealed in God's infinite hatred of sin, not only in punishing of his Son standing in our law-place, but in his justifying of us by the righteousness of him who "is God over all, blessed for evermore," Rom. ix. 5. By a righteousness far exceeding that of Adam's in innocency, or that the holy angels; for Adam's holiness and righteousness was but the righteousness of a mere creature, and so is the holiness and righteousness of angels, is the righteousness of mere creatures; but this of God-man.

3. In his glorious design in sending of Jesus Christ to redeem us, which was not only to satisfy justice, and magnify mercy, but it was also to exalt his infinite holiness, in purging away both the guilt and filth of all sin, by the blood of his own Son. The same grace that inclined God to send his Son to die for us, to bear our sins, hath purchased the Holy Spirit, and sends it to us to renew us, and to live in us, that we being regenerated, and having his own image stamped on us, might be capable to enjoy communion with him here, and eternally hereafter: and as faith apprehends Jesus Christ to our justification by God's ordination, so the same faith purifies our hearts through the Spirit to our inherent sanctification and holiness, by its own divine operations.

4. In that his design is to present all his elect at last in Jesus Christ, absolutely holy, perfect, and without spot and blemish, Ephes. v. 27.

The glory of God's sovereignty revealed in the Gospel. **Sixthly,** The glory of God's sovereignty and dominion over his creatures, is revealed in and by Jesus Christ.

1. In that he was not obliged to save any of the lost sons of Adam, by any necessity arising from his nature, any more than he was the fallen angels.

2. In that he did not send his Son with a purpose to save all men, but only such whom he foreknew and predestinated, and gave to him from everlasting, Rom. viii. 29; The whole gospel is but a declaration of his sovereign pleasure concerning Christ and his elect, in him; it is therefore called, the mystery of his will, and the purpose of his will; "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," Eph. i. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 9; Tit. iii. 5.

And thus the glory of the Lord is revealed in respect to his glorious attributes and perfections of his nature.

Secondly, I shall show how the glory of God is revealed in the gospel, personally considered; or the glory of all the three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity.

Pray let it be considered, that though God is often called a Father in the Old Testament, yet how hard is it without the help of the gospel to find out where he is so called, or taken in distinction from the Son and the Holy Spirit, *sith*, father (as many divines observe) in some places of Scripture respects all the three Persons; and hence the Jewish Rabbins, (who allow not of the New Testament) manifestly declare their ignorance touching this great truth of the Trinity, though it may in part be imputed to that judicial blindness they are left under, yet it must be granted, that there is in the gospel a more clear and

discovery of this glorious mystery, then there is in the law or Old Testament. O how plainly, and by manifold testimony, is this borne witness unto!

1. By the angels, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the highest," Luke i. 32.

2. By the Father himself from heaven, "And lo, a voice came from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. iii. 17. St. Peter saith, mentioning this passage, "He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 2 Pet. i. 17.

3. By the testimony of Christ himself, "I thank thee, O Father; even so Father—the Father sent me—the Father hath not left me alone; I and my Father are one," Matt. xi. 25. It is observed, he calls God Father near an hundred times in the gospel.

4. By the testimony of the Holy Ghost, in and by the apostles; so that the very personality of the Father is here fully revealed.

First, the glory of the Father is hereby revealed; my brethren, the Father in magnifying his Son, did not design to veil or eclipse his own glory, but to magnify it, though all are to honour the Son, as they honour the Father; but how did our Lord endeavour to the utmost to glorify the Father. "My doctrine is not mine, but the Father's that sent me," John vi. 57. "As the living Father sent me, and I live by the Father—I honour my Father," John xiv. 29. "I have glorified thy name, O holy Father," John xvii. &c.

The glory of God the Father revealed in the Gospel.

5. In that whatsoever belief, succour, and saving benefit we receive, all primarily is ascribed to God the Father.

(1). To the wisdom of the Father, in contriving the way of our redemption.

(2). To the love, mercy, and goodness of the Father.

(3). That all might redound to the glory of God the Father.

All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. The Father, he is the first Person, and he is also the first in order, in all the divine operations.

1. The Father chose Christ to be our Surety and Saviour.

2. He accepted of him in our stead.

3. He sent him into the world.

4. He anointed him.

5. He upheld him.

6. He raised him from the dead, and justified him, and God the Father justifies us in him.

7. Our union is of the Father: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us," &c.—that is, God the Father.

Secondly, The glory of the Son our blessed Redeemer, is also herein revealed, and all flesh shall first or last see it.

1. The glory of his person, who is God essential with the Father; "I and my Father are one." He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. See "pearl of great price," Phil. ii. 6.

2. His glory is revealed in his glorious offices, which indeed He executed from the beginning under the Old Testament; but the nature and exercise of his offices never were so fully and clearly revealed, as in the gospel, when he was actually anointed and proclaimed King, Priest, and Prophet, and gave forth laws, taught his people, and suffered for their sins.

3. In the glory of his works, in what he did in obedience to the law, and in those wonderful miracles which he wrought; and in his death, glorious resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

The glory of God the Son revealed in the Gospel.

4. The glory of Christ is revealed in respect of those glorious names or titles that are given to Him, and in respect had to what he is made of God unto all them that believe on him, i. e., to them indeed he is all, and in all. For,

5. Christ is all with God, he is all to God, and he is all from God; we have no acceptance but in him, we only come to God by him, and receive all from God through him; he is all in redemption, all in satisfaction, reconciliation, justification, union and communion, and in regeneration and sanctification, in pardon, peace, and in all glorification. Christ is the foundation on which we are built, the fountain in which we are washed, the bread of life with which we are fed, and the water of life of which we drink. In a word, he is our life, our light, our strength; he is made every thing to our souls that we need. He is the power of God; Christ is the great repository of all sacred truth, and of all grace; and Christ is the great out-let or conduit-pipe of all that grace and goodness we receive from God also. Thus is the glory of the Son of God revealed.

Lastly, his glory is revealed in that great victory and conquest he hath obtained over all his, and our enemies.

Thirdly, The glory of the Holy Ghost is hereby also revealed.

The glory of the Holy Ghost is revealed also. 1. In that manifestation of his distinct personality from the Person of the Father and the Son, i. e., that he is an eternal divine, existing substance or essence with the Father and the Son, or an intelligent voluntary divine agent; he knoweth, worketh, he willeth, &c., and therefore an intelligent agent.

Now his being a distinct Person from the Father and the Son, and yet the same God in essence, sets forth the glory of the Holy Ghost.

1. He is called God.

2. The Saints are called the temple of God, because the "Holy Ghost dwells in them." Acts v. 3, 4; 1 Cor. iii. 10.

3. We are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and therefore the Spirit is the same God; and we are thereby obliged to worship him, and live to him.

4. He is called the Comforter, which is a personal appellation, John xiv. 26.

5. He is the voluntary Author of all divine operations, i. e., he cherished the creation, moved upon the waters; yea, he made and formed them, Gen. i. 3. Psal. xxiii. 6, Job xxvi. 13.—"The Spirit of God (saith Job) hath made me;" he spake by the prophets, he enlightened, renewed, regenerates, sanctifieth, teacheth, and guideth us.

6. We may grieve him, nay, vex him; and so we cannot be said to do to a mere divine quality or operation; grief denotes or belongs to a person, Ephes. iv. 30.

7. He is said to appoint overseers, or give pastors, and send them forth; "The Holy Ghost said, separate me Paul and Barnabas, for the work whereunto I have appointed them," Acts xx. 28; Acts xiii. 2.

II. The glory of the love of the Holy Ghost is in the gospel, revealed in removing all those mountains of difficulties, that lie in the way of the conversion of sinners. (1). All that the Father elected, the Son redeemed, the Holy Spirit renewed and sanctifieth; the love of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is the same in nature, and of like extent; the Father prepared the matter of which the garment of Christ's righteousness is made; he prepared the body of Christ, the Son wrought that garment, by his active and passive obedience, and the Holy Spirit puts it upon us. (2). Our union with Christ is by the Spirit. (3). All graces in us are the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

III. The glorious power of the Holy Spirit is also herein revealed. (1). In quickening us. And (2). In forming Christ in us. (3). Raising us from the dead, in his enabling us to mortify sin. (4). And to repel all Satan's temptations, and to overcome the world. (5). Likewise in helping of us to bear all manner of trials, torments, and sorrows, with an undaunted courage. (7). In his helping us to perform all holy duties, and to exercise all our spiritual graces, and in his preserving us in a state of grace to the end, and in perfecting of that work in our souls.

APPLICATION.

1. We may infer from hence, that the grand design of God in sending his Son, &c., is to abase man, and wholly to advance and magnify his own name and glory.

2. That salvation is alone of God's free grace.

3. This may tend also sharply to reprove all those who are lifted up in pride and vain glory, and such that ascribe part of that glory which belongs unto God, to sorry man, or to the will, or power, or righteousness of the creature.

4. By it likewise we may learn to give equal honour to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, they being all but one and the same God. "These Three are one," one in essence.

5. Let all the ministers of the gospel learn from hence to exalt the Holy God, and his free grace in our salvation.

6. From hence also, I infer that such who have not the gospel, are ignorant of God, in respect of his chiefest glory, and of their own good.

7. And that the knowledge of Christ and the gospel, is the way to be truly wise, Christ being the wisdom of God, and the gospel a declaration of the depth of God's wisdom; "the wisdom of God in a mystery," which is hid from most men: those that would be truly wise, must learn to know Jesus Christ. And this wisdom also will enrich the soul, even to make such who understand it "wise unto everlasting life." It makes not only knowing heads, but knowing and gracious hearts, and thus I close with these words.

SERMON I.

THE AXE LAID TO THE ROOT OF THE TREES.

And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees, every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.—Matt. iii. 10.

IN speaking to this symbolical text, I shall,

1. Open the scope and coherence thereof.
2. Explain the parts and terms therein contained.
3. I shall observe one or two points of doctrine therefrom.
4. Improve the whole by way of application.

First, From the scope and coherence of the place, it is evident, that John ^{The scope of these words opened.} Baptist endeavours to take off the Jews, particularly the Pharisees and Sadducees, from the external and legal covenant God made with Abraham and his fleshly-seed, or offspring. See verse 7. "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come!"

Historians tells us, That there were three more eminent religious sects amongst the Jews, the first were called Essenes, of whom we do not read in the holy scripture; their main doctrine was fate; they (say our annotators) ascribed all things to it. Secondly, the Sadducees were directly opposite to the Essenes, they ascribed nothing to fate, but asserted the liberty and power of man's will, in the largest sense, or in the most extravagant height; they denied the immortality of the soul of man, the resurrection, angels, &c., all which the Pharisees owned. See Act. xxiii. 8.

Thirdly, The Pharisees, who were outwardly a very zealous sort of people; and, though they were tainted with that false opinion of the freedom of man's will to do good, yet they ascribed much to the providence and grace of God; they were interpreters of the law, and separated themselves from others; they spent much time in fasting and prayer. 1. They held, nevertheless, a righteousness by the works of the law, by which they thought they were justified and accepted of God, "And so stumbled at that stumbling-stone," Rom. ix. 32. 2. They gave a very corrupt interpretation of the law. 3. They held many unwritten traditions of equal force with the law of God; by which means, they made void the commandments of God. 4. They were a mere hypocritical sort of men in their practices, being very strict and zealous for the smaller matters of the law, and neglected the weightier things thereof.

Whether these Pharisees and Sadducees came with an intention to be baptized, or only out of curiosity, is hard to be resolved, since it is said, "They rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized by John," Luke vii. 30.

John, however, sharply treats them both, calling them "a generation of vipers," a sort of serpents; of whom it is said, they make way into the world through the bowels of their dam. It may be upon this account, he gave them that name, or so called them, who thought through the bowels (as I may so say of their ancestors) or being the seed of Abraham, or the offspring of godly progenitors, to come to heaven; "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? What is the reason that you come to my baptism? Whereas some of you think there is no resurrection, no heaven, no hell, no angels, no spirits; or, you, who think you are so righteous, as you need no repentance, and so need fear no wrath to come. From whence comes this to pass, that you seem to fear, or to be afraid of future wrath, and the vengeance of an angry God? "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance," ver. 8.

O come now, and put yourselves among the crowd of poor sinners, and godly penitent persons; repent of your false doctrines you have taught; repent of the corrupt and wicked notions and opinions you hold, and of the vain and hypocritical lives you have led, and think not that a bare profession of this will do neither; for you must bring forth fruits of true repentance, fruits of true holiness, from a thorough change of heart that must be wrought in you.

But, (as if he should say) I know your thoughts, I have heard what a belief you are of. You think you are in covenant with God, and so are federally holy, and in a saved and safe condition, because you have Abraham to your father. You conclude, that the covenant God made with Abraham, and his natural or fleshly seed, was the covenant of grace; and so the promise is sure to you: and therefore, he adds, ver. 7, "And think not to say within

yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham."

You promise good to yourselves, because you are the natural offspring of believing Abraham, you rest upon your descent from him. The very same plea we find they made to our blessed Saviour, Job viii. 33, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest thou, ye shall be made free?" We were never under the bondage of sin, as others are; that covenant made with Abraham being the covenant of grace, we are thereby set at liberty, and no man shall by his doctrine make us believe the contrary. We are a free people, in respect of our souls and spiritual privileges, (for they could not mean otherwise, because they had often been in bondage to men, in respect of external liberty and freedom: first to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and then to Nebuchadnezzar, and now were so in bondage under the Romans). I know (saith our Saviour) that ye are Abraham's seed, (John viii. 37;) according to the flesh, they were his offspring; but that was no spiritual advantage to them; though it did give them right to legal privileges and ordinances under the law, yet it signified nothing now, it would not profit them under the gospel dispensation, they must be the spiritual seed of Abraham, and do the works of Abraham, and walk in his steps; which they did not; and therefore the Lord Jesus told them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of you father you will do."

John Baptist intimates the same thing, when he called them a generation of vipers; though they entitled themselves to the covenant of grace, (like as some do now a-days) upon that, in Gen. xvii., extended to Abraham's seed, as well as to himself, and concluded, they were members of God's church, then on earth, and could not therefore be denied any privilege, or ordinance, that of right belonged to covenant children. But this great prophet knew how blind and deceived they were, not understanding that there were two covenants made with Abraham; and also a two-fold seed (viz.), a natural, and a spiritual seed: they thought that promise of God, made with Abraham, must be made of none effect, if they should not be owned or allowed to be the seed of Abraham. But, (saith the Baptist) God is able of these stones, to raise up children to Abraham. If he should turn stones into men and women, who have Abraham's faith, they would be certainly the true seed of Abraham, and not such as they were, though they naturally proceeded from his loins, according to the flesh; or, God could of the Gentiles raise up children to Abraham, and so make good his promise to him, who said, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 3.

And now farther to convince them, and so to take away, for ever, all their hope and pretences of right to gospel-ordinances, and church-membership, by virtue of the covenant made with Abraham; or, from the consideration of their being his natural or fleshly seed, he in the words I first read to you, says, "and now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees, therefore every tree which bringeth forth not good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire," ver. 10.

Now, this now refers to time in this place, sometimes it refers to the matter, or occasion of what is spoken. "Now the axe is laid to the root of the trees;" this is certain, the axe was not till now, or until this time so laid, or thus laid to the root. We cannot understand what the Holy Ghost intends hereby, unless we observe, and well consider, the scope and coherence of the text, which does clearly unfold the whole drift and purport of the Baptist. He shewed them before in the context, that their plea to gospel baptism, was not good nor pleadable, i. e., "We are Abraham's seed;" they might object and say,

Obj. All the seed of Abraham were taken into covenant with God, and all that sprang from his loins were members of the visible church; and had right to the external rites, ordinances, and privileges thereof.

Ans. This John Baptist seems to grant, i. e., that it was so from Abraham's time until these days, or under the law or old covenant-dispensation; they had, he denies not, a right to Jewish church-membership and legal ordinances: but what of that, "now the axe is laid to the root of the trees;" that is, as Abraham was the root, or common covenanting-father, as concerning the flesh, out of which root, all the Jews, his natural offspring, sprang; and, upon which foundation, they and their natural church-state was founded: yet, now the axe is laid to this root, i. e., to this covenant, i. e., the legal, or external covenant made with Abraham; and down must the building fall, when the foundation is removed; down goes the trees, when the root (out of which they grew) is cut down. So much as to the scope and coherence of words.

Secondly, I shall explain the terms and parts of the text:

1. Show farther what is meant by the root.
2. What is intended by the trees.
3. What is meant by the axe.
4. What by laying the axe to the root of the trees, and by cutting down.
5. What by the fire, and casting into the fire.

First, by the root is meant, that which bears up the branches, and on which the trees and branches stand and grow; and it is from hence, from this allusion, the Baptists makes use of these words and expressions. Now the root, whereof he speaks (as I conceive) was that covenant God made with Abraham, and his natural seed, or offspring; which covenant did in a mystical sense, as clearly bear up the national church of Israel, and all the trees, i. e., members or branches thereof, as common natural root doth the tree, or trees that grow out of it.

The terms
and parts
opened.

What is
meant by
the root.

2. And as by root may be meant that covenant made with Abraham, and his natural seed, as such (from whence the national policy, and church of the Jews, sprang, and was borne up, and from whence it grew and was to abide) until the gospel dispensation came in, and was established; so also by the root may be intended the foundation of all their hopes, confidence, and outward privileges; for that they (I mean the natural offspring of Abraham), had great confidence in the flesh, by means of that legal or external ministration they were under, cannot be denied, and had many outward rights and privileges also, above all people then in the world; and if so (I mean if this be granted, which I am sure cannot be denied), then it follows there was some root, ground, or foundation, which they had, and upon which they built, and laid claim to those outward ecclesiastical and civil rights and privileges; and that the ground, root, or foundation of all this, was that covenant God made with Abraham and his natural seed, is apparent to all who are not willingly blind. For before those covenant transactions with Abraham, we read not that the people, from whom Abraham sprang, had any such rights or privileges granted to them, and what outward privileges God promised them afterwards by Moses, it is signified in divers places to be upon the account of the covenant made with Abraham, &c. And according to the exact time, told by the Lord to Abraham, God brought his natural seed out of the land of Egypt.

This, from the scope and coherence of the words therefore, I must affirm, is primarily, and chiefly intended by the root of the trees in this place: but,

Thirdly, by root, in a more remote sense, may be meant the state and standing of every ungodly, unbelieving, and impenitent person; let their hopes, expectation, and confidence, be what it will; if he be not a good tree, a believing and true penitent person, his root, or foundation on which he builds, let it be what it will, cannot secure him, for down he must go with all his vain hopes, works, expectation, and confidence whatsoever with him, for "now is the axe laid to the root of the trees."

Secondly, by trees are meant men and women, but chiefly the seed of the stock of Abraham, according to the flesh; of whom the national church of the Jews was made up, and did consist; as also, all wicked and unbelieving persons whatsoever, who embrace not the offers of grace in the gospel, or believe not in Jesus Christ. For, as the Church of God is compared to a good tree, and godly men in particular, are called good trees, so is the adulterated church of the Jews compared to an evil tree; and wicked and ungodly persons, called, "Evil and corrupt trees," Matt. vii. 17. Yet it might be here noted, that they are in this place compared to fruit trees, though to such that bring not forth good fruit, as (by the Prophet) the Jewish church is compared to a vine, and an olive tree, though she brought forth sour grapes, Isa. v. 1, 2, 4.

What is
meant by
trees.

Thirdly, as to the axe, we all know an axe is that instrument used by men to cut down trees, at the pleasure, or for the profit of the owner thereof; by the axe here, may be intended divers things, by which God may be said to cut down impenitent sinners, or unfruitful churches, or bodies and souls of men. For cutting down may refer,

1. To the souls of men, &c.
2. To their outward rights and privileges.
3. To their bodies and souls both.
4. To their external, fleshy and corrupt church-state.

First, to the souls of sinners, which is done by an act of God's justice, when he cuts off, from profiting by the means of grace, giving them up to unbelief and hardness of heart: and thus he in judgment dealt with the Jews, by giving them up to blindness of mind, when they have ears, and hear not; eyes, and see not; hearts, and understand not; God utterly leaving them to a

What is
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seared conscience, or gives them up to their own heart's lusts, and to walk in their own counsel. Then they, in respect of their souls, may be said to be cut down in wrath for ever.

2. Or, when he takes away the kingdom of God from them, *i. e.*, the dispensation of the gospel. "Therefore shall the kingdom of heaven be taken from you, and given to another people," &c. Matt. xxi. 43.

Secondly, it may refer to the cutting down their religious and civil rights and privileges.

1. When God takes away all the external and spiritual immunities, blessings, and favours, a people once enjoyed.

No gospel more preached to them, no ministers to preach it, the hedge of protection and preservation plucked up, and ravenous beasts let in to devour them; like as God threatened the national church of Israel, Isa. v. The sun to shine upon them no more, nor the clouds to rain upon them. This is a dismal cutting down.

Thirdly, their bodies left to be destroyed by merciless enemies, or cut down by famine, sword, or pestilence, as this very people were dealt with, when God brought the Romans upon them, and their souls cut off for their final unbelief and impenitency. Also,

Fourthly, It may refer to the cutting down of their church-state, sacrifices, priesthood, sabbaths, temple, and all taken away and overthrown; and another people, another seed, and more spiritual church, constituted and established in the room thereof. And thus God dealt with this people, *i. e.*, the church of the Jews they were broken off, or cut down, and the Gentiles were grafted in, as the apostle shows at large, Rom. xi.

The axe, by which they are cut down, may be,

What is meant by the axe First, the dispensation of God's providence, or time. Time is pictured with a scythe; but then man is compared to grass, but it may be pictured with an axe, since men are compared to trees; a scythe is no fit instrument to cut down trees. Men, as you have heard, are here compared to trees, and when once the time set for the Jewish church to stand, or abide in the world, was expired, time, or the dispensation of God's providence, like an axe, cut it down for ever; and so will the prefixed time appointed by the Lord, when it is come, even cut down at the root, the bloody idolatrous church of Rome; when the beast, forty-two months are expired, down she shall go with vengeance, and unless time lays the axe at her root, and at the root of all other corrupt churches, there will be no cutting them down, nor will there be any then able to save her or them. The standing of all human and ecclesiastical states and constitutions, are determined by the Almighty, who works all things according to the counsel of his own will.

2. The axe also may refer to the gospel: the word of God is an axe to hew and square some persons for God's spiritual building, and to cut down others also, as trees that are rotten, and bear no good fruit; "Therefore (saith the Lord) I have hewn them by the prophets; and what follows, mark it, "I have slain them by the words of my mouth," Hos. vi. 5. The word of God either kills or cures; it is either a savour of life unto life, or the savour of death unto death, 2 Cor. ii. 16. Like as sweet-meats are to some pleasant and comfortable, and to others pernicious and deadly.

The abuse of gospel grace cut the Jews down, and so it will all others who slight and contemn it; the word either softens or hardens, like as the sun, which shining on the wax, it softens that; but shining on the clay, it hardens that. When the word comes in judgment, then it is like an axe in the hand of God's justice. I find one learned man speaking thus on this place, *viz.* the Word of God, which is a spiritual axe, cutteth down spiritually wicked men, and hypocrites, like rotten and barren trees. This is it, which is elsewhere meant by plucking up, destroying, hardening, &c. Some, (saith he) expound this, not of spiritual judgments, threatened in his word against impenitent sinners, but of the power of the Romans, which were the instruments of God, to destroy utterly the unfaithful and wicked generation of the Jews. The former is (saith he) the best exposition, but I conceive it may refer to both.

The axe is cutting down may refer to judgment. 3. The axe may refer to men, whom God makes use of, as instruments in his hand, to cut down and destroy a wicked and God-provoking people: hence wicked rulers and kings, whom God raises up as instruments in his hand, to chastise and cut down a rebellious people, are called "his sword, and the rod of his wrath and indignation." Psal. xvii. 14. "Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down, deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword." And thus the Assyrians

were an axe in God's hand, to use, as he pleased, and the Romans afterwards, to the Jews likewise.

Moreover, God's Israel is called his axe "Thou art my battle-axe and weapons of war ; with thee I will break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms." God's people, in the last days, which are now very near, shall be his axe, by whom, as instruments in his hand, he will destroy Babylon, Jer. li. 20, 24. "And I will render unto Babylon, &c., all the evil they have done to Sion, in your sight, saith the Lord. Reward her as she hath rewarded you, double to her double," Rev. xviii. 6. Give her blood to drink, for she is worthy. "The stone cut out of the mountains without hands, shall break to pieces all the powers of the earth, that oppose Christ's kingdom, or that stand in the way of its establishment," Dan. iii. 34, 44.

4. By the axe, may in general be meant God's wrath ; however it is, or may be executed, or upon whom, wrath will sooner, or later, cut down all the ungodly, both false churches, and tyrannical powers of the earth, and all who continue in unbelief and in rebellion against God.

The axe may mean God's wrath.

The laying the axe to the root, discovers the final fall and ruin of sinners, whether considered as a church, or as particular persons ; dig up, or cut down the root, and down falls the body, and all the branches of the tree.

The axe laid at the root may refer to final cutting down of sinners.

Fifthly, and lastly, "therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire." Now he draws a necessary inference and conclusion from the premises.

Every tree, that is, every man and woman, or every corrupt church, be they who they will, either Jew or Gentile, Babylonian or Christian ; if not plants of God's planting, if not fruitful to God, if they answer not his design and end, if they bring not forth good fruit, they shall be hewn down and cast into the fire of external and eternal wrath. A fire, saith the Lord, is kindled in my anger, and it shall burn to the lowest hell. Wrath seizes, and shall seize on them here ; but at last they shall be cast into hell-fire, "where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched," Mark ix. 46.

1. The words being thus opened and explained, I shall take notice of two points of doctrine.

1. Doct. Now the dispensation is changed. To be of the natural root, or of the national church of the Jews, or the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, as such, is no ground of church-membership ; or it is no argument for such to be admitted into the gospel church, or to gospel baptism.

2. Doct. Now in the times of the Gospel, God is, and will be, severe with all ungodly, unbelieving, and impenitent sinners ; he strikes at their root, at the root of all their hopes, false faith, or fleshly confidence whatsoever.

These propositions I shall not prosecute now, but shall make some brief use of what I have said.

1. Caution. Take heed on what you build your hopes of justification and salvation, what is that which bears up your spirits : for if you are trees that grow not out of the true root, Jesus Christ, and the covenant of grace ; if you have not union with the Lord Jesus, or are not built on that foundation, or corner-stone, God hath laid in Sion, down you fall ; for "now the axe is laid to the root of the trees."

2. Enquiry. Is not morality, a civil and honest life, doing to all as you would be done unto, the ground or foundation of your hopes ? Do you build upon this ? If it be so, tremble : remember Christ saith, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3.

If you have no other ground of hope, but from your own moral righteousness, when death comes with his axe, down you will go, and be cast into the fire.

3. Consider, all you profane and ungodly ones, what is that which bears your hopes up, what do you build upon ; is it not on the mere mercy of God, or death of Christ ? God (say you) is gracious, slow to anger, and we therefore have hopes, and do trust to that : Christ died for sinners, &c. You say right, God is merciful ; but what then ? Will you therefore presumptuously go on in ungodly and wicked courses ? Oh ! know he is just as well as "gracious, and will in no wise clear the guilty," Exod. xxxiv. 7. "Except ye repent therefore, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3, 5. Shall the goodness of God, which should lead you to repentance, be thus evilly improved ; i. e., to strengthen your hands, and encourage you to sin against him, and provoke him ? It is, I fear, with you as Solomon speaks, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do wickedly," Eccles. viii. 11.

Christ, it is true, died for sinners, but you have no true faith in him; he died to save sinners from their sins, and that they live to him. See my text, "now the axe is laid to the root of the trees;" if you believe not on Christ, if you are not made new creatures, 1 Cor. v. 17. the axe will cut you down, and with vengeance and wrath, will at last cast you into the fire. You must learn to know the way of salvation, and how the mercy of God shines forth in a Mediator. Christ hath satisfied his justice, and by him you must come to God; out of Christ, he is a consuming fire. Abused mercy, O sinner! will be turned at last into fury. Except you obtain an interest in Jesus Christ, you are undone; "for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," Rom. i. 18.

3. Or are you self-righteous persons? Do you build on your own righteousness, like the Jews and hypocritical Pharisees? You, may be, think your state's good, because you are not swearers, drunkards, &c., May be, you do read, pray, and hear sermons, and give to the poor, and do much good; but if you build your hopes of heaven on these things; down this axe will cut you also; "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 20. Nay, you must be found in the righteousness of Christ; "all ours is but dung," Phil. iii. 8, 9. You must, in a word, bring forth good fruit, every soul of you, or perish; and this you cannot do, till your hearts are changed, and so you become good trees. Make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good; "an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit," &c. All works of regenerate persons, yea, their religious duties, are but dead works, not good fruits; nor can they bring forth good fruits, unless they are planted by faith into Jesus Christ. Nay, I must tell you, that gospel-holiness will not save us; it must be the righteousness of God by faith.

SERMON I.

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.—Matt. iii. 12.

OUR text is metaphorically, and as touching the main scope and coherence of it, it is one and the same with the 10th verse of this chapter, I have already spoken unto.

John the Baptist endeavoureth to take off the Jews from their pretended privileges, of having Abraham to their father, or their being his natural seed, or offspring; and so considered in covenant with God, and thought their state and condition good. Which he strove to convince them was a mistake, and this he doth by that tropical expression in ver. 10. "Now also is the axe laid to the root of the trees." And in this 12th verse, "whose fan is in his hand," &c. As if he should say, you shall ere long see yourselves deceived, for all your great confidence in the flesh, touching your external, federal, relative holiness, and legal privileges: for Christ with his axe will now quickly cut you down: and with his fan, fan you away as chaff, if you have no better right to church-membership on earth, and to the glory in heaven, than that which is derived to you from the account whereof you boast, viz., having Abraham to your Father. So much only shall now serve as to the scope and coherence of the words.

1. I shall proceed to give you the parts of this symbolical text.
2. Open the terms hereof.
3. Note two or three points of doctrine therefrom.
4. Apply the whole.

First, we have the person speaking, and that is, John the Baptist.

Secondly, the person spoken of, and that is Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, The predicate, or what is spoken of Christ, *i. e.*, whose fan is in his hand, &c.

John the Baptist was a great prophet, yea, "the greatest prophet that was born of woman;" having greater light and knowledge of the Messiah than any of them that went before him, in that he could tell them this is he. He was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, as his great messenger or harbinger. He therefore was well instructed into the nature and excellency of his Master's kingdom, which was suddenly to be set up, upon the removal of the old Jewish church, and church membership; this John was he that the prophet Malachi spoke of, that God would send as his messenger, to prepare the way of the

Lord, as also how he would do this, even by a spirit of burning, that should consume that people, and leave them neither root nor branch, *i. e.*, burn up all their hopes in respect of their root, viz., that external covenant, God made with Abraham, on which they stood, and of which they boasted; as also all that confidence they had in their own good works, and inherent righteousness. And this, John's ministry, clearly held forth, and thereby discovered the grand effect and glorious design of Christ's doctrine, and nature of his spiritual kingdom, which was near at hand.

Secondly, As touching Jesus Christ, who is the person John speaks of. I shall not now treat of his office, power, dignity, and glory, which are more fully hinted at in the context. "Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire," ver. 11.

But I shall pass by that, and shall explain the terms.

1. Show you what is intended by floor.
2. What by the fan in Christ's hand.
3. What is meant by the chaff.
4. What by the wheat.
5. What are we to understand by Christ's garner.
6. And lastly, what is meant by the fire, and by burning up the chaff.

First, Thoroughly purge his floor. No doubt by floor the Holy Ghost alludes to that, which, in common acceptation, is well understood by husbandmen, *i. e.*, ^{What is meant by the floor.} a floor is a heap of corn that is threshed out of the straw, and laid in a barn, wheat and chaff together; this usually is called a floor.

By floor here, is doubtless intended more directly and immediately the Jewish church, but in a more remote and comprehensive sense, any spiritual community of Christians, church, or body of people, professing religion.

1. The Jews were then God's floor (or God's people), as God himself is called a husbandman; and they were a great heap, a mighty floor. But almost all chaff; loose, vain, empty, carnal, and unbelieving men and women. A more profane and ungodly generation was hardly ever in the world; and but a very few godly ones among them, but a very little wheat, viz: few sincere or believing persons in all that floor, who waited for Christ's coming, and did when he came, in truth receive him.

But now the Lord Jesus was come, with his fan in his hand, to separate the wheat from the chaff, and not let them remain any longer together on that floor in that old barn, *i. e.*, in the legal Jewish church-state, according to the external covenant of peculiarity God made with Abraham, and his natural seed as such: which had stood near its full period of time prefixed by the Almighty, but now must be pulled down, Jesus Christ being come, and just going to build a new spiritual garner, or Gospel church, to put all his choice grain or wheat into; viz., all believing and true penitent persons; this primarily I am satisfied, is intended by floor. For the Jewish church was not to abide or continue any longer than till the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; it being a typical church. When the Antitype was come, that must needs vanish away.

Whose fan is in his hand. A fan is a certain instrument which the husband- ^{What is a fan.} man uses to cleanse, or purge his corn from the chaff, evil seeds, and all filth whatsoever. And this instrument he holds in his hands, and uses upon his knees, by which he tosses up the wheat and chaff together, and then shakes it to and fro, moving all at once, by which a wind is made, and the chaff is blown away, and the wheat separated and purged from it. Now John Baptist alludes to such an instrument as this.

1. By Christ's fan is meant his word, his holy Gospel, especially the doctrine ^{What Christ's fan is.} thereof; it is by this he cleanses and purges his floor. "Now you are clean through the word I have spoken unto you." Now the unclean person, the traitor Judas, is gone out from you, Through my word, *i. e.*, through my doctrine, you believing in me, and receiving me by faith for righteousness and eternal life. It is said "Christ gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," Ephes. v. 26. Cleansing here imports the means by which it is wrought, or the instrument, namely the word of the Gospel, especially the promise of free justification and sanctification by Christ. Sirs, this was, and still is, Christ's fan, namely, the glorious doctrine of God's free grace through the redemption that is in Christ's blood; and it was by this fan Christ cleansed that Jewish floor, to which my text primarily refers. For the Jews were his floor, and now Jesus Christ was come with his fan in his hand, to purge this floor; and evident it is, his holy doctrine severed or separated the wheat from the chaff; and by this means was the wheat gathered into Christ's gospel-garner, and the chaff blown

away; for as chaff cannot endure the wind of the fan, so could not those unbelieving Jews, and hypocritical Pharisees, endure Christ's holy and heavenly doctrine, see John vi. 52, to ver. 60. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" They thought he spake of a natural eating of his flesh, as we eat the flesh of beasts or fish: his doctrine was not understood by them. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," ver. 53. The eating of Christ's flesh, and drinking of his blood, is no other thing than the receiving Jesus Christ by faith for righteousness and eternal life. "Believing in Christ, coming to Christ, looking to Christ, leaning, trusting, or staying on Christ, receiving of Christ, and eating of Christ," imply one and the same thing. It is our going out of ourselves to him, or feeding by faith on him, or resting, or relying on his merits, on his obedience in his life, and in his death, for justification and eternal life, without any works done by us, or any righteousness wrought in us, as the Apostle speaks, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5.

But this mysterious and sublime doctrine the Jews could not bear, but it was such a fan as fanned them all away that believed not, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. They thought their own personal inherent righteousness was that by which they must be justified, accepted, and eternally saved: they had meat of their own to eat, and therefore saw no need to go to their neighbours' door for it; they were full, and increased in goods, and thought they had need of nothing. And hence the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ alone was rejected by them, it was not understood by them: that "Christ's flesh should be meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed," was a strange doctrine in their apprehensions; they could not conceive how such things could be, (as Nicodemus spake of regeneration,) John iii. 9. Nor can any man whatsoever, who will receive no point of faith, but what his natural reason can comprehend. And thus this doctrine of our Lord Jesus was a fan in his hand, and it fanned away all the chaff of that mighty Jewish floor, who believed not in Christ.

The dispensation of God was a fan in Christ's hand. Second place, Jesus Christ hath another fan also, and that is (I doubt not likewise intended here. The dispensation of God's providence: for this was also a fan in Christ's hand, by which he fanned away those unbelieving Jews, and scurged his floor; I mean, the time was now come that their national, legal, and external church-state must be pulled down and dissolved, the dispensation was changed, the priesthood changed, and right of church-membership changed. Their having Abraham to their father, or being the seed of professing parents, would do them no good, nor avail them any thing, because the covenant of peculiarity God made with him and his natural seed as such, as to the date or duration thereof, was now run out and expired, the axe being now laid to the root of the tree, ver. 10. So that unless they receive Christ, believe in Christ, and are found gracious persons, fit wheat for Christ's spiritual garner or gospel-church (which is built up of lively stones) as chaff the gospel-dispensation like a fan purges them out, as indeed it did, and blew them all away: and we are not alone in respect of this great truth, for many of our worthy brethren (who in some things differ from us) assert the same; particularly the Rev. Mr. Cotton, who speaking of this text, Matt. iii. 10, saith, "The first is the root of Abraham's covenant, which this people much trusted upon, and of that it is which John Baptist speaketh, 'Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree, think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father,' so that all their confidence that they had in Abraham's covenant, temple, and tabernacle, and such things are burnt up, and so they have no root left them to stand upon, and this is one thing intended by the root.

"Secondly, There is (saith he) something more in it; the Lord by the power of his Spirit doth cut us off from any power of our natural gifts and parts, and spiritual gifts also; or from any confidence of our own sufficiency; the Lord hath cut us off from any hope in the righteousness of our parents, and from boasting of ordinances. And again, he saith, 'This we read of,' Mal. iv. 1. It is spoken of the ministry of John the Baptist, which did burn as an oven against all the Scribes and Pharisees, and left them neither the root of Abraham's covenant, nor the branch of their own good works. He cutteth them off from the covenant of Abraham, &c. And by cutting them off from the root, he leaveth them no ground to trust on." Thus Mr. Cotton on the covenant, p. 177, and p. 21, 22. Now evident it is, that nothing but the dispensation of God's providence, or the expiration of that period of time determined by the Almighty for the standing of the church of Israel, could cut the Jews off as a nation, from being a church and peculiar people unto God; I mean in respect

of that legal covenant. (I deny not but that the covenant of grace God made with Abraham, and with his true spiritual seed, stands firm for ever and ever, and none in that covenant can be cut off, nor fanned away.) For the Jewish priesthood, church-state, and church-membership, and all their church-privileges were to remain until Christ came; or until the time of reformation; that is, till the gospel days and gospel-dispensation took place and no longer. But now that time being come, and they not seeing an end put to the old covenant-church, as it was made with the natural offspring of Abraham, and that their right to legal ordinances and church-membership, could not give them any right to gospel ordinances, nor gospel-church-membership; and they not believing in Christ, not accepting of the terms of the gospel, were all of necessity purged out, or fanned away by the fan of the New Testament dispensation, and so were no longer a people in any sense in covenant with God.

Thirdly, Christ hath also another fan in his hand, viz., the fan of church discipline. And many persons falling into sin, are purged like chaff out of his floor thereby. 1. Sometimes some evil and corrupt persons, who get among God's people (or into his church) and pass a while for wheat, i.e., for gracious persons, yet in time God suffers them to fall into one temptation or another, by which means they are fanned away. The holy Jesus by his wise providence making a discovery of them, and their evil tempers and dispositions.

2. Others, whom Christ would have purged out of his church, may be suffered to such in some evil, corrupt, and dangerous principle, or errors in fundamentals, like that of "Hymeneus and Alexander," 1 Tim. i. 20; whose errors being discovered, are purged out.

3. Also many fall into notorious and scandalous sins, and are purged out by this fan, Also.

4. Some who are chaff, or unsound Christians, may be suffered to take up undue offences against the church, or churches to whom they do belong, and by giving way to temptation, they may become unreconcilable, magnifying their own wisdom and self-conceitedness, so by a secret hand of God be discovered and purged out. But it must be considered that the use and exercise of the keys or rules of church discipline, is appointed by Christ, as the proper fan by which those sorts of persons last mentioned, and some others, are to be purged out of the church, or congregation of the saints.

I told you that this fan of discipline takes hold of, are such that suck in heresies or capital errors; these after the first and second admonition (Tit. iii. 10), ought to be "rejected and delivered up to Satan, that they may not learn to blaspheme," 1 Tim. i. 20.

5. Such also who refuse to hear the church after the case (in which they have offended) is regularly brought in against them, according to the rule contained in Matt. xviii. 17. The offence at first may be against one brother, and the offended party is first to tell him his fault between himself and his brother or sister that hath offended him, alone; whom if he can bring to see and acknowledge his evil, it is to proceed no further; but if he cannot, then he is obliged by the holy law of Christ, to take one or two more, and go to him, and strive to convince him, and bring him to a sight and sense of his iniquity; but if he cannot do it, then it ought to be brought to the church, and if he will not hear the church, then the fan of excommunication is to be used in the name of Jesus Christ, and he purged out.

Fourthly, Jesus Christ hath also another fan in his hand to purge his floor, or cleanse his wheat from the chaff, filth, and defilement of sin, namely the Holy Spirit; and by this means he cleanses and purifies, in a gracious manner, the souls of his own people: "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. What filthy creatures were those Corinthians, before the Lord Jesus by his Spirit had purged and sanctified them.

Faith, of the operation of God, is a most excellent grace; it is by faith in the blood of Christ that we come to be purged from the guilt of sin; faith applying his merits and righteousness unto the soul in justification; and such is the nature thereof, that it makes holy the hearts and lives of all such persons in whom it is by the Spirit wrought or infused in sanctification; "And hath put no difference between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith," Acts xv. 9. Yea, it cleanseth them "From all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that they may perfect holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1.

But let me tell you that the Spirit and grace of Christ, in this respect, is as a fan, and rather to cleanse the saints, by purging out the chaff of corruption, which naturally is in

their hearts and lives, than to purge hypocrites and false professors out of the church, and to that I principally refer here.

Fifthly, moreover Christ hath the fan of persecution, or the sufferings of the cross, and all other afflictions which he brings upon his people, which he uses to purge and purify their souls, and his churches too.

And from hence afflictions are compared to a refiner's fire: "He shall sit as a refiner's fire, and purifier of silver." He, that is, the Messiah, i.e., our Lord Jesus Christ; this his work, viz., to purge his people, who in this place are compared to silver and gold, that is refined: as in my text they are likened unto wheat. In this he is compared to a refiner, and hath his furnace; in the other to an husbandman, and so hath his fan. Both these texts allude to the same thing, and doing the same work, namely, to sever and separate the clean from the unclean, the gold from the dross, the chaff from the wheat. And evident it is, that persecutions, trials, and afflictions, commonly make a great discovery who are wheat or pure gold, viz., sincere believers: and who drossy and chaffy professors. If wheat, persecution purges and purifies them: but if they are chaff, it usually fans them away. But he that receiveth the seed in stony places, the same is he who beareth the word, and with joy receiveth it: "Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, by and by he is offended," Matt. xiii. 20, 21. Thus the fan of persecution purges these chaffy professors out of Christ's spiritual floor, or rather his garner: by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning. The rod of affliction, or furnace of persecution, cannot purge out the filth of sin that is in the Lord's people without the operations of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit is called a Spirit of burning, because like fire it burns up and consumes the filth, chaff, and dross, that is in us. Before trials and persecution come, Christ seems to have a very great floor, a great heap, or much corn; but when he comes to try them with his fan in his hand, one great part thereof is found mere chaff, and the wind drives it away. So much shall suffice as to the fan in Christ's hand by which he purges his floor.

Quest. What is meant by the chaff?

Ans. I answer the chaff may be understood to be twofold.

1. Men and women who get into God's church, or among his people, but are not wheat, but vile hypocrites, pretending to be that which in truth they are not; thus all that are of Israel are not Israel. Though they bore his name, were called Jews, called saints, yet were unsound at heart, and graceless souls, or mere chaff, in God's sight.

2. By chaff may also be intended sin, or that filth and corruption which cleaveth oft-times to the best of God's people, which Christ must and will purge out.

Quest. Why are hypocrites or ungodly persons in the church compared to chaff? And how may they be known?

Ans. I answer, hypocrites and ungodly men in the church are compared to chaff;

1. Because chaff, before it is separated from the wheat, cleaveth close to it, and it is hard to sever it from the wheat, and it also seems like unto it: even so some carnal and hypocritical professors cleave to the church, and seem to love and embrace the godly in their arms, and to lay them in their hearts; they walk in company, nay in outward fellowship and church communion with them; they pray, and break bread with them, as if they were really gracious, and are not known to their brethren to be otherwise: and as it is hard to discern them from the godly, so it is hard to separate such from them. Chaff is so much like to the wheat, that some have taken it at first view to be wheat; so are these taken to be saints, and there may be no severing them from the congregation of the Lord, till Christ comes with his fan to purge his floor.

2. They may be compared to chaff, in regard of the great pains that is and must be used to separate it from the wheat: the wheat must be threshed and fanned; nay, fanned again and again, before all the chaff can be severed from it. So unsound professors, or some hypocrites in the church, seem to cleave so close to the godly, and are in such seeming union and oneness with them, that the Lord sees there is no other way to sever them from each other, but by threshing his wheat with the flail of persecution, and then the chaff flies away by the wind of this fan.

3. Chaff is of very little worth or value unto wheat; "What is the chaff unto the wheat, saith the Lord?" Jer. xxiii. 28. One peck of good wheat is worth many bushels of chaff. So ungodly men and women are of little worth in God's sight; a wicked man to him is loathsome," Prov. xiii. 5, as Solomon shows, and that which is loathsome and hateful in our sight, we value not, but cast away. The prayers of the wicked are abominable to the Lord, because their persons are not accepted in Christ. Whatsoever the ungodly do, or whatsoever show they

make of religion, let them pray, hear, read, preach, or give to the poor, it is not regarded nor accepted of the Lord; one godly person is more to him, than a multitude of unsanctified and hypocritical persons. The tongue of the just is as choice as silver, the heart of the wicked is but of little worth. The best part of a child of God is his heart, though he thinks that is the worst of all. Saints are wheat, hypocrites chaff; the one is gold, the other dross in God's esteem. Hence the Lord saith, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee. therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life: I will give Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." Isa. xliii. 3, 4. God so little values graceless persons, that he will sacrifice thousands of them in love and mercy to his faithful ones.

4 Chaff is light and airy, it is no ponderous thing, therefore the wind carries it this way, and that way, at every turn: nay, every small breath of wind moves it to and fro; whereas wheat stirs not, moves not, but abides in its place, it being a weighty and ponderous thing. Even so all hypocritical and unsound professors, whatsoever they seem to be at some times, (by making a show of religion, and pretending to piety) yet they are in God's sight as light as vanity; they are like chaff, not serious, weighty, and ponderous, they are but a flash, a shadow, and no substance, having mere dry, barren, and empty souls. And their lightness appears and shows itself in many respects.

1. It appears sometimes by their light, frothy, and airy talk and discourse. They may sometimes seem serious; but if watched they will be discovered, their tongues will betray them, by their foolish and vain words, and communication. "They setting no watch before the door of their lips, and bridle not their tongue, therefore their religion is vain," James i. 26, as the apostle James shows.

Christians, if you would not be found chaff at the great day, take heed of a reviling tongue, lest you deceive yourselves, and all your religion and profession be vain. "He either deceiveth his own heart (saith our Annotators) in thinking himself religious, when indulging himself in things contrary to religion; or else deceiveth his own heart, being blinded with self-love, and lifted up with self-conceit, which is the cause of his railing, censuring, and speaking evil of others. Their religion is vain, empty, and to no purpose, having no reality in itself, and bringeth no benefit to them.

O what a reproach doth the talkative and prating person bring on the name of God. This man, this woman, say they, is a member of such or such a church, and see what vain talk, frothy words, and frivolous discourse proceed from their lips? But much more evil is in such who backbite, revile, and defame others (as was hinted before.) This I say may discover such to be but chaff.

2. They appear to be chaff, not only by their light, vain, idle, and back-biting tongues, but also by their light behaviour; for the lightness of the heart is as much discovered by a loose and airy deportment, as by loose and vain words; their wanton looks, and rolling eyes, or other unseemly and uncemely carriage, show in part what they are; they being not of a grave, sober, and serious spirit, but behave themselves as if they had no sense of the omniscience of God upon their hearts, nor of his holiness; not setting the Lord always before them, gives cause to all to fear they are but chaff.

3. Their light, empty, and airy attire, dresses, and antic fashions, which they wear and take delight in, doubtless too much discovers the lightness, vanity, and emptiness of their spirits. I am persuaded these high and shameless head-dresses which some women appear in, that come into Christian assemblies, are but as tell-tales of the vanity, pride, emptiness, and haughtiness of their hearts; who but they that sell wine will put forth a bush? I cannot see how a sober serious Christian woman should be satisfied to wear such antique dresses. Their souls sure must needs blush at the thoughts of them; when they consider whose eyes behold them, viz., God.

4. Such are chaff that only have the husk or shell of Christianity. Chaff is the husks of wheat. Many professors please themselves with the external part of religion, having a form of godliness, but are strangers to the life and power thereof. Like the foolish virgins, they have lamps, but no oil; a name, but want the nature of true believers; can talk and discourse of religion, of the covenant of grace, and excellency of Christ. They may have, I grant, clear notions in their heads of the mysteries of the Gospel, and defend it too against opposers, yet their hearts are unsanctified, and never felt nor experienced the work of faith with power; they have the outside of the true Christian, the shell of the wheat, but if tried and searched there is nothing but chaff, no kernel in them, they want the root of the matter. All true believers have passed through the pangs of the new birth; they found they were once dead, but are now alive; once blind, but now they see; once

lost in their own eyes, but now found; once carnal, but now spiritual; once had their affection set on things below, but now on things above. Sin was once sweet and pleasant to them, but now it is bitter and loathsome in their eyes, because they see it is so in the sight of God. Their judgments are informed, their understandings savingly enlightened, Christ and heavenly things are valued and esteemed above all things here below, yea, above ten thousand worlds, by them; and their understandings are not only brought to assent to the truth of Christ, to the glory and beauty of Christ; but their wills also are subjected to him; they are brought to consent and yield themselves to the Lord; they believe and love, believe and obey, believe and suffer reproach, taking up the cross, putting on the yoke of Christ; their affections are so changed, and under divine influences, that what they loved once, they hate; and what they once hated, or liked not, they dearly love and approve of now. But thus it is not with chaffy professors. They may be changed from open profaneness to an outward reformation of life, but their hearts are not changed, sin is not crucified in them, self is not subdued; that enmity that was naturally in their hearts, or dislike to the life and power of strict godliness, is not removed; they act only from common illuminations of the Spirit, and so they put a force upon themselves when found in religious duties: and find not a natural inclination and sweet propensity in their hearts to heavenly things. And this shows they are no more than chaff.

5. And lastly, chaff I told you is light, and every breath of wind will move it, this way, and that way; and if it rises high, it will, may be, blow it quite away, there being no kernel in it, whereas the wheat abides.

So chaffy and vain professors are startled at every small blast of persecution, and presently begin to move out of their place, and shun assembling themselves with God's people. Nay, every wind of corrupt doctrine is ready to blow some of this sort away; they are unsettled persons, that want weight, or are not rooted in the truth, wanting a good understanding, and a principle of saving grace in their hearts. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is good to have the heart established with grace, and not with meats," Heb. xiii. 9.

This sort are soon corrupted from the simplicity of the gospel, by the cunning craftiness of men, being ready to receive any strange notion, or close in with a new scheme of religion, some turning to Judaism and add Moses to Christ, or join to the gospel their own works. They are commonly corrupt, either in principles or practices, or in both; making a stir about the mint, annise, and cummin, i. e., about the smaller matters of religion, as concerning meats and observation of days, as if in such things lay the great stress of Christianity. How many are there who like those false teachers, and deluded people in the primitive times, plead for justification some other way than by faith only, and bring in their own inherent holiness and sincere obedience, and add that to the merits of Christ, in point of justification before God; or exalt the power and will of the creature, to the eclipsing the doctrine of free-grace.

Secondly, By chaff may also be meant, sin, filth, and corruption, which cleaveth to the hearts and lives of true believers, which Christ by the fan of his Word, Spirit, and afflictions, as you have heard, purges out. "He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." This is spoken of Jesus Christ, whose fan is in his hand. It shows his work and office, namely, to refine and fan his people, not only members but ministers also, signified by the sons of Levi, that they all may offer acceptable sacrifice unto God. Besides, our Lord Jesus sometimes makes use of wicked men as a fan in his hand to purge his people, and he did of old fan Israel by the Babylonians, and by the Assyrians; "I will send unto Babylon fanners, as I have sometimes fanned and scattered my people by them; so will I fan them by the Medes and Persians, who shall empty the land of them," Jer. lix. 2. After Christ hath fanned or purged away the chaff and fith of the daughter of Zion, he will fan their enemies, and they being all chaff, the wind of his indignation will drive them away. Let this be noted, that Christ hath many ways to fan and purge his people, yet still it is for their good; and they shall lose nothing but their chaff, their sin and corruptions thereby.

"And gather his wheat into his garner." The saints are here called wheat.

1. Wheat is a choice grain, the best grain; so true believers are a choice people in Christ's sight. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," Prov. xii. 26. They are called "the excellent in all the earth," Psal. xvi. 3. "God calls his people his jewels, or choice treasure;" Matt. iii. ult. They are men of a high and heavenly birth, of

Sin is likened
to chaff,
Matt. iii. 3.

high, sublime, and excellent spirit; they are espoused, by an excellent person act, and are influenced by excellent principles; and have glorious ends and aims in all they do. And from hence may be compared to wheat.

2. Wheat hath its chaff, cleaving oftentimes close it, it will stick and cleave so to it, that it is not easily separated.

So it is with Christ's spiritual wheat; the filth or chaff of internal corruption is very subject to cleave to them, and hard it is for them to get rid of it. "When I would do good, sin is present with me; for the good I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not do, that do I," Rom. vii. 21—24.

Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I am (as if he should say) even wearied with continual combating. I cannot get rid of this dead body, this inward filth and corruption, the remainders of sin in my flesh; this chaff cleaves to all Christ's wheat.

3. Wheat is threshed with the flail, to sever it from the straw or chaff, by the husbandman; so God, to sever the wheat, i. e., the godly from the chaffy professor, and free them of the filth and corruption of their own hearts, brings his flail of affliction and persecution upon them.

4. Wheat is also fanned, to cleanse it; and it is to be noted, that the fan in the hand of the husbandman tosses up the wheat and chaff together, and then he shakes it to and fro, this way, and that way, on his knees.

So the Lord Jesus with his spiritual fan tosses the godly and hypocritical professor, by the same afflictions, trials, persecutions, and temptations. And O what hurrying, tossings and tumblings to and fro in their spirits, have some Christians met with in the late times, and still daily meet withal. They have their ups and downs, this affliction and the other temptation; this loss, and the other cross: but yet, nevertheless, they are not tossed out; whilst Christ's wheat is refined, they abide fanning, (as I hinted before), but so doth not the carnal and light professor: "They are offended," Matt. xiii. 21, through this means, as our Saviour shows, and are ready to say with that wicked man of old, "this evil is of the Lord, why should I wait upon him any longer?" 1 Kings vi. 33. Believers know God doth it not for his pleasure, but for their profit, that they might be partakers of his holiness," Heb. xii. 10. Hence it is said, that "they endure chastening, and faint not when they are rebuked of the Lord."

"And gather the wheat into his garner."

Christ hath a two-fold garner.

First. His Church is his garner.

1. A garner is prepared on purpose to retain, and safely to secure the wheat in a heap together, where it is carefully to be looked after. So is the Church of God appointed and prepared to receive and secure his faithful people together; it is not built for chaff and tares, and great care and pains is required of Christ's servants in looking to, and taking care of his spiritual wheat in his Church.

Yet through want of care, or weakness, or want of knowledge in Christ's ministers and servants, in discerning who are sincere Christians, and who are not: many unsound and chaffy professors are let into the church or churches of Jesus Christ, which is displeasing unto him, because they spoil the beauty and glory thereof, and cause many to reproach his faithful ones; as it also renders them in the sight of the carnal world not to be God's people.

Therefore, Christ with the fan of persecution oftentimes fans his people, to purge out the loose and profane from among them.

Secondly, By the garner is meant heaven itself, into which all the elect shall be put at the last day, and into this garner shall none come but pure wheat: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Rev. xxi. 27.

Heaven is Christ's garner.

"But he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

By burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire, is meant the direful wrath of God, which sometimes seizes on ungodly persons in this world, and shall eternally take hold of all the chaff in the world to come. The wrath of God is often compared to fire in the Scripture. "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and a fire out of his mouth devouring; coals were kindled by it," Psal. viii. 8. So in another place it is said, "A fire goeth before him," Psal. xc. 3, &c. "Shall thy wrath burn like fire?" Psal. lxxxii. 46. "His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him," Nah. i. 7.

What meant by burning up the chaff.

See the parable of the wheat and Tares, Matt. xiii. 24. Where the nature of wheat is largely op cued.

1. Fire is a terrible and a most amazing element, especially when it breaks forth like a masterless enemy, and none can stop it; so is the wrath of God very terrible, when he poureth it forth in his greatest fury. O what a frightful cry doth a dreadful fire that breaks out in a town or city cause! what a wringing of hands! men tremble, women miscarry oftentimes, children screech out, it frightens the very fowls of the air, and beasts of the earth, and turns all faces into paleness! How amazing were the flames of Sodom, and how terrible is the burning of mount *Ætna*! The wrath of God, when it furiously breaketh forth upon a people and nation, or particular person, causeth dreadful horror, it maketh the stoutest heart to quake, and the strongest hands feeble: "At his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation," Jer. x. 10. His fury is poured out like fire, and the mountains are thrown down before him. Can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, in the day when I contend with thee? "Who can stand before his indignation?" Nah. i. 6. O how will the wicked fly into holes, quiver like a leaf, "and cry to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Laub," Rev. vi. 16.

2. Fire breaks out sometimes very suddenly, when none think of it, but all are, as they judge, safe and secure; yet in a moment how are they surprised, when nothing but the horror and cry of fire, fire, fire, is heard in their ears. So God's wrath, like a dreadful and unexpected fire, breaks out sometimes suddenly upon the godly. How surprising were the flames of Sodom, and the amazing hand-writing on *Belshazzar's* wall, when he was drinking wine in bowls! immediately the "king's countenance was changed, and he was troubled in his thoughts, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other: Dan. v. 5, 6. "When they cry peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape," 1 Thess. iii. 3.

3. A fire sometimes breaks forth in the night, when men are asleep: so God comes upon men many times in the night of ignorance and unbelief, while they lie on their beds of ease and carnal security, by amazing judgments, or by sudden death. How secure was the old world, and the rich man in the gospel, to whom God said, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee?"

4. A consuming fire destroys, wastes, and devours exceedingly; as Sodom found, and London also, by woeful experience. So God when he breaks forth in his wrath and fury, he makes most lamentable desolation. "The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them," Psal. xxi. 9, 10. The wrath of God is compared to a consuming fire: "For our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. ult.

5. A consuming and raging fire spares none, the palace of the prince, no more than the cottage of the peasant; the mighty oaks, as well as the lowest shrubs, are devoured by it. So the wrath of God seizeth, and will seize on all wicked men; on the mighty and honourable of the earth, as well as the poor and contemptible ones; the king on his thrones, as well as the beggar on the dunghill. "His wrath shall be on every one that is proud and lifted up, and he shall be brought down; upon all the cedars of Lebanon, and upon all the oaks of Bashan," Isa. ii. 12—16. "He will come upon princes as upon mortar, the whole earth shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy, neither their gold nor silver shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath," Zeph. i. 18.

6. Wood, hay, stubble, chaff, and tares, are fit fuel for the fire to seize upon, and such things that are combustible make it to burn the more vehemently. And if strong towers cannot stand before a consuming fire, how is it possible for briars and thorns? Some sinners are like stubble fully dry: they are fit fuel for the wrath of God, like fire, to take hold of. O what horrid guilt lies upon some men's consciences! Just like a great heap or pile of wood, well dried, or cart loads of straw, or dry stubble: "What if God will to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" Rom. ix. 22.

A long course in sin, custom in sin, resisting the grace of God, slighting convictions, hardening the heart against reproof, stifling the accusations of conscience, and abusing the patience and long suffering of God, fits men for the fire of his wrath; "Whilst they are folded together as thorns, and whilst they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble full dry," Nah. i. 10.

7. A dreadful fire, when it breaks out, turns all joy into sorrow, and makes a day of mirth a day of mourning: so the consuming wrath of God, whether it seizes on the consciences of men only whilst alive in the body, or on body and soul both here, or on the

soul at death, it turns all joy into sorrow. O what extremity of misery do such feel! ask Judas or Spira, they could tell you.

8. Fire is a most cruel and dreadful tormentor; if a man be cast into a fire, what intolerable pain and anguish doth it put him to; but alas, alas, that is nothing to the wrath of God, when God kindles it in the consciences of men, nor to hell fire. You will say, O it is a fearful thing to fall into a furious fire, into a burning furnace; but, O sirs, how much more dreadful it is to fall under the wrath of God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God: for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. ii. 12. If it be terrible to have a finger, a foot, or a hand to be burned off, or to have the whole body cast into a furnace of boiling oil, (as some of the holy martyrs were) how then can sinners, who are as chaff, bear the thoughts of God's wrath and vindictive vengeance, which is far more intolerable than any fire into which any mortal was ever cast? For,

1. Other fire burns only the external part, or temporal, or corporal matter; but the fire of God's wrath burns and torments the spirit, the soul, the invisible part.

2. Elementary fire is seen, but internal wrath is only felt inwardly, it cannot be seen.

3. The fiercest fire that ever was kindled hath been overcome, and by engines or instruments put out; but the fire of God's wrath, when kindled, and the soul thrown into hell, cannot be put out, nor be extinguished; it is unquenchable fire. Though the burning of mount Etna and other burning mountains is impossible for man to extinguish, yet doubtless they shall not burn always, they will be put out; but wrath shall burn for ever. So much as to the explanation of our text. From hence we may observe divers propositions or points of doctrine.

1. Doct. The old floor is gone, it is removed, viz., the old Jewish Church, or national Church of Israel, the wheat that was in it being taken into Christ's gospel garner, and the chaff, or all graceless persons, "or unbelievers, are fanned away," Eph. ii. 16. Now Christ hath removed the partition-wall that was between Jew and Gentile, and hath reconciled both unto God in one body, 2 Cor. v. 17. Now there is no knowing men after the flesh, fleshly privileges, i. e., being the seed of Abraham, or being the seed of believers as such, gives no right to spiritual, saving, and eternal blessings. Both those two people, Jews and Gentiles, that believe, of twain are made one, i. e., one new man, or one Christian or Gospel Church. And this is done by Jesus Christ, who by his fan, or dispensation of the New Testament, hath abolished the old covenant right of church-membership; not the fleshly seed, but the spiritual seed of Abraham, are to be received into Christ's Gospel garner; "Ye as lively stones are built up a spiritual house," 1 Pet. ii. 5., &c. But this I shall not prosecute.

2. Doct. Jesus Christ would have none but pure wheat be gathered into his garner; not the fleshly and spiritual seed, not the believer and the unbeliever, not godly ones and ungodly ones, not the chaff and the wheat, as it was under the law, in the national church of the Jews. Not whole parishes, or whole nations; no, no, none but true Christians, or holy persons, sanctified and sincere, and truly gracious souls.

3. Doct. Christ's great work and office is to purge his people, to cleanse them, and make them holy, and to sever the wheat from the chaff, the pure from the impure; or to separate hypocrites from his church, and purge his saints from all their inward filth and corruption: he would have no chaff there, none that are false-hearted and unsound, such will he first or last purge out; and he will make them that are good to be much better, more clean, more holy, more pure, he will purge out the chaff of hypocrisy, unbelief, pride, passion, covetousness, vain-glory, carnality, and all manner of corruption whatsoever that is in them. He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will thoroughly "purge away their dross, and take away all their tin," Isa. i. 25. The time draws near in which "the sinners in Zion shall be afraid, fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites: who amongst us shall dwell with devouring fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14.

4. Doct. All true believers, or all Christ's wheat, shall be saved, shall be received into heaven, or be gathered into his glorious garner above, and into which place no wicked person, no false-hearted professor, no hypocrite, no carnal and self-deceived gospeller, shall come. Though some of this sort get into the church militant, they shall not get into the church triumphant; though they may get a seeming place in his garner below, yet they shall have no place in his glorious barn or garner above. Sirs, you that seem to take delight in the company of the saints, and seem to feed and lie down with Christ's sheep, yet know you shall one day be separated as goats from the sheep, as foolish virgins from the wise,

as chaff from the wheat, and as dross from the gold ; all you that are not sincere must go to your place ; and those that shall be set at Christ's right-hand, shall receive the kingdom prepared for them, and all that shall be on his left-hand, must go into "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41.

5. Doct. A discrimination day will come, a day of severing the good from the bad, &c.

6. Doct. The wrath of God is like fire, it is intolerable ; or the misery and torments of the damned, or of all hypocrites and unbelievers, will be dismal and amazing ; or there is no expressing how fearful their condition is and will be, who fall under the vindictive wrath and vengeance of an angry God. I shall not speak now to either of these propositions, but at present I shall close with a word or two by way of use.

THE APPLICATION.

1. Caution. Take heed you are not chaff, or prove not chaff, when the fanner comes to fan you. O see you are not loose, carnal, and empty professors ; if you have only a form of godliness, the name of Christ only, or lamps, and no more, sad will it be with you ; if you are not solid, weighty, and ponderous Christians. If you experience not the divine power of godliness, the sin-killing, the soul-quickenig, the heart-transforming, and God-exalting power of Christ's Spirit, you are undone.

Take a few motives to stir you up to take heed.

1. The fanner is coming with his fan in his hand : A providence may be near, yea, such a providence and dispensation which you little think or dream of. I might have showed you that the whole earth is but Christ's common floor, and he is now about to fan this mighty floor ; he hath many fans to do this. What are his fearful judgments but as a fan in his hand, whether it be war, pestilence, or famine, or other strange judgment, it is and will be but as a fan to purge the earth, and consume the ungodly, or blow them away as chaff.

What amazing earthquakes have there been lately in divers places. Have not we in England, in London, felt some of it, (as well as most nations in Europe) though not like to that in Jamaica, and some other places ? Are not these fearful tokens and signs of God's wrath and indignation ? Are they not harbingers and presages of what is coming upon the world, and of the end thereof ? Look to it, there is great wrath at the door. I am afraid thousands will be suddenly surprised, and paleness of face take hold of them. God is certainly about to shake and toss the earth to and fro : the seven vials of his wrath will quickly now begin to be poured out : expect all of you to be tossed and fanned, as wheat and chaff is tossed and shook together : "The lion hath roared, who will not fear ? the Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy ?" Amos iii. 8. There is a worse earthquake near, as the wicked shall find it ; yea, such an earthquake that will make all their hearts to tremble, which will shake down the foundations of mystery Babylon, and all false states ; it will be such a one that never was since the world began ; these which have been of late, may be but signs and forerunners of that. In the earthquake which is near, the tenth part of the great city shall fall, and seven thousand of the names of men, or names given to religious men, that were never given to them by Jesus Christ, mere antichristian names, shall be no more, strange will be the effects of it no doubt. O what will you do in the day of God's wrath if ye are chaff, or but counterfeit Christians ? If not sincere, if not in Christ, "Thou shalt be visited of the Lord in earthquakes and a great noise," &c., Isa. xxix. 6. Great changes, commotions, mutations, and revolutions, will suddenly come from the Lord of hosts : "He will make the earth empty, and turn it up-side down, and it shall be as with the people, so with the priest," Isa. xxiv. 1. He will fan, shake, and tumble the people together ; you will find distress of nations, and perplexity with a witness, in a short time ; nay, no doubt, but the day of judgment and end of the world, or coming of Christ ; is very near ; for he hath foretold these things as signs thereof "that there shall be great earthquakes in divers places," Matt. ii. 4.

2. If you be chaff among the wheat, you spoil the beauty and glory of the wheat ; you bring a reproach upon the saints and upon the church ; the ways of God are evil spoken of through your means ; your pride, your covetousness, your back-biting and detracting tongue, and unjust dealing, hinders the propagation of the gospel ; your formality, deadness, slighting and neglecting of the worship of God, and want of zeal, and love to Christ and to his

people, have bitter effects on the unbelieving world, as well as it will have on your own souls.

3. If you are chaff, you shall ere long be separated or severed from the wheat: there is a time near that will discover all, and make a full discrimination "between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth the Lord, and him that serveth him not," Mal. iii. 18. There shall not (ere long) be a Canaanite in the house of God any more.

4. Nay, and (remember) the chaff shall be burned with unquenchable fire; into hell at last all false-hearted, light, and loose professors, shall be thrown. O take heed for your soul's sake, that you rest not upon a bare profession, or on a name of Christian.

5. This may inform us also, that Christ hath a gracious end in bringing persecutions and trials on his people; it shows us why he uses the fan, as severe providences, judgments, and afflictions: it is, you have heard, to purge, to purify them, and to separate the chaff from them. O do not then think it strange concerning fiery trials, as if some strange thing had befallen you.

Exhort. Let me exhort you to see to it in time, that you be not deceived, and to prove chaff, and vain persons, empty and foolish virgins at last.

Motives. 1. O how far may men go, and yet be but almost Christians! remember this.

2. Many when Christ comes shall have great confidence, and go forth to meet him, and yet be found foolish ones: some deceive their own hearts, and others have hearts deceived them, by trusting in them, and never examine how matters are between God and their own souls.

3. Men may preach and prophesy, yea, speak as if they had the tongue of men and angels, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, and cast out devils in Christ's name, and yet be nothing; they may preach, no doubt, to the conversion of others, and yet may not be converted themselves.

4. Wheat is commonly weighed, to know the goodness of it; so God weighs the actions of men: thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting: weighed in a balance, alluding to the weighing of gold or goods exactly in scales. God tries men and women, that all may know he will proceed justly and righteously with them; he weighs them in the balance of the sanctuary, or tries them by the touch-stone of his word, and if found full weight, or pure gold, then he declares that they are his, and he owns them as his people, as his wheat; but if too light, or hold not weight, but are greatly wanting, there being no worth in them, but are dross, chaff, light, and empty persons, unsound and un sanctified ones, then he rejects them as none of his, but are as reprobate silver, false coin, people of no value with him.

As he weighs men, so he weighs their works, their graces, their duties, to see whether they hold weight, whether true and righteous or not; whether their grace be true grace, special grace, not common grace, and their gifts counterfeit gifts, or mere natural gifts, or only human and acquired gifts. Some boast of false gifts, which as Solomon tells us, is like clouds and wind without rain. What a stir doth a vain person make of a strong memory, crying it up as if it was a spiritual gift, and as if none were true ministers but such who have a great memory, and can deliver all they have got by their study, by the strength of their memory. Alas, all men of any sense know, that is but a natural gift, which some wicked men have, as well as some good men; but let him know, God knows what men's hearts are, what their ends and designs are, as well as what the matter of their worship is, which they perform to God; that is, whether it hath his image stamped upon it; or is of his authority, his own appointment, his own institution, or but human inventions: he also weighs the manner how they perform all divine worship towards him, from what principle, life, power, end, and design; whether it is from a changed heart, from unfeigned faith and love to Christ, in sincerity, with zeal, and to glorify God; if not, he will discover them, weigh them, and they will be found wanting, and be found no better than chaff at last. Though they may seek ways to hide and cover their wickedness, and false spirits, and base designs, yet let them know, he that weighs the hill in scales, and the mountains in balances, doth and will weigh them, and find out all their cursed deeds, their pride, their malice, and put a rebuke upon their backsliding and detracting tongues: "Talk (saith Hannah) no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogancy come out of thy mouth; for God is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed," 1 Sam. ii. 3. Thou Peninah (as our annotators note) "speak no more so insolently and reproachfully of me as thou hast done; he knoweth thy heart, and all that pride, envy, and contempt of me, which thy own conscience knows, and thy perverse carriage towards me: God pondereth,

and trieth all men's thoughts and actions, as a just judge, to give to every one according to their works.

Oh what a motive should this be to us all ! God weighs our persons, our graces, our gifts, our duties, and all our services, in scales : take heed you are not found too light, found wanting, as be sure you will, if you be found chaff, when put into the balance of the sanctuary.

Directions to try ourselves.

Direction. 1. If you would not be found chaff, try and weigh your spirits, your persons, your faith, your love : see if it holds weight by the king's standard, see on what foundation you are built : have you dug deep, and laid your foundation on a rock ? What love have you to Christ ? Is He precious to your souls, the chiefest of ten thousand ? What love have you to the children of God ? How do you carry it at home and abroad ? Do you feed the hungry, visit the sick, and clothe the naked ? Is Christ's family, Christ's servants, Christ's poor, more in your esteem, love, and affections, than sons and daughters, than brethren and sisters, that are not his children ? If you do not love Christ more than father and mother, son or daughter, you may justly fear whether you are wheat or no ! And if it be so, that you do so love him, and his saints, ministers and people, it will appear whilst you live : and when you come to die, you will not forget Christ then, his people and interest then. O think on this !

2. And to you, sinners, if you would be found wheat in the day of Christ, then receive Christ's true doctrine, labour to distinguish between truth and error ; beware of that strange and new scheme that darkens the free-grace of God, and tends to destroy the covenant of grace ; remember to exalt Christ alone in your salvation. How do some turn the gospel of God's free-grace into a law, by the performance of which, as the conditions of life and justification, tell thee, thy salvation doth depend. See what subtle opposers (of the clearest gospel) are risen up amongst us, and labour to avoid them ; though their tongues should seem to be tipped with silver, yet their doctrine is copper.

3. Be sure build on Christ alone, and see that that faith thou hast in him, be the faith of God's elect, which sanctifies both heart and life, and is attended with good fruits ; you must work from life, and not for life.

Consolat. I. Lastly, by way of comfort and consolation : be not afraid, O child of God, though thou art in Christ's fan, and art tossed up and down with temptations, trials, and afflictions. Know that his design is wholly herein for thy good ; it is but to purge out thy chaff, that thou, as pure white wheat, mayest shine the more bright and clear in grace and gospel-holiness, for sin and corruption spoil thy beauty to all that behold thee. No doctrine tends to promote gospel-holiness, like the doctrine of God's free-grace : " Shall we sin because grace hath abounded ? " God forbid. Rom. vi. 1.

2. O what a mercy of mercies it is that God's wrath is appeased towards you. Christ's blood has quenched this dreadful fire, as to you who believe, and indeed nothing else could do it. O bless God for Christ, and for that river of water which proceeds from him, to the extinguishing this flaming fire ; he hath borne it, and allayed it, nay, quite put it out, so that you shall never feel the burning or tormenting nature thereof.

3. Thou shalt at last, whosoever thou art, if wheat, be gathered into his garner ; viz., into heaven itself, for Christ will not lose one grain of his spiritual wheat, not one sheep of his shall perish ; " He that has begun that good work in thee, will perform it to the day of Christ," Phil. i. 6.

He will gather his wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

SERMON I.

Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? Thence it is good for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men.—Matt. v. xiii.

THESE words are metaphorical, they were spoken by our blessed Saviour, and in them are

The parts contained three parts.
opened.

1. Something asserted, " ye are the salt of the earth."

2. A supposition, or something supposed ; " but if the salt hath lost its savour," &c.

3. Taking that which is supposed to be granted ; the third thing containeth a necessary conclusion ; " it is therefore good for nothing," &c.

The persons here spoken of, are the disciples of Christ.

1. Considered as true Christians.

2. As ministers, who are compared to salt.

1. I shall show in what respect they may be compared to salt.

2. Why called the salt of the earth.

3. Observe one or two points of doctrine from hence.

4. Apply the whole.

1. They may be compared to salt, in respect of the grace of God given to them, for naturally they are not salt, nor savoury, any more than others; but grace is compared to salt, "every sacrifice shall be salted with salt," Mark ix. 49.

2. Saints and true ministers of the gospel may be compared to salt, in respect of their holy and savoury doctrine, those reasonable principles, and blessed truths, professed and preached by them, tend to salt the world; as false doctrine is called corrupt doctrine, so true doctrine, savoury and pure doctrine to the souls of men, is like savoury meat well and fitly seasoned for the body.

In what respect the saints are compared to salt.

What would become of the world, was it not for that holy doctrine and savoury truths that Christ's ministers preach? Even all the earth, and souls of men, would putrefy, and like corrupt flesh (for want of being salted) stink and become good for nothing; what hath corrupted the Popish and Mahometan world, but false and corrupt doctrine? Moreover, what a multitude among us, for not being salted with good doctrine, are corrupted and stink in the nostrils of God?

3. The saints, &c., may be compared to salt in respect of their savoury words; "Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man," Col. iv. 6. Hence, in another place, the same apostle saith, "Evil communication corrupteth good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33. Our words should not be tinctured with gall; put gall on meat, you spoil it. Brethren, a vile and malicious tongue is like gall, it is of a poisonous and embittering nature; so also is a frothy and profane tongue, a filthy and unclean tongue, tends to corrupt youth; nay, all that are pleased and delighted in such ungodly talk, but sweet, gentle, heavenly and savoury words, season all company, and tends to preserve the souls of men in this loose and licentious age. "A mild answer turns away wrath," Prov. xxix. 8.

4. The saints are compared to salt, in respect of their holy and savoury conversation: they by their pious deportment, just and holy life, and Christian behaviour, do put a curb upon the lusts of men, they are the salt of the earth, by their good example, this way they season others.

Secondly, Why are the saints and ministers of Christ compared to salt.

Ans. Upon the consideration of the excellent properties or qualities of salt.

1. Salt is very profitable, it keeps and preserves meats, and other things from putrefaction, which would soon stink and perish, were it not salted with salt.

So the godly are a people very profitable unto the world, in preserving of it from corruption and spiritual pollution.

1. They are a means to keep the earth from being totally corrupted by evil and pestilent errors and damnable heresies; they are helped to correct and confute bold heretics, and to defend the holy truths of Christ from their poisonous notions; and observable it is to see how God hath this way in every age, had some salt, I mean some most excellent instruments to stand up to preserve and defend his blessed truth against prevailing errors, which otherwise to all appearance would have totally corrupted the earth.

Note, the nature of salt is opened, as it refers to grace, in those words, Mark 9.

Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt, to which I refer the reader.

2. They are like unto salt, to preserve the earth and the souls of men, from being spoiled by profaneness and hellish debauchery; they are helped by their doctrine and holy lives to put a check to that over-spreading wickedness that threateneth every age in which they live; the world this way would soon become so filthy and abominable, that it would stink so in the nostrils of God, that he would tread it down under his feet, were it not for the godly.

2ndly. A little salt seasons much meat, and so prevents its perishing: so a little of this spiritual salt, I mean, a few godly persons, seasons much people, and prevents their perishing: what a little of this salt, for some time kept off or prevented God's wrath from being poured forth upon Sodom. Brethren, Lot was the salt of Sodom, whilst he was in it, and had there been but a little more of that salt in that city, even but ten righteous ones therein, it had not perished. In like manner may we not say in our days, as the prophet said of old, "Except the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and been like unto Gomorrah," Gen. xviii. 32, Isa. i. 9.

3rdly. Salt draws putrefying matter out of meat, by which means it appears it is of a purging quality; so gracious Christians, by their doctrine and holy example (especially ministers) draw out rottenness and filth out of the hearts, tongues, and lives of men, even as God's Spirit accompanies their word and example.

4thly. Salt seasons, and makes meats and other things savoury. So godly Christians and ministers season the minds of men (as instruments in God's hand, by the operation of the word and Spirit) with savoury thoughts, meditations, and discourses and practices.

5thly. Salt is of a hot and fiery nature, being cast into the fire, it sparkles and burns furiously. So the saints by the Holy Spirit are made holy, fervent, and zealous for God and his truth; how holy was David, who could say, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up;" and by their doctrine, how zealous are others also made, as were those we read of; "Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men, and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver," Acts xix. 19. Coals that burn but slowly, yet by laying them close together, and blow upon them, will soon burn vehemently, so the saints of God heat one another; one live coal or lively Christian (if God doth but please to blow upon them,) causes many to kindle in zeal for God, and in love to God.

6thly. Salt stirs up thirst in them that receive it; so a godly minister by his heavenly doctrine, when his word is received, causeth all such to thirst after Christ, and after a likeness to him; as also when some hear them speak of their experiences, and of what sweetness they find in God's ways, and in his love and favour.

7thly. Salt makes meat fit for food, and meet to be received by such who want it; so a holy and good life and conversation in those who profess the gospel, makes the word savoury, fit and meet to be received by poor sinners. It is this which commends the gospel and doctrine thereof to a blind and deceived world; but how unsavoury is a good doctrine in the mouth of a wicked man, (or one that is scandalous in his life). What little relish hath the word that comes forth out of such unholy and unsanctified lips.

8thly. Salt may lose its saltiness in a great degree, nay, may quite lose it, and become good for nothing.—So may a sincere Christian become unsavoury in his life, or decay in grace and piety; also such who never were sincere, may utterly lose that seeming grace and savour they once had, or seemed to have.

9thly. If salt hath lost its savour utterly, it is good for nothing, (flesh that is corrupt and not good for men to eat, may yet be good to feed dogs) but salt that has lost its savour is good for nothing; naturalists tell us, that salt which hath lost its savour, if it be laid upon land causeth barrenness. So hypocrites, or unsavoury professors, that once seemed holy, religious, and devout persons, and exemplary to others, when they apostatize finally and totally, they are the worst of mortals, neither fit to live nor die; they also make the church barren, or by their wicked example hinder the increase thereof, causing the good ways of the Lord to be reproached, and his people contemned; and God will at last tread all such under foot in his wrath, to their fearful ruin and damnation in hell, for ever and ever. But so much as to the second thing proposed.

Doct. The saints of God, and the faithful ministers of the gospel, are a great blessing to the world, or the true interest of the nations in which they dwell. The

The saints a great blessing to the world.

world is not worthy of them, yet they receive marvellous benefit by them; they are not unfitly called "the pillars of the earth;" the earth would sink were it not for God's elect ones; it would soon be so loathsome, were it not for this salt,

God would presently destroy it; and indeed no sooner are all God's elect gathered to him, but he will consume the world by the flames of his incensed wrath. Was not Noah the interest of the earth in his days, for not so much as a small seed had (doubtless) been spared, had not he been found righteous in that generation? And was not Lot the true interest of Sodom, while he dwelt among them? "I cannot do any thing till thou come thither," Gen. xix. Was not Jacob the true interest to Laban? Was not he blessed for Jacob's sake? The like I might speak of Joseph to his master, and to the whole land of Egypt.

THE APPLICATION.

1. From hence also I infer that grace is a most excellent thing.

2. It appears that there is a vast difference between God's people and others; but what hath made this difference? All naturally are alike; it is only grace that makes some men to excel others; "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," Prov. xii. 26.

3. From hence we may see what the cause is that some places are more vile, filthy, and abominable than others; it is because they have no salt, to season them, or but a little; i. e., but few gracious men, and godly ministers among them.

4. From hence also we may infer, that the earth is naturally unsavoury; they are loathsome in God's sight. All are as unsavoury meat, and things not salted, until they receive the true grace of God, and have gracious persons among them.

5. This shows what the duty of the saints is, and what true ministers should do. They should season the place, the town, the city, the family where they dwell. 1. They should season them by savoury words, savoury discourse, and communication; such words that may administer grace to the hearers. Spiritual discourse becomes the children of God in all company, and at all fit and proper seasons, and to put a rebuke upon profane and idle talk; for in this it will appear they are the salt of the earth. 2. And not only by their words, but also by their works, and savoury behaviour, and holy conversation.

6. It therefore affords also sharp reproof and reprehension to such professors who would be looked upon to be the salt of the earth, who themselves need salting. O how unsavoury are some professors, nay, church-members! Instead of preserving sinners by their holy instruction and precious example, they rather corrupt them, and harden them in their evil ways. Some can be as vain, as foolish, as wanton, as proud, as others are; do not many of them pursue the world as eagerly as most carnal people? And are not others ready to get into every foolish and idle fashion! What are these but like unsavoury salt?

7. Moreover, this may serve to discover the sad and fearful state of all false and unsavoury Christians; they are like salt that hath lost its savour, which is henceforth good for nothing; they are worse, and do more hurt to religion, than the vilest people on the earth. Others cannot render the ways of God so reproachful, nor cause the name of God to be blasphemed as these do. Let therefore these unholy and unsavoury professors tremble, for God will suddenly in his wrath tread them under his feet, nay, cast them to the dunghill; I mean to hell, where all such like unsavoury and filthy creatures are, and must lie for ever.

8. Let me exhort all Christians, especially ministers, to see that they are savoury in doctrine and conversation: ministers should preach savoury and wholesome doctrine; not law, but gospel; not Moses, but Christ; not error, but sound truth; not men's traditions, but Christ's holy and plain institutions; and to deliver the gospel in sound and wholesome words and expressions with all gravity, that it may appear savoury food to all that hear them; and let all take heed of scandalous sins, for by these the name of the Lord is blasphemed: religion brought to contempt and reproach: the hearts of all that are sincere, greatly grieved, and the conversion of sinners hindered, and the damnation of many souls furthered.

9. It may be matter of comfort to the godly. O what use are they of to the world! By them the world is preserved, that is, God preserves it for their sakes, they keep the earth from such horrid pollution, as instruments in God's hands, that it doth not stink in the nostrils of God to such a degree, as to provoke him to destroy it; their holy and savoury lives make good men lift up their heads with boldness; though unjustly reproached, it tends to stop the mouths of the wicked, and to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, nay, it often proves not only a means of conviction, but of the conversion of sinners, even of such that will not be won by the word. It also gives great evidence to their own consciences of their uprightness when unrighteously charged, as Job and others were; "Whose ox have I taken, or whose ass, or of whose hands have I received a bribe?" 1 Sam. xii. 3.

10. This also may discover the folly and blindness of wicked men that strive to root the godly out of the earth; it may well be said that the world is not worthy of them, since they receive so many great benefits and blessings from them, and yet they would not have them live among them.

Lastly, it may serve to deter and caution all professors against apostacy; our Lord bids us remember Lot's wife, she for not being savoury, or for looking back, was turned into a pillar of salt, nay, into a standing and an abiding pillar, that all may take warning by her; and might not one reason of this be to show that one example of God's severity upon her, might tend to be sufficiently to salt or season all Christians to the end of the world against the sin of apostacy. No doubt but our Saviour in this similitude refers to that horrid sin; "If any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38. Nay, he will be so far from taking delight or pleasure in him, that his soul will abhor him; he is so highly displeased with his sin, that his very soul abominates his person, and takes pleasure in his misery and fearful damnation; the Lord help all therefore that profess the Gospel, to remember that they should be as salt, and tremble at the thoughts of being unsavoury, either in life or doctrine.

SERMON IX.

Ye are the light of the world ; a city set on a hill cannot be hid.—Matt. v. 14.

IN these words our Lord makes use of a two-fold simile.

1. The saints are compared to light.

2. To a city set upon a hill. “Ye are the light of the world.” Before he told them they were the salt of the earth ; ye that are my disciples, but especially ye that are my apostles, my ministers, who preach my Gospel, “ye are the light of the world.” The method I shall take in speaking unto this fruitful similitude, shall be.

1. To give you the various acceptations of this word, [light.]

2. To show you in what respects the saints and ministers of the Gospel are called the light of the world.

3. Observe two or three points of doctrine from hence.

4. Apply the whole.

1. Light is taken sometimes for a thing of little value ; our souls loathed this light bread,” Numb. xxi. 5 ; they esteemed it as a light or small thing, they did not value it ; he that setteth light by his father is accursed.

2. Sometimes it refers to loose persons. “Abimelech hired vain and light persons,” Judg. ix. 4. But these things are remote to that which is intended by the word in this place.

3. Light is that which is opposed to darkness ; there is a three-fold light. (1.) Natural. (2.) Artificial. (3.) Eternal and spiritual.

1. Natural light is that of the sun, moon, and stars, by which our natural eyes are lighted.

2. Artificial light, is that of a candle, lamp, &c.

3. Eternal and spiritual light.

1. God is light, he is that eternal and uncreated light ; he is that original of all natural and spiritual light, and like as the light of the moon and stars proceeds from the sun, so all spiritual light proceeds from God ; he is the fountain of all light, yea, that wonderful light that is in Christ, considered as Mediator, proceeded from God ; though Christ considered as God, is the same original light, and fountain of light.

2. Christ is called light, yea, the light of the world. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men,” John i. 4. “That was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” Verse 9. This denotes his having light in himself, as considered. The eternal Word, or ever-blessed God, he hath lightened with the light of reason and understanding, every man that cometh into the world ; or if it be taken for divine light, then it signifies no more but only those who are spiritually enlightened by him, for no man hath any true light but what he hath received from Jesus Christ ; but because the Holy Ghost in this place speaketh of Christ considered as God or Creator, I cannot see he refers to any other light here, but that light which is said to be in the Gentiles, viz., the light of natural conscience, which is materially the same with the moral law of God that was given to Israel. Jesus Christ is called “the light of the Gentiles, and the sun of righteousness,” Mal. iv. 2. Christ is the great Sun of the world ; look what use the sun in the firmament of heaven is of to this visible world ; such is Christ to mankind in a spiritual sense, especially to all believers, and to the church of God ; this Sun giveth light to all who have the eyes of their understanding opened, or true faith infused into their souls.

3. The word of God is also called light, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths,” Psal. cxix. 105. The word of God like unto light, hath a directive quality in it. It is that unerring rule or infallible guide in all matters of religion, both in respect of faith and practice.

4. The doctrine of the Gospel is called light, “Lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine upon them,” 2 Cor. iv. 4. 6. *Lux est claritas seu splendor in corpore luminoso, vel extra a corpore luminoso exiens*, the Gospel is as light, a clarity brightness or splendour in a luminous body ; such glory doth proceed from it, that the brightness of the blessed God, in all his glorious attributes or perfections of his nature, shines forth therein.

5. The saints and ministers of Christ are called light or lights; John the Baptist is called a burning and shining light; and saith Paul, speaking unto the saints, "Ye are light in the Lord," Eph. v. 8. They have not only received light, or have the light of grace in them, but are a light to others; "Ye are the light of the world."

6. And lastly, light sometimes refers to the blessedness of heaven, or light of eternal glory; "Who hath made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12. So much as to the first thing proposed.

Secondly, I shall show you in what respects the saints may be called the light of the world.

1. Negatively. 2. Positively.

1. Negatively, not in themselves, for Christ only is the light of the world as considered simply in himself: saints in themselves are but dark bodies, (as astronomers tells us the moon is) but they are such who have received great light from the Sun of righteousness; they, like a candle being lighted, give light to all in the house.

How the saints are not the light of the world.

2. Not that they can give or communicate the light of saving grace to others; no, no, all light of grace and of saving knowledge, is from Jesus Christ; therefore in this sense, he only is the light of the world. The wise virgins could not give of their oil unto the foolish; a minister though he may have much grace in his own soul, yet he cannot communicate one drachm of it to his poor unbelieving wife or children, though he should see her or them ready to drop into hell.

3. The saints are not such a light as to be the only rule or guide by which others should walk; no, no, whether you take them as they are a body united together, I mean a church, or as particular persons; and though such that excel others, as Paul and Peter, &c. The saints, ministers, nor the church, are a light to the world in this sense: they are not the rule of our faith and practice, for woe to the world, had God left us no better rule to walk by than they, because the best of men, yea, the best of ministers, and the best of churches, may, and doubtless do err in many things. True, this had been the pretence of the blind Papists, and that by which they have deceived the world; they assert the church is the rule, or the Pope, or church and Pope, (they are at a loss where to fix their pretended infallibility) yet they say we first must find the church, and then take the scriptures from her, because she is the only rule. O beware of this delusion: all good Protestants ever have abominated this cursed doctrine (as they have cause to do) and affirm that the word of God alone is that rule which he hath left us, and by it we are to find out the true church, that is, know the true church by the Scriptures, and not the Scriptures by the church; Paul himself would not have any to follow him any further then he followed Christ.

The church nor ministers are the rule of our faith and practice.

4. The saints and ministers of the Gospel are not so a light, as that there is no darkness, no ignorance, no error, no sin at all in them. Brethren, in this sense none but God and Christ is Light; "in him is light and no darkness at all," 1 John i. 5; every Christian may say with David, "who can know his errors?" "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," 1 John i. 8, And doth not Paul say, that "he knew but in part?" 1 Cor. xiii. Besides, did he not cry out, "Oh wretched man that I am—When I would do good, evil is present with me?" Rom. vii. 24. Sirs, the best of men are but so, the light of the world, as in every thing they may preach or practice, they ought to be followed. But to proceed,

Secondly and positively, the saints and ministers of Christ have much light and knowledge communicated unto them from Christ, by which means (as they are savingly enlightened) they are a light to the world; like as the moon and stars, receive their light from the sun to give light to the earth in the night; hence Christ's ministers are called stars, they are the light of the world, as compared to stars, "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches," Rev. i. 20, and these Christ holds in his right hand, ver. 16. Which shows that great honour and dignity he hath conferred on them, as also their blessed safety, security, and protection. This may put a rebuke upon those who slight and despise Christ's poor ministers. Now they may be compared to the stars upon divers considerations, and so the light of the world.

In what sense the saints are the light of the world.

Ministers are the light of the world, as they are compared to stars.

1. As the stars receive their light from the sun, so the saints and ministers of Christ do receive their light of grace and knowledge from Christ. "What hast thou which thou hast not received? And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16.

2. Stars are placed by the Lord in the firmament of heaven, to give light to the earth;

and so in like manner, are the ministers of Christ placed in the church, (which is oftentimes called heaven) to give light to the world, which is in darkness and in the night of sin, of ignorance, and error.

3. The stars are a great ornament to the heavens; they sparkle and shine there as so many rare and glorious jewels or diamonds. Even so the ministers of Christ are, or ought to be, a great and glorious ornament unto the church, and to shine therein like the stars of the first magnitude in grace, gifts, and true holiness.

4. The stars sometimes are obscured: the clouds shadow them, and they shine not; they give very little or no light at all.

So it is sometimes with the ministers of Christ, they fall through Satan's temptations; and by reason of the corruptions of their own hearts into sin, as David and Peter did, and are thereby brought under great obscurity and darkness, that they shine not until they get out of those dark clouds.

5. Stars differ in glory, some appear not so bright and splendent as others; all are not stars of the first magnitude: even so the ministers of Christ, and saints of God, greatly differ in respect of that grace, and those spiritual gifts which they have received from Jesus Christ. Some have great parts, they excel in wisdom and knowledge, like as Paul, who was a glorious light, and outshone many of Christ's ministers; moreover, we have had in latter days, some that have been like stars of the first or greatest magnitude. What a Luther was a light was blessed Luther in the last age. And what great lights have we had great light, in this age? Though none shone more splendidly (in my judgment,) in our Owen a great light days, than renowned Dr. Owen, but, considering all circumstances, I think also Bunyan should not be thought a very small star, he having not those human improvements, in respect of learning, &c., as others have, yet shone very bright and outdid many others.

6. Stars give their light only in the night. So Christ's ministers and holy people only give light unto the world, whilst the night of this world shall last, which now is far spent, and the day of Christ's coming is near, when those stars shall be all fixed in the highest heavens, and shall be no more of use to give light to the earth. O brethren! let us long for the morning of that eternal day, when all these stars shall be transfixed in other orbs above, and not dart down their light any more for the use of men; but let us bless God for that little light these stars do give, whilst the dark night of this world abides.

7. Stars have good and evil influences upon all natural bodies, and things on earth, as astronomers observe.

So the ministers of Christ have by their lives and doctrine, also good and evil influences upon the souls of men; to some they are "the savour of life unto life, and to others, the savour of death unto death," 2 Cor. ii. 16. The gospel in its ministration hath hardening influences on some, as well as softening influences on others; yet as God orders all the influences of the stars as he pleaseth, so it is he that gives all success to the ministry of the word.

Ministers the light of the world, as compared to a candle. 2ndly, As the saints and ministers of Christ are compared to stars, and are the light of the world in that respect, so also they are compared to candles, their light is compared I say, to the light of a candle; "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but put it into a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house," Matt. v. 15.

Though the light of the stars be far greater than the light of a candle, yet all know a candle gives much more light to such that are in that house where it is lighted and set up in the night than the stars do; though the stars give a more extensive light, yet their light is but dim as to us, by reason of their vast distance from us.

1. A candle gives no light until it is lighted, it is until then a dark body. So the saints give no light until they are enlightened with the Spirit of God, or have received divine grace and spiritual gifts.

2. A candle must be put into a candlestick, that so it may the better give light to all the house. So ministers ought to be set or placed orderly in the church which is compared to a golden candlestick, Rev. i. 8. Such preachers ought to be disowned, who are not set in a due and orderly manner in some regular church or candlestick, the light must shine in and from Zion. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty God hath shined," Rev. i.

3. A candle, or lamp, that it may give the better light, ought to be often snuffed and trimmed, for else by means of the ashes, the light will be but very dim. So the saints and ministers of the Gospel, should like the wise virgins, trim their lamps, Matt. xxv. 7: that is, they should get all that deadness and earthliness from their spirits by

the quickening operations of grace. A worldly spirit spoils the light, it is like ashes, that hinders the candle from burning clear, also they should get rid of their remaining ignorances of divine truths. Some candles give but a very dim light by this means, and others want topping; they are swelled in pride and haughtiness to such a degree, that they give hardly any light at all, so that men by these means stumble: the candle gives them not light to see their way, or find out that filth and corruption that is in their house, (I mean their hearts.)

4. A candle wasteth itself by giving light unto others. So poor ministers, especially some of them, spend their strength, and bring their bodies to utter weakness, by their hard studies, and painful and laborious preaching, to the profit of others.

5. A candle is not to be hid or put under a bushel or bed: no more ought a servant of Christ, to whom God hath given ministerial gifts, being able to edify the church, and give the light of knowledge to the world, to hide those gifts, or refuse to exercise them, but ought to be set up in the pulpit as a candle in a candlestick, to give light to all.

Thirdly, In what respects are the saints and ministers of Christ, the light of the world?

1. I answer, By that holy and glorious doctrine which they have received and preach unto the world, in this they are the light of it. How dark are those nations and regions of the earth where there is no knowledge of the gospel, or where there are no gracious Christians and ministers to hold forth the light of saving truth? Was not famous Luther the light of the world in his time upon this account? For like as when light breaketh forth, darkness is thereby expelled: even so by the rising of that glorious star, and by virtue of that doctrine he preached of free justification by the righteousness of Christ alone, how was Popish darkness vanquished?

2. They are the light of the world by their holy and heavenly lives. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matt. v. 16; that is, let the light of your doctrine, which you have received from me, and the light of your holy conversations, so shine before men; but by the following words, it is the latter which I conclude is principally meant. The saints should not do good works to be seen of men for their own glory, or for vain glory sake, (as hypocrites do,) yet they should do good works, and let them be seen, that God may be glorified. "Herein is my Father glorified, if you bear much fruit," John xv. 8. Not that we can add any thing to the essential glory of God, but we are to manifest or declare hereby his glory: nay, it doth tend to excite and stir up others who see our holy lives and good works, to praise and glorify God, from whom all grace, by which all good works are performed, doth proceed. This shows, that all acceptable services are done by the help and influence of special efficacious grace required from God, otherwise (I mean, if we do good works by the mere power and liberty of our own wills,) it would rather tend to our own glory than to the glory of God.

Brethren, as the candle ought not to be hid, but to be seen, that so it may give light to all that are in the house; so ought not Christians to hide their convictions of sin or of duty, they must not quench the Spirit, or put out that spark of divine fire, which God hath kindled in them, but let it be seen, and not conceal their religion, or those convictions they are under out of shame or fear of reproach; nor neglect prayer, reading, hearing, or heavenly converse under any pretence whatsoever: yet they should see rightly to time everything, and labour to avoid hypocrisy, and shun all just occasions which may cause them to be suspected as guilty of it.

1. Doct. The world is in darkness, they are in the night, else there would be no need of light, or to set up candles.

2. Doct. God is pleased out of his infinite grace and mercy to the world, to afford light unto it.

3. Doct. The people of God, and ministers of the gospel, are as lights to this world where they are, whilst darkness or the night doth continue.

I shall only speak a little to the first of these propositions.

1. Prove it.

2. Show their woful condition thereby.

1. That the world is in darkness or in the night, appears by the testimony of divers scriptures, "for they that sleep, sleep in the night," 1 Thess. v. 7; by their sleeping in sin and ignorance, they show that they are in the night, or are in darkness; "for ye were sometimes darkness, but are now light in the Lord," Ephes. v. 8. Yea, the saints of God who are the children of the day, were once in darkness as well as others: nay, were darkness; works of sin, are from hence called works of darkness, "have no fellow-

ship with the unfruitful works of darkness," Ephes. v. 11. This further appears, because the saints are said to be "delivered out of the power of darkness," Col. i. 13; that is, out of the world in whom the prince of darkness rules and tyrannizes, and keeps all the ungodly of the earth in his bonds and chains of darkness; the devil is called "The prince of the darkness of this world," Ephes. vi. 12. Jesus Christ was sent "to give light to them that sit in darkness," Luke i. 79.

Secondly, Their misery upon this account is great.

1. Darkness is uncomfortable; so it is to be in spiritual darkness. How uncomfortable was it to the Egyptians to be in that thick darkness that might be felt, so what comfort can a poor sinner have that is in spiritual darkness, "Who walk in the valley of the shadow of death."

2. Darkness is dangerous, especially when a man's way lies among pits, snares, and where there are lions and devouring creatures. So it is dangerous to be in spiritual darkness, because sinners pass through a howling wilderness; this world is full of dangerous pits and snares, where devils and hellish deceivers lie in wait to prey upon them, nay, they walk upon the brink of the bottomless pit.

3. Darkness is fearful, we read of the horror of darkness; so the state of spiritual darkness, or to be in the state of nature, is fearful; terrors attend such on every side, both from within, and from without, an unconverted sinner is a Magor Misabid, like as was Pashur, Gen. xv. 12.

1. Is it not a fearful thing to be led by the devil, left to the power of the devil, to the will and power of the God of this world? they know not whither they go, Ephes. ii. 2, 3.

2. Is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, or to lie under his wrath and curse? Heb. xii. ult.

3. Is it not a fearful thing to lodge in the next room to hell?

4. Is it not a fearful thing to have the guilt of sin charged on their souls; but so it is with all that are in darkness, or in an unrenewed state?

5. Is it not a fearful thing to be without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world? Eph. ii. 12.

6. Is it not a fearful thing to be condemned to die, to die eternally, always a dying, yet cannot die? Now all unconverted sinners are condemned to die such a death.

APPLICATION.

1. I infer, it is a dangerous thing to be led by this blind and dark world, or by them that walk according to the course of this world, or to follow the multitude in their ways and sinful practices, this is to walk in darkness.

2. I infer, what great folly is in the people of the world, they hate the saints and ministers of Christ, who are appointed by the Lord to be a light to them. How many of the world would, if they could, destroy the saints and ministers of Christ, it is because they love darkness and hate the light.

3. They may teach all to prize Christ's ministers, from whom they receive so much good; they by their divine doctrine enlighten the earth; "I send thee to open their eyes, (that is the Gentiles) and to turn them from darkness to light," &c., Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

4. Let ministers also learn from hence to discharge their work and office in all faithfulness, that they may be lights where they live; it behoves them to see they preach the gospel clearly without errors, and plainly without obscure terms and words which the people understand not. I am sure in so doing, they are not a light to the world; it may be also a caution to them to take heed how they live; we must live religion, live Christ as well as preach Christ; our conversations must give light as well as our doctrine.

5. Let all take heed what ministers they are led by, that they be disciples of Jesus Christ, and ministers of his making. All ministers are not the light of the world; no, none but the true ministers of Christ, and they are known three ways. 1. By their call to the ministry. 1. They are regenerated men, and have received grace and ministerial gifts of Christ. 2. They are regularly called, and empowered to preach by the church with whom they are members; they also take not up the ministry for filthy lucre's sake, but in love to Christ preach freely, and as freely the people should minister to them in all good things. 3. They preach Christ, Jesus Christ is the sum and substance of their ministry; they preach not Moses, nor the traditions of men, nor magnify the righteousness of man, but their whole design is to abase the creature, and exalt Jesus Christ; they preach not themselves, "but Jesus Christ the Lord;" they preach a whole Christ, and nothing but Christ, and so are the light of the world.

6. Pray that your ministers may have much light, much clear knowledge, since they are the light of the world, and that they may not at any time be clouded.

7. Lastly, Bewail the loss of faithful ministers; oh what a sad loss it is to lose any of our glorious lights! how many are gone, and how few raised up in their stead!

SERMON X.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest at any time thy adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be east into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.—Matt. v. 25, 26.

I WILL not deny but that our Saviour may design by these words to advise such who are fallen into the hands of an external adversary (whom they have provoked) to endeavour to agree with him, whilst they are in a way to do it, from the consideration of the temporal danger which (otherwise) may follow, especially when they are in the hands of such who stand upon acts of strict justice. Yet certainly he had in uttering of these words higher and more important matter in his mind; so that besides the literal, there is a mystical sense, which we ought to search into; indeed our late annotators, after they speak of the first, they also allude to the second or metaphorical signification, viz. "Let my disciples who have been, or may be overtaken with great faults, by repentance, and faith in me, make their peace with God in this life, lest dying in impenitency, they be under the eternal displeasure and wrath of God, from whence they shall never be delivered." Also Marlorate saith, that these words, "Lest at any time thy adversary deliver thee to the judge," &c. That some expound it metaphorically, and that the similitude very aptly refers to God, &c. 2. Besides we find our Saviour uttered the same words in substance, without respect had to what St. Matthew speaks of, as antecedent to them, St. Luke xii. 58. 3. Also how often do worthy ministers refer to it, as a symbolical or parabolical allusion; especially in respect to the last clause; "Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt not come out thence until thou hast paid the utmost farthing." What man stands so upon strict justice, that he will not forgive the least part of a debt, but will have every farthing paid? God is indeed not only just, but justice itself, and therefore forgives no man, without a full satisfaction made to his justice; and therefore, 1. I conclude our Lord refers chiefly to the holy God. 1. This therefore may be one main scope and design of this similitude. 2. The great danger all unreconciled sinners are in of falling into the hands of the living God, who is a worse adversary, if an adversary, than any mortal man can be. 3. To show to sinners there is a way found out by which they may attain to peace and reconciliation with God. 4. And that they should not delay in the use of all means to endeavour after it, whilst the day of grace lasteth, or "before the things of their peace be hid from their eyes;" for it is evident, our Lord did not preach this sermon to his disciples only, but to the multitude also, ver. 1. Even to such who were not in a reconciled state, so that he seems to take an occasion from what precedes (about offending a brother) to instruct them about a higher concernment, i. e., that such who have God for their adversary, should above all things labour to obtain peace and reconciliation with him; and this indeed on other occasions was his frequent practice, that he might improve temporal things, to the spiritual profit and advantage of his hearers. So much as to the scope hereof.

Secondly, I shall proceed to open the parts of this simile.

1. By the adversary, I understand, as I have hinted, the holy and just God is meant, who is set out often in the Scriptures to be an adversary to all ungodly men.

2. The persons he directs his advice or counsel to, are all unreconciled sinners, who have not laid down their arms, but remain in a state of rebellion against God.

3. By the judge may be meant the Lord Jesus Christ, Acts xvii. 31, who is appointed, and ordained the judge of the quick and the dead: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son," John v. 12.

4. By the officer (some read it, jailor,) may be meant death, or divine justice; death as a sergeant, may be said to arrest a guilty sinner, when Christ the judge gives him a commission to seize him, or cut him down.

5. By the prison, no doubt is meant hell, out of which there is no redemption; were it not this prison, why should our Lord use this great asseveration, "Verily I say unto you,

he shall not come out thence, until he hath paid the utmost farthing." He doth not use such an expression certainly to confirm small matters, or things only of a temporal concernment: besides men commonly, though provoked, do not always stand upon severe justice, so as not to release a prisoner without the payment of the whole debt; justice and mercy are not essentials of man's nature, but only qualities (or virtues); and severe justice in men may be, and sometimes is, mere cruelty, but God's nature is just, he is essentially and absolutely just: yea, justice itself, as well as he is love, holiness, goodness, truth, &c. These are not qualities in God, but they are his attributes, or essential properties, so that he can as soon cease to be God, as cease to be just, righteous, and good.

Thirdly, In the words we have.

The parts opened. I. An exhortation, or a duty enjoined; "agree with thine adversary."

2. The time expressed, when, quickly, or now presently, or without delay.

3. We have a threefold motive, to excite, or to stir men up to this.

(1). Is taken from the consideration of the means of grace God affords, whilst thou art in the way with him; or whilst he calls and extends mercy and means of reconciliation to the sinner.

(2). From the consideration of the uncertainty of the continuation of the mercy and forbearance of God, lest at any time, or before thou art aware.

(3). From the fearful consequence of delay, and of the punishment that will unavoidably follow; He delivers thee to the judge, that is, God delivers the sinner into Christ's hand, not as a Saviour, but as an offended and just judge, who will deliver him up also into the hands of death and divine justice, and so his soul is sent to hell. From the words thus opened and explained, I shall take notice of several propositions or points of doctrine.

Doct. 1. That God is an adversary to all unbelieving and impenitent sinners.

Doct. 2. That it is the great duty of guilty or unbelieving sinners, to labour after peace and reconciliation with God, or accept of the offers of his grace and favour, in and by Jesus Christ.

Doct. 3. That sinners ought to seek peace and reconciliation with God presently or without delay.

Doct. 4. That a person who is not reconciled to God, is at all times in danger of wrath and divine vengeance, or of being sent to hell.

Even this very day, this morning, this night, or at any time; or if he lives until tomorrow, one day, one week, one month, or one year longer, it may be then O how uncertain is the life of a poor sinner! And how uncertain are the means of grace also! Whether persons are young or old, rich or poor, strong or weak, male or female, in health or sickness, they are in danger, if not reconciled to God, at any time of being delivered up into the hands of an offended judge, and of being thrown into hell. I shall speak a little to the first of these propositions, viz., that God is an adversary to sinners, &c.

And I. I shall show how God became an adversary to man.

2. How it appears he is an adversary to sinners.

3. Show what a kind of adversary God is.

How God became man's enemy. First. Let this be considered, i. e., God was a friend to man, and took delight in him whilst he abode in the state of innocence, but by sin and disobedience: in eating of the forbidden fruit, God cast him off, and became an enemy unto him: man rebelled originally against God, and God cannot but be an adversary to rebellious sinners. "They rebelled, and vexed his Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them," Isa. lxiii. 10. By original and actual sin, the hearts of men are set against God; resisting his authority, crossing his will, and violating his holy law: and from thence he became their adversary.

Secondly, It appears many ways that God is an adversary to sinners.

1. By declaring his wrath and anger against them: "God judgeth the righteous, and he is angry with the wicked every day. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. i. 18.

2. By whetting of his sword, he appears to be an adversary to all unbelieving sinners; "He will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow and made it ready: he hath prepared for him the instruments of death," Psal. vii. 12. What can more clearly discover God to be an enemy to sinners than this, to prepare war against them?

3. By his fearful threatenings and pronounciation of his anger against them; every where in this word, it evidently appears, that he is an adversary to them: "upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion

of their cup," Psal. i. 16. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3, 5.

4. By his abhorrence of them, some say that God only abhors the sins of some wicked men, but not their persons, but this is not true; "The wicked (saith the Psalmist) boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth," Psal. x. 2. He abhorreth not their sin only, but their persons also. "Three shepherds also I cut off in one month, and my soul loatheth them, and their souls also abhorred me," Zech. xi. 8. Every ungodly person, as sinners, God abhorreth.

5. By his laying the whole race of sinful mankind under his wrath, curse, and sentence of condemnation, and in that state all abide: that is, under his wrath, whilst they continue in unbelief: "He that believeth not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," Johu iii. 36. Every man in the world was a child of wrath by nature," Ephes. ii. 3; and God is an enemy unto them all, without distinction there is no difference.

Thirdly, I shall show you what an adversary God is to all unbelievers.

1. God is an enemy with just cause, not without good reason he became an adversary to sinners; he was provoked and stirred up by acts of highest treason and rebellion; how was man honoured at first! What dignity and glory did God confer upon him, in creating him in his own image, and in making him a prince and ruler over all things and creatures on earth! And how abominably did he revolt from God, and conspire with the devil against his Maker!

2. God is a strong and an invincible adversary, who is a match for him? Or who can stand before his indignation? "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth and is furious, the Lord taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies, the elect themselves are his enemies before called; the mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger; his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him?" Nahum i. 2, 5, 6. Man can stand no more before the wrath of this terrible God, than stubble can stand before a devouring fire: "Who would set briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, and burn them together," Isa. xxvii. 4. He is an adversary clothed with might, power, terror, and majesty, he hath made mighty kings as stubble to his bow, and emperors as chaff before the whirlwind.

3. God is a wise and skilful adversary, he knows how to marshal his host, and set his battle in array, and how with ease to revenge himself of his enemies: "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength," Job ix. 4. There is no device, no policy, nor crafty counsel against this adversary, the Lord of Hosts.

4. God is an incensed enemy, wrath hath been long kindling in his heart: and at last if sinners lay not down their arms, it will be poured forth like fire upon them.

5. God is a victorious and a prevailing adversary: when he rises up he devours at once; he shall cry, "He shall roar, he shall prevail against his enemies," Isa. xlv. 19.

6. Yet he is a forbearing and long-suffering adversary, he seeks not all advantages to destroy and avenge himself of his enemies. O how willing is he to put an end to that fearful war that is between him and poor sinners; he sends his ambassadors to offer peace, and to intreat them to be reconciled; he puts out his white flag to draw them, and to allure them to lay down their arms, and to accept of mercy and free pardon, before the bloody flag is put up.

7. In Jesus Christ he is reconciled; though he is an enemy to all sinners who have not Christ's satisfaction applied to them, his wrath is appeased in Christ, or by the sacrifice of his Son, and fury is not in him towards any that are in Jesus Christ, or who plead the satisfaction he has given, and that atonement he hath made by his blood: yet to such, I say, who stand out and refuse to come in, or accept of this atoning sacrifice, or to believe in Jesus Christ, or who seek by some other ways to make their peace with God; his frightful and soul amazing wrath will overtake and devour with dreadful vengeance and fury.

Fourthly, I shall endeavour to prove or to demonstrate, that it is the duty and highest concernment of sinners to accept of terms of peace with God.

1. Because the sinner first broke with God, the breach was not made by the holy Creator, but by man the wretched creature. God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions. Man first began this fearful war, he took up arms against his Maker, and therefore it is his duty and interest to accept of peace while he is in the way, or may be received into favour with God.

2. Because it is an unjust and unreasonable rebellion; shall the subject strive to dethrone his sovereign, and set up a sworn traitor in his place? Or shall the creature contemn and raise up war against his glorious Creator, who not only gave him his being, but feeds, clothes, and preserves him continually? O what a rebel is sorry man, and what ground and reason is there why he should strive to be at peace and reconciled unto God!

3. Because if they do not speedily take hold of peace, the mischief and wrong will fall upon themselves: what hath the sinner already suffered? and what may he further expect to meet with, if he continues in his rebellion and enmity against God? how poor and wretched hath this war already made him; and how wiserable will he be in the end; and, yet will he not be convinced of this his madness and folly; their swords will turn back into their own bowels, and pierce their own souls.

4. What cost and charge hath God been at to reconcile sinners to himself? God has sacrificed his own Son to procure their peace and reconciliation; this is the way he took, this is the way by which his wrath is appeased, and his offended justice satisfied; "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. Our blessed Jonah was thrown into the sea of God's wrath, to lay that dreadful storm our sins had raised; the honour of God's justice, and sanctification of the law, must be vindicated; we have not peace with God, as a simple act of mercy, but in a way of satisfaction to injured justice! but such who do not accept of this Christ, this succour, and fly to God by him, God will have war with for ever. It is indeed to abuse infinite wisdom, justice, love, goodness, and mercy, for sinners any other way to seek peace and reconciliation with God, or to refuse this way.

5. Because you are not able to deal with, or to stand against this adversary: are you a match for him? will you run upon the bosses of his buckler? He is a God of influences and authority, he commands all. The frogs invade Pharaoh, the stars fight against Sisera, an angel destroyed a whole army of Assyrians in a night, the watchers cut down Nebuchadnezzar, and sent him to graze with oxen, and tosses Belshazzar from the throne; and dost thou think to escape his awful frowns? can any by strength prevail? or will thy riches profit thee in the day of wrath? Or canst thou out-wit infinite wisdom? He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and by power shall none prevail. "He is of one mind, and who can turn him?" Job xxiii. 13. "His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure," Isa. xl. 10. "Whosoever hardeneth his heart against him and prospered?" Job. ix. 4? Wilt thou resolve to go on in thy sinful course, let God say what he will, ministers say what they will, and godly parents say what they will; nay, and thy conscience never so often and severely rebuke thee and terrify thy soul? And yet for all this wilt thou swear, lie, be drunk, and commit uncleanness; nay, "Add drunkenness to thirst, and say thou shalt have peace? O hear what God saith and tremble, the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall be upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven," Dent. xxix. 19, 20. Thou hardenest thy heart against him, when thou dost delay to close with Christ, and dost stifle those convictions thou mayest be under of sin and danger; every act of sin hardens the heart against God; what shall neither the word nor the rod break thy heart?

6. Now peace may be had with God: this is the time, the things of thy peace are not yet hid from thine eyes; mind the words, "whilst thou art in the way with him." Oh wonder that thou art out of hell, or that the day of grace is not yet ended; believe God is willing to be at peace with you, he is ready to pardon, and thou mayest not live until to-morrow, therefore it is thy wisdom to accept of peace to-day.

7. Christ's ambassadors do offer peace to you in their great Master's name; what answer will you give them? He will call them home in a short time. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 20. What, doth God and Jesus Christ entreat and beseech you to be reconciled, and dare you refuse? Nay, is God in Christ reconciled, and will you reject this Christ, and that peace he hath made by his own blood?

8. Moreover, you may have peace on easy terms, your sins are the plague and sores of your souls; no man but would be cured of the plague, or of a mortal disease; are you not willing to throw your filthy rags away, to be clothed with a glorious robe, or to accept of a plaister to heal your wounds? Would a man wounded with a spear, not have it pulled out of his side? You are polluted, and it was to wash and be clean. What poor virgin would think it a hard thing, to yield to be espoused to a glorious prince, when courted by him? Is not Christ deserve your choicest love and affections?

True, to the flesh the terms are hard, it is like pulling out a right eye, &c. But the Spirit of God makes it easy to the soul; it is but to believe and be saved, and that faith God is also ready to give to thee.

9. If you refuse peace to-day, your adversary may deliver you to the judge to-morrow, and the judge to the officer, and you be cast into hell; and what will you do then? Verily you shall not come out thence, until you have paid the utmost farthing you owe to God's justice.

10. It is peace with God, the mighty God, he will become thy friend, and thou wilt see in Christ all his wrath is over for ever.

11. Thou hereby shalt see thou art actually brought into the bonds of the covenant, and in a league of lasting peace and real friendship; so that God's enemies will be thy enemies, and such that are his friends, will be thy friends, his strength will be engaged for thee, to help and succour thee at all times, both of afflictions and temptations.

12. Thou wilt have soul-peace, peace within, as well as peace with God; "Great peace have they that love thy law," Psal. cxix. 165; it is indeed, "Peace that passeth all understanding," Phil. iv. 7. O what is it to have peace with God? It is perfect peace, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," Isa. xxvi. 3; and this peace opens a blessed trade, even free access to God, thou shalt have communion with him, and enjoy many other high and glorious privileges also, therefore it is thy wisdom and interest, and the interest of all sinners, quickly to accept of peace with God.

USE.

This may serve to reprove such who say God is no adversary to the persons of the elect, whilst in their sins, and unbelievers, though they are swearers, blasphemers, drunkards, whoremongers, murderers, &c., because in his Son he is reconciled, or Christ hath satisfied the justice of God for all their sins. Cannot they distinguish between the satisfaction of Christ, or that atonement he hath made for sinners, and the application of it to the sinner's person and conscience? Sure they are ignorant of the holy nature of God, and do not believe the truth of his word, or the record thereof.

Object. I. God is (say these men) unchangeable, and therefore how can his elect be at one time under his wrath, and another time in his love? Can such ever be children of wrath, and God an enemy to them whom he loved from eternity? Thus they argue.

Ans. You look upon God as upon man; as if love and hatred were but qualities in God; that which we call love, and that which we call hatred, in God is all one, saith Reverend Jer. Burroughs, but in us they are two things, two acts; one while God acts in a way of love, and at another time in a way of wrath,

but the change is not in God, but in those objects towards whom his love or wrath is manifested.

God himself (saith he) is one pure act, one in his own holy nature, though in his acting towards creatures, he seems to us as it were divided,

when all is but the several ways of the manifestation of his own infinite essence. Pray did not God love the angels that fell when they were holy and pure creatures?

And yet now they are become devils, and doth he not love them? Yet is there from hence any change in God? We must distinguish between what God is in himself, and his actings and manifestations of himself to creatures.

Man in a state of innocency was, as it were (saith Mr. Burroughs) white glass, and God shined thereon in a way of love and goodness to man; the same man falls, and is dyed red by his sin, and let him now be presented unto God, and the ways of God are bloody, and appear full of wrath;

let this man be converted, and then again the glass is changed, and God presenteth himself another way, i.e., in love and sweet complacency: but he is still the same God, only according to the several ways of the creature, so are his several actings; whose ways to us are past finding out: therefore those that would speak of God, as he is in himself, who is but one act, lead people into abundance of errors, because they are not able to manage their apprehensions of him as he is in himself, page 20.

We converts (saith the Apostle), were the children of wrath as well as others, in that respect there was no difference between us and others. I will put this to these men, i.e., was not there a time when Christ was under God's wrath? Yet God loved his Son from all eternity.

Sirs, that wrath of God due to us under which the elect were fallen, Christ came under, and from hence we may see that the elect were under wrath, and God acted as an enemy to them, and yet he loved them, as he saw them in his Son from eternity, and also acted in a way

of love, pity, and good-will towards them from everlasting. Jer. xxxi. 3. God, saith another author, hates no man's person, simply considered as his creature, but he hates them as ungodly or wicked persons, and so he could not but hate elect sinners, as well as he hates their sins, and sinful state; and he hates them also, so as to withhold (for a time) the effects of his love from them. We call (saith he) the effects of God's grace, grace; and the effects of his wrath, wrath; as God is said to repent when he causes the effects of anger to cease; God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; the meritorious and wrath-appeasing sacrifice is paid once for all, but it is in Christ for us, and not applied to any adult person, until they believe; we must be in Christ, if God be reconciled to us, and we to him; in him only is God well pleased, that is, with none else but them that are in Jesus Christ.

2. Bewail the state of all unbelievers, all who are in a state of enmity and rebellion against God. O what a fearful thing is it to have God for an adversary, and to fall into the hands of the living God!

3. Here is great encouragement for sinners to fly to God by Jesus Christ, God being in his Son well pleased and reconciled, though he is not well pleased, nor actually reconciled to the person of any wicked, ungodly, and unbelieving sinner; and such who assert the contrary, speak not that which is right of the holy God, but contradict the testimony of the word of truth. Let no sinner therefore once imagine God can be at peace with him, delight in him, or be reconciled to his person, whilst he is an unbeliever, or lives in, and love his horrid sins and abominable lusts; but let him lay hold of God's free offers of peace, and strive to obtain the grace of God, and faith in Christ, to change and purify both his heart and life.

4. Terror. This may be for a use of terror to all such, as resist and fight against God, and slight all the offers of his grace and free pardon, in and through Jesus Christ; what will they do in the day of his fierce anger? "He will then speak to him in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure," Psa. ii. 5. Yea, he will thunder out of heaven against them, and break them all to pieces, who is able to gather heaven up in the folds as a curtain, and roll it together as a scroll of parchment, and break up the fountain of the great deeps of his wrath, and open the windows of heaven, and drown them in a deluge of his divine vengeance, and affright them by rattling peals of thunder, or cut them to pieces with thunderbolts, and amazing hail, fire, and brimstone. Quake, ye haughty, and God-contemning infidels, whither will you fly? Or where can you find a place to hide yourselves from this incensed adversary when he rises up to the prey, and his hands takes hold of judgment?

5. But sing, ye saints, rejoice ye righteous; this terrible God is your Father, your Friend, he is at peace with you, and will plead your cause against your enemies; and he will hide you in the day of his wrath, and be your refuge when he comes forth in flames and flashes of fire, to burn up the earth, and to consume the proud and all the wicked like unto stubble. "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel," Joel iii. 16.

SERMON XI.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, &c.—Matt. v. 25, 26.

I SHALL proceed to the next proposition, &c.

Doct. 3. That sinners ought without delay, quickly, presently, to seek peace and reconciliation with God.

1. I shall show you what is necessary for sinners to know and to do, in order to their being reconciled unto God.

2. Give you the purport of this word "quickly."

3. Give you the reasons why they should agree with their adversary quickly, or without delay.

1. It is absolutely necessary that such sinners who would have peace, do know the blessed God, or what a God he is; that he is a holy God, his nature is holy; that he is originally and essentially holy, yea infinitely holy, and hateth all sin and wickedness, and all that live in sin and rebellion against him.

2. And they ought also to know the holiness and purity of his blessed law, which lays unbelieving sinners under wrath and the curse.

3. They ought to know the justice of God, who will not acquit any guilty sinner, but will implead mercy, unless the sinner can plead a full satisfaction is made for his sins to the injured law and justice of God.

4. Sinners ought to know the mercy of God is exceeding great, and that love and goodness are as absolutely the essential properties of God's nature as holiness and justice.

5. They ought to know the channel in which mercy, love, and goodness, only runs down like a mighty stream, or the way by which God displays his mercy and pardoning grace to sinners, which infinite wisdom found out, which is that way, and that way alone, by which his divine wrath is appeased, and infinite justice is satisfied; viz., by the sacrifice and obedience of Jesus Christ, who was offered up in our stead; the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, or make our peace by the blood of his cross.

II. Sinners ought to know the insufficiency of all other ways and means whatsoever, in order to their obtaining peace and reconciliation with God.

1. That no other sacrifice can appease the wrath of God; no, though a sinner should offer a thousand rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil, or give his first-born, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, Mich. vi. 7. Much less the sacrifice of bulls and goats.

2. That his repentance cannot satisfy divine justice, no, though he could shed tears of blood.

3. Nor his leaving off his sins; no, though he could live and sin no more, because his former sins, the old score, would cast him into hell; will not running into God's debt any more, satisfy for sin and debts committed, or contracted in times past?

4. No more ought the sinner to think his faith, either as a habit or a gracious act, can satisfy divine justice, or appease God's anger for his sins; for faith is imperfect, through his sin cleaving to it; who can say his faith is perfect, or any other grace? No, our faith needs a Saviour, or rather that unbelief that cleaves to our faith. *Sirs*, faith subjectively taken, justifies us not, or makes not our peace with God; but objectively considered; I mean, it is Christ that faith apprehends: Jesus Christ, the object of faith. Both faith make the obedience and death of Christ satisfactory unto God? Both that pay our debts and satisfy divine justice, because that way the atonement is received or applied to us?

5. Nor is it our inherent righteousness, nor our religious duties that can make our peace with God; all our own righteousness is but unrighteousness in the eye of severe justice. Hence it is compared to "filthy rags or dung," Phil. iii. 8, in comparison of the righteousness of God. Therefore sinners ought to know that regeneration and sanctification cannot make their peace with God, or satisfy for their sins; for although no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven that is not born again, and made inherently holy, yet neither of these doth, or can atone for sins, nor appease God's wrath; therefore do not think, though you become new creatures, that regeneration can procure or purchase your peace, or make reconciliation with God; it doth indeed make us meet for heaven, but it gives us no right or title to it. Grace in us is but a creature, and regeneration is but in part; whilst we are in this world, there is much sin and corruption remaining in the best of saints.

III. Therefore sinners must know that it is Christ's obedience only, his blood and merits, his sin-atonement sacrifice that makes our peace. O it is a most dangerous thing for any to build their hopes of God's favour and peace with him upon any thing wrought in them, or done by them. Moreover, it is not your pleading God's mercy that will avail you anything, unless you eye the way in which he lets his mercy run forth. God's mercy will not acquit a sinner to the eclipsing the glory of his justice and holiness. Mercy indeed moved infinite wisdom to find out the ransom, but to plead for pardon without respect to Christ's bloody sacrifice, is the way to turn mercy into fury. Shall a condemned criminal sue to his sovereign for pardon upon the simple score or account of mercy, after the king had sacrificed his own son, to satisfy the law and justice for those his horrid offences; this would but enrage his abused sovereign. Might he not say, Thou ignorant wretch, did I not sacrifice my son to make thy peace? why dost thou not plead the merits of his blood, in which my mercy and justice are both magnified? He that would have pardon and peace with God, ought well to consider these things. They must despair of help or relief any other way, therefore seek it by Jesus Christ alone. We must die to our own righteousness, as St. Paul did, and count all that is gain to us as loss for Christ, that we may be found in him, and clothed with his righteousness only, Phil. iii. 8, 9, if we would have peace with God; or else the law will let fly his killing arrows against us, and divine justice will throw us into hell. Woe to such who build upon their own inherent righteousness, or boast of a state of perfection in themselves, or place their title to

heaven on their inherent sanctification, or mix works with Christ's merits in point of justification, reconciliation, and peace with God.

IV. Such sinners who would have peace with God, must resolve to lay down their arms, and fight against God no more. Dare a condemned rebel approach the throne of his incensed sovereign, to beg pardon with his sword in his hand, as if he would sheath it in the bowels of his prince?

1. Resolve not to sin any more, whether God will pardon thee or not; do not hug any idol in thy heart.

2. Be convinced that this world in its riches, honours, and sensual pleasures, is a cursed enemy to thy soul, and while it smiles upon thee, it secretly and unawares cuts thy throat; do not be fond of a name amongst men; self is a grand idol, self-love, self-interest, self-righteousness; beware of human applauses, and vain glory.

3. Take heed thou dost not love husband, wife, children, or estate, above Christ, and so in love to them neglect to seek peace with God through Jesus Christ.

4. Take heed of resting on that knowledge, and upon those outward privileges thou hast attained; I may say to thee, alluding to that passage, 2 Kings ix. 18, "Is it peace? and Jehu said, what hast thou to do with peace? turn thou behind me," ver. 22. "And it came to pass when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, is it peace, Jehu? And he answered and said, what peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her withcrafts are so many?" O put away your idols, your strange gods; let no trust, no relation, no duty, no attainment be your idol, if you would have peace with God; what peace so long as men love the world above God? What peace whilst thou art a swearer, a drunkard, a liar, a back-biter, a whoremonger? What peace so long as pride, covetousness, and other abominable lusts, reign and predominate in the sinner's heart.

V. Agree you must with your adversary quickly, accept presently of the free offers of grace in Christ, and be united to him by the Holy Spirit; it is only to them in Christ: I say again, that God is reconciled in Christ, and therefore cry to God to give thee his Spirit, to bring thy soul to accept, espouse, and unite thee to the Lord Jesus, and so to enable thee to believe in him, John iii. 36, Mark xvi. 16; for he that believeth not, God's wrath abides upon, and such shall perish. "He that believeth not shall be damned;" nay, he "that believeth not is condemned already," and abides condemned, because he believes not in the Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. You must be born again, if you ever come to have peace with God, for though regeneration does not reconcile God to us, (as you have heard) yet we must have the old nature, that evil nature changed, and that enmity that is in our minds against God removed. God will ever have war with the old nature, and with all such in whom that old enmity remains; therefore marvel not that Christ says, "ye must be born again;" you cannot love God till then, nor the things of God, nor enjoy communion and fellowship with God and Jesus Christ, nor delight in him, until you find a new heart, or partake of the divine nature. God hath promised to circumsise our hearts to love him, and to give us a new heart. O plead his absolute promises, take hold of his absolute promises, and observe the proclamation of peace and reconciliation God hath sent out, and daily makes in the ministry of his word;

lay hold of the first summons, do not delay, your life lies at stake.
VII. You must know the power of God in Christ to save to the uttermost, all that come unto him; and also how ready and willing he is to pardon all your sins, though never so many, or never so great, Heb. vii. 25.

Object. But I am not sure that God will pardon me, and be at peace with me.
An-w. 1. Observe this well, our Lord hath said, "That whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast him out," John vi. 36, 37, that is, I will receive him, he shall be pardoned, and have peace; never did any come to God by Christ, but found acceptance, and therefore thou shalt if thou dost come unto him.

2. Thou hast as much ground to believe that God will pardon thee, and be at peace with thee, as any of those sinners had, who have found mercy, and now have peace with God; they could not find their names in the proclamation, no more than you can, but the promise to sinners, to all that see themselves lost, and undone sinners.

3. Many as bad, nay perhaps worse sinners than you, have found mercy, and been received into favour with God.

4. If thou canst not believe, cry to God to help thy unbelief; he will give faith to thee, if thou dost but cry to him, and wait on him in the use of all means he hath ordained.

5. Hath not God sent his ambassadors to offer peace to you, and doth not he command

you to believe in his Son, and tells you that he will abundantly pardon all that turn to him : " though their sins be as red as scarlet, he will make them as white as snow." Isa. i. 18. What would you have more ?

Secondly, I shall show you what this word quickly doth denote ; " agree with thine adversary quickly."

1. It is to do a thing with great haste, make ready three measures of fine ^{What quick-}meal quickly, that is, make haste ; " Abraham made haste to fetch a calf, he ^{ly doth im-}ran unto the herd—and he hastened to dress it," Gen. xviii. 7, so such who would have ^{ply,}peace with God, must make great haste, and speed to do it.

2. The word signifies utmost diligence : " Thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place," 1 Sam. xx. 19. Sinners should endeavour after pardon and peace, by closing with Christ with the utmost care and diligence imaginable.

3. It denotes the doing of a thing without the least delay or lingering. " Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty," Luke xvi. 6. So here ; this great work must not be delayed one moment, nor be deferred until to-morrow.

Thirdly, I shall give you the reasons of this and so confirm this proposition by arguments.

I. Because it is business of the highest concernment in the world : Can you eat, drink, or sleep, whilst God is your enemy, and his wrath abides upon you ? Will you ^{Why sinners}play with your souls, and trifle about things of an eternal concernment ? Were ^{must quickly}you not sent into this world to seek after God ? he is accounted a foolish man ^{accept of}that neglects his seed time, his market, or exchange-time : Doth our Lord say in vain, " Strive to enter in at the strait gate ?" Luke xiii. 24. What, are there none here that will stir up themselves to take hold of God ? Will you all plead excuses ? Your blood then be upon your own heads. I have given you warning this day, to agree with your adversary now speedily, and without delay.

II. Because the present time is the very season in which God commands you to seek him, and be at peace with him, " To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Heb. iii. 15. " Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. Behold, take notice of it, would you have pardon, be accepted, and have peace with God ? Behold this is the time, the accepted time, the day of salvation ; but if you do not now lay hold of Christ, it may be the day of your damnation ; It is not the time you like or approve of, sad ! that God's time should not be your time : Is it meet you should choose the proper time, or God ?

III. Because the neglect of the present time, is to neglect the time of your visitation : " O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace," Luke xix. 42. If you stay till to-morrow, you may never have another offer of peace made to you : the proclamation is, that you rebels lay down your arms, and kiss the Son, submit yourselves to his mercy this very day, if you would have pardon and peace with God.

IV. Because the day of your lives it is but short and very uncertain ; nay, and the day of God's patience, or the day of grace, may be but short also, as it is very uncertain. We know how many hours are in a natural day, but we know not the number of the days of our lives : and we are bid " not to boast ourselves of to-morrow, because we know not what a day may bring forth," Prov. xxvii. 1. We know not also how long God's may be, this I say, brethren, the time is short ; O make haste, what you do, do quickly : doth not God say now, Christ says quickly ? " Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace," Job xxii. 21. If you remain ignorant of God, or know not God in Christ, you can expect no peace : or if you think to acquaint yourselves with him hereafter, it may not do ; you must do it now : shall God say now, and you say no, not now, not to-day, but to-morrow ? If God's now be not regarded, and Christ not closed with this day, thy soul may be in hell to-morrow ; " This night shall thy soul be required of thee." Dare you disobey God's calls, and refuse his now ? is it not an act of the greatest folly as well of rebellion ? why do you delay ? would a condemned criminal when sent to by his prince to haste and come quickly to him, even to-day, say no, I'll defer it till to-morrow ? All would say he was out of his wits should he so do : Alas, saith he, if I go not to-day, execution-day may be to-morrow. Consider, sinner, what thou doest, thou that sayest thou wilt turn to God to-morrow, or art not resolved to do it to-day ; thy purpose it appears is to be wicked to-day, such sin with full resolution : and what if God says, thou shalt have thy choice, thy lusts to-day, thy pleasures to-day, thy carnal delights and profits to-day, and be damned to-morrow ; thou shalt be hardened to-day, and be cast into hell to-morrow. Were your house on fire to-

day, would you say you will endeavour to quench it to-morrow? or had you a child fallen into the river to-day, would you say you would pull it out to-morrow? *Seneca*, though a heathen, condemns many that call themselves Christians; it is the folly of a man (saith he) to think to live, when a thousand to one but he will be dead and rotten! O what folly is it in men to think of closing with Christ, and get peace with God when they are old! whereas thousands are cut off while young. Let me ask you a few questions.

1. Is not peace with God worth seeking? is it not absolutely necessary? can you be happy without it? I know you will say nothing is more needful, why do you not then quickly seek after it?

2. Did Jesus Christ out-bid himself in dying for us who were enemies to God? was he unwise to die to make our peace, or was it worth the price of his most precious blood, and is it not worth your serious thought, prayers, and tears, and greatest diligence to seek after the merits and blessing thereof?

3. Or do you think God will be better pleased with the dregs of your days, than with the chief and prime of your days? You will say no, why then do you reserve them and waste the best of your time, days, and strength, in the service of sin and Satan?

4. Or do you think that you shall be in a better capacity to mind heavenly things hereafter, when sickness, pain, and anguish seize on you, and when God's Spirit perhaps will be withdrawn from you, or strive no more with you?

5. Or is it fit for a servant to say, to-morrow I will go and work in thy vineyard, when his master says go to-day? O will you deal with the holy God, as you would not be dealt with yourself?

God as an act of sovereignty may at any time cut down a sinner. V. Mind these words well, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge. Thy times are in God's hand; he may act when he pleaseth in a way of sovereignty, i. e. at any time he may give thee up into the hands of divine Justice and cut thee off; death may seize on thee this day, this night, or at any time, even before you are aware. Man knows not his time.

VI. When once the Judge delivers thee to the Officer, and thou art cast into prison, how dismal will thy state be for ever? There is no redemption out of hell. Could sinners satisfy divine justice by suffering, though they lay in torments ten thousand years, they might come out thence; but, because the sufferings of a finite creature cannot satisfy infinite justice, who demands the uttermost farthing, they must lie in those flames to an endless eternity. For though Christ satisfied for all the sins of the elect, or paid the uttermost farthing in a short space of time, yet the sinner cannot; sinners in hell sin eternally, and therefore must suffer eternally. Christ, saith one, endured the penal death of men, not the spiritual death of men: and that in the nature of it, not in the continuance, not in the despair and moral evils that follow upon it. Such sins as the damned are guilty of, are not essential to the nature of the punishment, but arise from the inherent unrighteousness of the person suffering; neither is the eternal duration of the punishment essential to its nature, but ariseth from the infinite nature of the suffering creature, which renders a commensurate satisfaction from him impossible. But the infinite holiness of Christ's nature was a bar against the sins which are committed by others under wrath; and the infinite satisfaction he made, by means of the grandeur and dignity of his Person, was a bar against the eternal duration of the punishment.

APPLICATION.

Our peace with God is a mystery. From hence I infer, that the sinner's peace and reconciliation with God, is a great mystery; Christ did not plead with the Father, pray and intreat the Father only to be at peace with us; no, but he died, he died, to procure our peace. "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world began, to our glory." 1 Cor. ii. 7.

2. That our peace and reconciliation with God, is alone of his free grace. It is free to us, though Christ paid dear for it; sinners could not make their own peace with God, neither do anything to reconcile God to them, or them to God; no, God alone is the Author of it, and it flows from him as an act of infinite love, grace, and favour. He found out the great Peace-maker, he sent him into the world, he accepted him as our Surety in our stead; he anointed him, upheld him, and raised him up from the dead; he, by the power of his Spirit, changes our hearts, bows our wills, draws our affections, and makes us yield to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and to accept of that peace he made by his blood.

3. We also infer from hence, that God the Father, who is the Author of our peace

and reconciliation, ought to receive equal glory with our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath made our peace; and that we ought equally to exalt the Holy Ghost, who applies this peace to us, and who works out all that enmity which was in our hearts against God; and so makes the blood of atonement efficacious to our souls.

The Father is the Author of our peace.

4. That it is a certain, a sure, and an abiding peace; "The covenant of my peace shall not be removed, saith the Lord who hath mercy on thee." This peace is according to God's eternal counsel: it is founded upon his unalterable decree and purpose in Jesus Christ, and it is confirmed by the blood of his Son, and the oath of God, Heb. vi. 17—19. Shall any of them miss of peace and reconciliation with God, for whom Christ died, and to whom this peace is applied? No, no, that is impossible. "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

It is sure peace.

5. We may infer that Christ as Mediator doth the whole work, or all for us, about our peace: he reconciles God to us, and us to God, so lays his hands upon both.

Christ alone is the Reconciler.

6. We also may infer from hence, that he that would agree with God (who is an enemy to sinners whilst they remain in their sins) and have peace with him, must receive the Holy Spirit, and so be united to Jesus Christ, and must believe in him, receive him by faith, or perish for ever. And all that the Father gave to his Son, shall be thus united to him; they shall believe, or come to Christ, John vi. 37.

The Spirit is a great Agent in our peace, Isa. vi. 37.

7. We may infer, that to reject Jesus Christ, or not to receive him who hath made our peace, is an abominable evil, the worst sin any soul can be guilty of. Hath God done all this, Christ done all this, for sinners' peace, and shall any wickedly refuse to accept it? Or shall they think of getting peace with God some other way, even by their own works, reformation of life, or by their righteousness, repentance, and sincere obedience? Let such fear of falling into hell, and so perish for ever. "For there is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved, if ever we are saved," Acts iv. 12.

The evil of rejecting peace with God.

8. We infer from whence it is that we are made accepted in the sight of God, *i. e.*, it is in the beloved; and by this means also we have free access to God; our peace being made, and we justified, we may come with boldness to the throne of grace, by the blood of Jesus.

9. We infer also, that God is reconciled to sinners upon honourable terms; God every way is magnified, and suffers not in any of his blessed attributes. Had we only been pardoned as an act of simple mercy, perhaps the devil would cry, where is now the glory of thy justice, the glory of thy truth and holiness, and the sanction of thy law?

Gospel-peace upon honourable terms.

10. This may serve to abase man, humble man: here is peace made without sorry man's seeking, or man's procuring, nay, and without any desert of mankind? Did we deserve this favour, such love, such a Saviour? What did Christ die for us when we were enemies? "Where is boasting then?" "All things are of God," &c., that man might be nothing, but cry out, O the riches of God's grace! who works all our works in us and for us.

Man hated the way of his peace.

Exhort. O sinners, sinners! make haste, and quickly agree with your adversary, *i. e.*, embrace Jesus Christ, labour to know and receive the atonement, and the things of your peace, lest they are hid from your eyes, or before you are given up to hardness of heart, &c., or into the hands of your righteous Judge, whose lamb-like nature will be turned into fury, and like a lion will tear you in pieces. And O let the sight of a bleeding Jesus upon the cross, move you into tears, and melt your hearts to think that no other ways you could have peace and reconciliation with God. What is sin? O what a kind of breach did it make between God and us, that nothing but the blood of his own Son could make up that breach?

Sinners exhorted to accept of peace by Christ Jesus.

Comfort. What consolations here to all that are reconciled to God; there will never any more be a breach between God and you; he is your Father in Jesus Christ, he will defend your cause, and take care of your persons, and fight against and subdue all your enemies; and keep your souls in perfect peace whose minds are stayed upon him.

SERMON XII.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man that built his house upon a rock.

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.—Matt. vii. 24, 25.

1 Sermon
preached
July 2
1693. THIS is an express similitude, (and as my purpose is to open and explain all the parables contained in the four Evangelists) so likewise all the principal similitudes which our blessed Saviour made use of.

The method I shall take shall be as followeth :

First, open every part of this similitude.

Secondly, I shall take notice of the chief points of doctrine that lie therein.

Thirdly, apply the whole.

First, Christ's sayings may comprehend his whole doctrine.

1. The doctrine of faith and repentance, for in these two things did part of his sayings consist, nay, the first and chief of them. This doctrine on these sayings, he began to offer just after he was baptized, when he first entered on this ministry. "Saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the Gospel," Matt. i. 10—15.

2. The doctrine of regeneration. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3.

3. The doctrine of self-denial.

Then said Jesus to his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," Matt. xvi. 24.

But more particularly, that doctrine, and those saying of his, which he uttered in the mount, Matt. v. ; to which these of my text, particularly refer.

1. Wherein he presseth a holy life, and openeth the nature and spirituality of the moral law.

2. The doctrine of righteousness, showing that we must have a righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, Matt. v. 20.

Quest. What was the righteousness of the Pharisees ?

Ans. I am not ignorant that some affirm it was only a formal hypocritical righteousness, because many of the Scribes and Pharisees were charged by our Lord with horrid hypocrisy.

And this they would have here meant, to bring in man's own inherent righteousness, or our sincere obedience to the precepts of the law and Gospel, to be that righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ; thereby to exclude the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, to be intended by our blessed Lord.

Now, though we deny not but that some of the Scribes and Pharisees were guilty of abominable hypocrisy, and consequently all their righteousness was but in show, and outward appearance ; also mixed with many vain rites, ceremonies, and traditions : yet evident it is, all of them were not of this sort, but some might act out of moral sincerity ; and can we think that our Saviour alluded to that righteousness that was in the grosser and coarser sort of the Pharisees, and not to the righteousness of those of them that acted in moral uprightness towards God, as Paul did whilst he was a Pharisee, as he testified before the counsel ; "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day," Acts xxiii. 1. That he acted in uprightness, or morally in all good conscience towards God, in obedience to the law while a Pharisee ; I think there is no doubt to be made of this ; Saul certainly was no hypocrite, though misled, and ignorant of that justifying righteousness that is in Christ only ; which when he came to believe, he so valued, "That his own righteousness he accounted but dung," Phil. iii. 8, 9, 10, in comparison of it.

2. So that it appears, the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was a self-righte-

ousness, a legal righteousness, an inherent righteousness, or righteousness of works. A righteousness in conformity to the letter of the law, not to the perfection or spirituality of the law.

Our Lord shows, that our righteousness, if we enter into heaven, must exceed the very best that any of the Pharisees had, (viz.)

1. It must be a perfect righteousness, a spotless righteousness; viz., the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for our justification.

2. He may also comprehend that sincere, inherent righteousness that is in believers, that flows from faith, and union with Christ, and right principles, which tends to sanctify and cleanse both our hearts and lives.

But such who preach the righteousness our Lord speaks of, (as exceeding the righteousness of the Scribes, &c.) to be only a sincere, inward, and outward conformity to the rules and precepts of the Gospel, no doubt are mistaken. For should a man gain an inherent righteousness, that exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, will that justify him at God's bar; or give him a title to, and an entrance into the kingdom of heaven?

Certainly, whosoever he be that obtains the highest degree of an inherent righteousness, and resteth on that, thinking that will save him, he is blind and deceived, and in danger to fall into hell; for all works either done by us, or wrought in us, are utterly excluded in point of justification.

Christ's righteousness only is our alone title to eternal life, without any of ours being joined with it, (though by the operations of the Holy Spirit, and blessed effects of faith, and union with Christ) we are made meet, or fit for that glorious "inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12.

It was not Abraham's nor David's own inherent righteousness that justified and saved them, though theirs did far exceed the righteousness of any of the Scribes or Pharisees, because it was the effects of faith and union with Christ.

"Abraham believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness," Rom. iv. 3, that is, by faith he saw Christ and believed on him; Christ's righteousness to apprehend, justified him. "Now to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5. "Enter not into judgment (saith David) with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified," Psal. cxliii. 2. All our righteousness (saith the prophet) is but as filthy rags; therefore our Saviour by his sayings, doth not put us upon doing, or working for life; no, no, though we exceed therein the Scribes and the Pharisees; but to show that we must look out for a perfect righteousness to another; that is, look by faith to Christ, believe in him for righteousness; "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. "When ye have done all, say ye are unprofitable servants." Heaven is not a reward of debt, but of grace.

3. Our Lord alludes to those sayings of his, of heart purity; not only, not to commit the act of adultery, but also, not to look upon a woman to commit adultery with her, Matt. v. 28.

4. To cut off a right-hand lusts, and pull out a right-eye lusts. Also,

5. Not to be angry with our brother without cause; showing that we may be guilty of murder without committing the overt-act of murder; thereby to convince us that it is impossible for us to keep the holy law of God, and to be justified thereby, and so to lead us to rely, and depend upon his perfect obedience unto it, in our nature and stead; likewise to those sayings of his about abstinence and secret prayer; also to "agree with thine adversary quickly," Matt. v. 25, that is, to plead the atonement he hath made for our sins; and to that satisfaction he hath given to the law and justice of God. Moreover, what he said about mourning for sin, labouring after poverty of spirit, to be meek, and "hunger and thirst after righteousness, to bear reproaches and persecution patiently for his sake; to be the salt of the earth, and light of the world," Matt. v. 3—13; as also to be "merciful, as our Father that is in heaven is merciful and perfect," ver. 48; that is, to labour after the implantation of grace, and to obtain an impress of God's image upon our souls, or to experience the same holiness, as to its nature and quality (though we cannot arrive to the same in respect to degrees thereof.) So much as to what those sayings of Christ my text refers to.

Secondly, What is meant by hearing of Christ's sayings?

Ans. 1. To hear his word and sayings with attention, to hear in hearing;

What it is to hear Christ's sayings.

some will not hear at all, they will not come where Christ's doctrine and sayings are preached; others do not regard what they hear, but hear carelessly.

2. To hear his sayings and holy doctrine, as it is his word, not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the Word of God. Thus those in Thessalonica heard it, and received it, which becomes effectual in all that believe.

3. They hear Christ's sayings with holy trembling. Thus the good king Josiah heard the book of the law. "Princes (saith David) persecuted me without a cause, but my heart standeth in awe of thy word," Psal. cxix. 161.

If they heard the words of Moses with such trembling and holy awe, who was but the servant, and but a man as we are; with what fear and awe should we hear Christ's word, who is the Son of God, the Lord from heaven; we certainly should give the more earnest heed to the things he says; "To this man will I look that is poor, and that trembleth at my word," Isa. lxvi. 2.

5. To hear Christ's sayings and heavenly doctrine believingly; "Who hath believed our report?" Isa. liii. 1. Many that heard our Saviour's sayings did not believe; they did not give that credence to his doctrine which they gave to such that came in their own names to deceive them: yet it is one thing to believe Christ's sayings to be true, and another thing truly to believe in him, and receive him, and rest upon him, for life and salvation.

5. To hear with understanding; many hear but remain ignorant of their state, do not understand the purport of the word, which is to convince them of the evil of sin, and of their woful and undone condition thereby, and of the necessity of a Mediator, or of a Saviour; as also of the excellency of that blessed Saviour, together with that mighty power and ability that he is clothed with to save. They hear and understand, that there is an absolute necessity of faith in Christ, of receiving him, resting and relying upon him for salvation; these are they that rightly hear the word and sayings of Jesus Christ; "But he that receiveth seed into good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it which also beareth fruit," &c., Matt. xiii. 23.

6. The wise hearer hears Christ's sayings and retains them, he is not a forgetful hearer; he sees the excellency of the word; likes and approves of the sayings and doctrine of Jesus Christ; he is like to Mary who pondered, "And kept all these sayings in her heart." These persons, with holy David, love God's word above gold, yea, above fine gold; "therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and hate every false way," Psal. cxix. 127, 128.

7. It is a hearing of Christ's word and sayings subjectively; such hear and come to Christ. "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, &c. Luke vi. 47. In coming to Christ they hear, and in hearing, come, that is, then believe, and receive Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, what is meant by doing Christ's sayings?

What it is to do Christ's sayings.

Ans. 1. It is to believe whatsoever is matter of faith; and to do and practise whatsoever is matter of practice and duty.

2. He may be said to do what Christ saith that hath his whole trust and dependence upon him, or that resteth wholly upon Christ's merits and righteousness for justification and eternal life; "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Brethren, this is one of the sayings of Christ; you are for working, for doing, (as if Christ should say) I will therefore resolve and answer our question, "What shall we do to work the work of God?" Ver. 28. That which God would have you do, or is his work, i.e., that which he had commanded you to do, is, that you believe on him whom he hath sent. Sirs, none do Christ's sayings but such that believe on him.

3. To do Christ's sayings is to yield ready and hearty obedience to the precepts he hath given forth in the Gospel; some will not hear what Christ says; others will hear, but they hear carelessly; others hear but do not. "If I am your Lord and Master, why do ye not what I say? Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," Matt. vii. 21.

4. They that uprightly do Christ's sayings, do them sincerely, in truth, not out of by-ends and aims; neither for loves, not for self and carnal profit, nor for self-applause. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did not eat of the loaves, and were filled," John vii. 26. Some have low, carnal, and base ends in hearing and doing Christ's sayings; but such who are truly wise, act as those St. Paul speaks of; "But ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine that was delivered unto you;" Rom vii. 17. The divine doctrine hath great efficacy on the hearts of these persons; the word makes an impression upon their souls, so that with joy and delight they obey it.

5. They do Christ's sayings from right principles, from a principle of life, from faith in, and love to Christ: if ye love me, keep my commandments; that obedience which proceeds not from faith and love, is not regarded, nor accepted of by Jesus Christ.

6. They are such that do all Christ's sayings; "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I say," John xv. 14. Nothing more clearly declares, or expresses our love to Christ, than our obedience to all his precepts, or our universal obedience to him; "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments," Psal. cxix. 6.

7. Such continue in doing Christ's sayings; they abide in their obedience, they obey always, or continue in well doing.

Fourthly, What is meant by his house? He is like to a man that built his house, &c.

1. I answer, By this house is, doubtless, meant his hope of salvation; "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as the spider's web," Job. viii. 14. He shall lean on his house, but it shall not stand.

1. A house is that which we rest in, and where we take our repose; a true believer resteth on Christ, he builds his house, i. e., his hope, his soul, and all he doth, on Christ; he that hath a right hope, a true faith, he hath a firm and well-built house, where he repositeth himself, or resteth continually.

2. A house is a place of shelter to us, in a tempestuous or stormy season, when rain, hail, snow, thunder, &c., are like to annoy us; so this man that builds his hope in Christ, is secured and safe, when Satan raises storms of temptations upon him; he is safe also from the thunderings of mount Sinai, or the thunderbolts of the law and of the wrath of God, which all unbelievers lie open to.

3. A house is often assaulted by thieves, and if not firm and strong, may be broke up, and all that dwell in it may be robbed, nay murdered; so is the hope of a Christian often attacked by Satan, and if his faith and hope was not built upon Christ, he was certainly in danger of losing all he hath; nay, his precious soul for ever.

Fifthly, What is meant by the Rock?

I answer, by the rock is no doubt meant Jesus Christ; he is often called a rock; "The Lord is my rock and my fortress," Psal. xviii. 1. "Who is a rock save our God?" O Lord, my rock be not silent," verse 31. Psal. xviii. 1. "Upon this rock will I build my church," Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Cor. x. 4.

Jesus Christ may be fitly compared to a rock;

1. A rock is a firm and immovable thing, therefore good for a foundation; that which is built on a rock, stands sure; so Christ is a firm and sure foundation; "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 18.

2. Christ may be compared to a rock, in regard that in ancient times people built their houses in rocks, as well as built upon them; "they hewed out houses, or habitations in rocks," Isa. xxii. 16. Christ is a believer's spiritual habitation; "they, like the dove, make their dwelling in the clefts of the rock," Psal. xc. 1. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God," 1 John iv. 16.

3. A rock in Locus Excelsus, an high place; though it hath its bottom deep, yet is the top high and the towering, far above the surface of the earth: so Jesus Christ, though in his humiliation he was laid low, that we might build upon him, yet in the dignity of his person, he being God, the most high God, as well as man, he is high, far above all conceptions of our hearts; as the Mediator he is also exalted at God's right hand, far above all heavens; and in his power and sovereign authority he is lifted up, having absolute dominion over angels, devils, and men.

4. Rocks are strong, and were made use of for places of defence; no fortifications like some rocks, they are impregnable: David for security fled into a rock; in this respect Christ may also be compared to a rock, because he is our refuge from the wrath and vengeance of God, the curse of the law, and rage of wicked men, sin, and devils; a believer in Christ is safe, his dwelling place is impregnable.

5. Rocks being high, or eminent places for height, are useful to take a pleasant prospect; from hence a person may see afar off; he that by faith ascends to the top of this spiritual rock, may take a survey of heaven, yea, of the glory of God, in all his attributes, to the joy of his soul.

6. Rocks are durable, permanent, and lasting; Jesus Christ hath the stability of a rock, he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever; hence he is called, the Rock of Ages.

What is meant by the rock on which the man builds.

Christ is as firm as a rock.

Christ is a strong rock.

Christ is a blessed prospect.

Christ is a durable rock.

7. Rocks yield the purest water; most pleasant springs come from them; no water is so clear as that which comes percolated through rocks; "Brethren, all our springs are in Christ, and flow from him; the Spirit proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb." Rev. xxii. 1. He was also the antitype of the rock smitten in the wilderness, from whence waters flowed to refresh the Israelites, till they came to Canaan; all our divine consolations and comforts flow from a smitten and crucified Saviour, till we come to heaven; we live upon this rock, as well as build upon him.

8. And as a rock affords sweet refreshing shadow for weary travellers; Jesus Christ is that rock whose shadow is good; he is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; it is he that keeps off all the hot scorching beams of God's

Christ a rock of offence to wrath. some.

6. Rocks are dangerous to stumble at, or to fall from; Jesus Christ is called a rock of offence, many stumble at his person, some at his doctrine and ordinances; some fall on him, and others fall from him, whose state of all is the worst; after they have made a high profession, and have attained great speculative knowledge, they fall, and all they build upon him; and down they go to the lowest hell.

O brethren, how should we prize our rock, out of whom flows precious water, honey, and oil. He is a rich, a living rock, a high rock, a strong rock, an invincible rock, a feeding and fattening rock; he is (as it were) as a rock of pearls and diamonds; yea, and an eternal rock: he converts all that build rightly upon him unto precious stones, and communicates life to them; so do no rocks; he far excels all rocks: "Their rock is not like our rock."

This wise builder is said to "dig deep, and lay his foundation on a rock," Luke vi. 48. As St. Luke notes, he never gives over searching and digging into the word of God, and his design and purpose, until he finds good ground, or a good bottom and foundation to build upon. Which I propose further to open in the prosecution of one point of doctrine from hence.

SERMON XIII.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man.—Matt. vii. 24, 25.

This similitude I have already explained, and now shall note one or two points of doctrine therefrom. viz.

Doct. 1. That every godly man is a wise man, a wise builder.

I purpose, in speaking to this proposition, to do these three things.

First, Show and prove that every godly man is a wise man, or why so called.

Secondly, Show you wherein his wisdom doth consist, according to the purport of this similitude.

Thirdly, Apply it.

First, He is a wise man, because he prefers the good of his soul before all things in this world.

A wise man prefers religion above temporal good. 1. He prefers the good of his soul, before the temporal good of his body, and this certainly demonstrates him to be a wise man, considering how precious a thing the soul is, as shall God willing be opened.

A wise man prefers religion above a name. 2. He prefers religion itself above a bare name of being religious. Alas! how many are there who content themselves with the notion of divine truth, or with an empty vessel. "The foolish virgins took lamps, but took no oil; but the wise took oil in their vessels," Matt. xxv. 3. 4; and for thus doing, they are wise virgins.

3. Because they prefer the approbation of God, above the approbation of men. They value not that honour that comes from men, they regard not the applause of men, so that they can but have the praise of God, and be accepted by him.

4. Because a godly man considers his future well being. "And the Lord commended

the unjust steward, because he had done wisely," &c. Luke xvi. 8. He eyes his future state chiefly. Brethren, our blessed Saviour doth not commend the unjust steward for his honesty; He calls him an unjust steward; honesty he had not; but he commends him for his policy, in providing for himself for the time to come, or a future state. We cannot wrong our blessed Master, whilst we improve his goods, his grace, and all spiritual or external gifts given to us, to our utmost advantage and profit; we are allowed to contrive our own good; he that is wise, is wise for himself. Servants among men who study their own interest, and convert their master's money to their own use, do abominably, and God will plague them for their injustice; but believers may, nay, ought to put all that grace they have into exercise to their own profit here, and to their own eternal advantage, or future happiness; and all that thus do, are accounted faithful servants. Nay, and in this thing lies the difference there is between a sincere Christian and an hypocrite, the one trades for himself that he may be happy here in this world; the other only eyes the glory of God, and his own future profit, his future honour and happiness; a foolish man he is that chiefly minds his present good; the other a wise man, he seeks his own future well being. Brethren, do not mistake me, while we seek our own eternal profit, and well being, we bring glory to God, nay, God hath no honour from any but from such who so wisely lay out their Lord's goods, or those talents he hath intrusted them with, as to provide for their future estate, for by this means we do what God commands, and answer his end in bestowing spiritual gifts and grace upon us, "They are given for every man to profit withal," 1 Cor. xii. 7; and by bringing forth fruit thus to ourselves for ever, God is glorified. In this lay the wisdom of the unjust steward, viz., in providing for himself for the future time, and for this our Lord commended him. Now, beloved, if he is counted wise, that provides for an after time that is uncertain, and at most not a moment when compared to eternity, how wise are they who take care to live everlastingly in glory, possessed of all true joys and delights!

1. A godly man ponders well all future dangers.

2. All future safety and security, how he may avoid and escape the one, and enjoy the other. If he builds not with wisdom, he foresees the danger that will follow, for his soul will fall into hell.

Brethren, if there was no greater evil than earthly or temporal evil, nor any greater good than earthly or temporal good; then the men of this world would appear to all, to be the wisest men, and the godly would be the greatest fools of all men. But alas, alas! what is the greatest sorrow or torment here to the torments of hell? Or the greatest joy, and worldly riches and glory, to the glory of heaven?

3dly. A godly man may be looked upon to be wise, because he so consults matters, that he may not suffer the loss of all his labour and cost; such who hear Christ's sayings and do them not, that do not believe in him, nor obey his precepts; though they may make a visible profession, and do many things, and give to the poor, and suffer much external loss, yet all their labour, pains, and costs, and future hopes, will be utterly lost; but a true Christian is so wise as to close savingly with Christ, and obey his precepts, by which he knows his labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

He is a wise man that sees he suffers no loss now by building.

4. A godly man is a wise man, because he complies with, and approves of that great and glorious design, and purpose of God in Jesus Christ; it being the contrivance of his infinite wisdom, this way only to restore and save lost man: Now seeing a true Christian accepteth of Christ alone, and builds upon him as the only foundation, it shows he is a wise man.

A wise man is carrying on the same design God carries on in the world.

5. Because he seeks the honour of his blessed Lord and Master, and thereby keeps in his love and favour; it is not his own good only, but Christ's glory which he seeks, and this is a great point of wisdom. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not what I say? It is not every one that saith to me, Lord,

A wise man chiefly seeks the honour of Christ.

Lord," Luke, vi. 46. Is he a wise man that hath a good prince to be his master, and yet never regards his master's interest nor honour, nor values his love and special favour, but rather doth expose his prince to great reproach and shame; now a godly man by doing what Christ says, honours him, and so abides in his love. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love," John xv. 10. A father commands his child to do this or that which he knows will be for his own good; now, if he doth it not, as the child suffers, so his Father hath shame and contempt cast upon him thereby also. "A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son causeth shame."

"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master," Mal. i. 6; that is, every wise and obedient son and servant.

6thly. Because nothing but God, and an interest in him, and the eternal enjoyment of this God, will satisfy his soul; if God be the chief good, then to place all our hope and happiness in him, and to enjoy him, must needs be a part of highest wisdom. "He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in God, and God in him." 1 John. iii. 24. This man hath God to be his God: O what man is wise, save this man only? Others have the shell, but this man hath the kernel: others have the cabinet, and that contents them, but this man hath also the jewel.

7thly. Because there men are the declared friends of Jesus Christ, and only favourites of heaven: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," John. xv. 14. What can be a greater part of wisdom than to obtain the favour and friendship of Jesus Christ? I do not say, by doing of Christ sayings, we purchase or procure Christ's love and friendship: no, no, his favour cannot be bought, but he doth freely vouchsafe this blessing to his chosen, who obey his word: it is hereby we are assured of his love: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be beloved of my Father." A man may have Christ's commandments in his Bible, and in his head, and in mouth, and in the notion of them: he may know what his commands be, but he may not have them in his heart, he may not keep them, or be subject to them: but a godly man loves them, approves them, and sincerely keeps them, and reaps the benefit and blessings of them, and therefore is a wise man.

8. He is a wise man, because he is resolved to keep a good conscience: brethren, conscience is a tender thing, and to offend it is a piece of greatest folly; it is for a man to arm himself to murder his own soul, or kill himself; better to have all men in the world against us, and to reproach us, than to have our own consciences to accuse and reproach us. Moreover, nothing more fully evinceth, or is a clearer evidence of a man's integrity, than when he keepeth a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men: hence holy Job saith, "My integrity I hold fast, and I will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live." That man certainly is an hypocrite, that doth not impartially all the commands of Christ, according to his light, or doth not whatsoever he says: universal obedience is a mighty proof of sincerity. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." Psal. cxix. 6. An hypocrite will do some things, but he falters and declines to do every thing, which he is convinced to be his duty: "Now I know that thou fearest me," Gen. xxii. 16. Why so? because he did not refuse to obey God in the hardest and most difficult thing, even in offering up his son Isaac, whom he so dearly loved.

9thly. A godly man who keeps Christ's sayings, is a wise man, because he departs from iniquity: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and to depart from evil, that is understanding," Job xxviii. 28. Now to keep Christ's sayings, is to depart from evil: "For obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of lambs: But rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry," 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23.

Certainly, if it be the greatest folly to disobey God's precepts, it must be great wisdom, sincerely, and from right principles to keep them. "My son, forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee," Prov. iii. 1, 2, 3. This is the way of peace here, and of eternal peace and honour hereafter: "Keep therefore, and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding," Deut. iv. 6.

And as they who keep Christ's word, are wise, so such that keep them not, are fools. "They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" Jer. viii. 9.

He is a wise man, because he is wise unto salvation; all others are only wise to get this world, in heaping up earthly riches; such things that are uncertain, and which cannot profit in the day of wrath; they do but load themselves with thick clay, and weary themselves for very vanity: but a godly man is not satisfied with earthly riches, earthly honours, and pleasures, but he is for the riches and glory of heaven: it is a crown of glory that is in his eye, nothing but God himself will satisfy him. This man, brethren, is under a clear promise of eternal life: I mean, he that obeys Christ and keepeth his sayings.

"And being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation unto all that obey him," Heb. v. 9. These persons have a declared right to future glory which Christ

bath purchased, and that God hath promised. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev. xxii. 14. Even into that city is so glorious, the foundations of which are laid with precious stones, and the city pure gold.

APPLICATION.

I. If these things be so, we infer, that all wicked men, though never so wise with the wisdom of this world, are the worst of fools. Ungodly men think the saints are guilty of folly in contemning all earthly riches, honours, and pleasures, for Christ's sake. But the saints of God know all carnal and graceless persons are fools, Christ called the covetous rich man a fool. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" But more as touching their folly, when I come to speak to the next verse.

II. Be exhorted to enquire what the commands or sayings of Jesus Christ are?

Now understand they are of two sorts.

1. Precepts that are purely moral, which contain our duty to God, and our duty to man.

2. Such precepts that are merely positive, and those also are of two sorts.

First, Such that are essential to salvation, as faith in Christ; this is one of Christ's commands.

2. Repentance, self-denial, taking up our cross, and following him, and leading of a holy and godly life, prayer, &c.

3. Duties of charity, and acts of bounty, and all other divine graces, though they are Christ's gift, yet he hath enjoined us to labour after them, and to strive to increase and abound in them.

Secondly, There are also precepts that appertain to the worship of God, and the discipline of the church, as preaching and hearing the word of God, and the holy ordinances of the Gospel, as baptism and the Lord's Supper, and church-fellowship; and there are also some sayings of Christ that appertain to the disciplining of the church, which are mentioned in Matt. xxviii. All which sayings and holy precepts, all true Christians should with great care and faithfulness, observe and keep.

CAUTION.

Let sinners know it behoveth them to see they rest not satisfied in their obedience thinking by that way to obtain the love and favour of God; for no obedience can make your state good: I mean, you should not think that any obedience, either to moral or positive precepts, while you abide unbelievers, will, or can profit you anything.

Your first business is to labour after true faith, to believe in Jesus Christ, and obtain union with him; your persons must be first accepted, before any duty of obedience can be accepted. All works of obedience before faith and regeneration, please not God, nor profit the creature; you must first come to Christ, (as his sayings direct you,) and then "take his yoke upon you, and learn of him," Matt. xi. 28, 29. The tree must be first made good, before the fruit can be good. "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit," Luke vi. 43.

God had first a respect to Abel, and then to his offering: obedience follows true faith, as the fruit of it.

REPROOF.

This may also serve to reprove all those Christians, that content themselves in doing some of Christ's sayings, and never enquire after all things, whatsoever he hath commanded them.

2. Also it may reprehend such, who, when convinced of a duty or ordinance, yet delay to obey Jesus Christ in it. "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy precepts;" "Arise (saith Ananias to Paul) and be baptized, why tarriest thou?" It may call into question the truth of your grace and sincerity, when you are convinced of an ordinance, and you delay or refuse to yield obedience unto Christ in it; you may fear that your house will not stand the winds of Satan's temptation, nor the floods of persecution, if you do not all the sayings of Jesus Christ.

This also may yield much comfort to sincere Christians, and be an evidence of their uprightness, when they are universal in their obedience to Christ. He that says he loveth God, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar. "By this we know, that we love the

children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments: this is love, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." I John v. 2, 3. David, by this means, came to have an evidence of his sincerity. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments."

2. This tends to show that your love is true love, and your faith is true faith. Satan may get strong advantages against such persons who are partial in their obedience to Jesus Christ; such do, as it were, put a sword into their enemy's hand.

3. Hereby also you come under the clear promise of eternal life, and have grounds to hope you shall stand. "when the winds blow, and the floods come and beat against your house." But so much at this time.

SERMON XIV.

Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man that built his house upon a rock, &c.—Matt. vii. 24, 25.

Sermon 3.,
preached in
July, 1693.

Doct. 1. Every godly man is a wise man, and a wise builder.

I. I have shown you why he is called a wise man.

I shall proceed to the next thing.

II. Show you wherein his wisdom doth consist.

I have done with the first, and shall speak to the second head, viz., show wherein his wisdom doth consist.

1. A godly man's wisdom doth consist in his thoughtfulness of his soul.

True wisdom
consisteth in
the care of
the soul.

Should a man have treasure of great value committed to his trust, and he take no care of it, or not regard what becomes of it; would not all say such a one is a fool or a mad-man, especially if lost, the loss would be his own, it would wholly fall upon himself.

Now the soul of man is of great worth, yea, of an inconceivable value; and every man hath this precious soul committed to his charge. And that the soul is of great worth or value, see what our blessed Saviour saith, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul," Matt. xvi. 26. It appears that it is such treasure, such a jewel, that it is more worth than all the world. Should a man, to get the world, lose his life, what would his profit be? Much more, should he lose his body and soul too, or lose his natural life here, his everlasting life hereafter. Such certainly would be looked upon by all to be fools, but wicked men are far greater fools, because they lose their souls for less than the ten thousandth part of the world; perhaps for the gain of one shilling, nay, may be of a groat; for what do they less who are unjust in their dealings; and for a very small matter of gain, will cheat and wrong their neighbour. Nay, for the sake of some base and filthy lusts that perhaps tend to ruin the body as well as the soul, do expose both to eternal flames.

But farther, to demonstrate the great worth and preciousness of the soul, consider these things following.

I. The soul was originally made in the image of God: it was made capable to bear an impression of the divine and holy image of the blessed God; in which consisteth the nature and substance of it, for the soul bears some likeness or resemblance of God, being spiritual, invisible, immortal, &c.

II. In its powers and faculties, being endowed with reason of understanding, and freedom of choice, as it came out of God's hands.

III. In respect of these singular endowments, wherewith God hath adorned it, as knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, I Cor. i. 30, Eph. iv. 24, in which chiefly, the apostle shows the image of God consisteth; and though that impression of God's image was lost, marred, and spoiled by sin, or defaced by the fall, yet it is capable by the work and operations of the Spirit, to receive a second and new impression of the same image again.

2. The soul is capable of divine contemplation on God, and on the works of God. "My spirit made diligent search," Psal. lxxvii. 6, saith David. Again he saith, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and that my soul knoweth right well," Psal. cxxxix. 14. The soul can find out the glory and greatness, infinite power, and wisdom, of the blessed Creator;

by searching into, and contemplating on the rareness, greatness, and wonderfulness of his works, and operations of his hands; which no other creature on earth is able, or capable to do: and this is only from the excellency of the nature and faculties of the soul.

3. The soul is capable of divine union with God. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," 1 Cor. vi. 17. The soul is not essentially, but mystically one with Christ; our spirit is united to Christ, and by virtue of this union of the soul, the body is brought into the same union also, for the body and soul, jointly considered, is the member of Christ. And from hence Paul takes his argument, to deter the saints from the sin of uncleanness; but were it not from the excellent nature of the soul, man could not have partaken of this high and glorious privilege.

4. The soul is capable of divine inspiration. In this the glory of man excels all other creatures on earth. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding," Job xxxii. 8. No doubt the text refers to the reasonable soul, or those vessels in which natural reason hath its seat and exercise, as a worthy divine notes, "Surely there is a spirit in man," an excellent soul in man that is capable, when God pleaseth to breathe upon it, to receive spiritual life and light, and high discoveries or inspirations of the Almighty. Man's soul is like a glorious house that requires suitable furniture. The soul of man I may compare to the moon, it is a light capable to shine gloriously, when the Sun of Righteousness shines upon it.

There is a light of acceptation. Such a light is the spirit of man; and there is a light of information: such a light is Christ, or the Spirit of Christ.

5. The price that bought or redeemed the soul, shows the great worth and value of it. God the Father gave his own begotten Son to ransom our souls from sin, wrath, and hell. Jesus Christ gave himself, poured forth his own precious blood to redeem the soul. "We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold from a vain conversation; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without spot," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

6. Moreover, the food the soul liveth upon, which is the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, shows the nature and worth of it; as also the clothes that God puts upon it, or that one glorious robe, namely the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is of infinite worth, together with those rich ornaments with which God adorns it, sets out the excellencies of it, which are the graces of the Holy Spirit, they being all in the sight of God, of great price.

7. The communion it is capable of enjoying with God, even with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, demonstrates its transcendant excellency; "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3; and that unwearyed endeavour of Satan to destroy it, and that continual care of God to preserve, keep, and defend it, shows the value of it; moreover, it appears, in that all wise men ever preferred the worth of their souls above all things on earth; these things to show the soul, it is a very precious jewel.

8thly and lastly, its immortality mightly evinceth this great truth; the soul is precious, it cannot die, nor be annihilated.

Secondly, The wisdom of a believer, or of a godly man, consisteth in his care to provide a house, or in building a house for his precious soul.

Some will provide a house for this son, and that daughter, and every one takes care to get a house to put their heads in; but oh! how few are there who have so much wisdom as to provide a house to shelter, secure, and preserve their precious and immortal souls! Now a good man doth not only provide a house for his soul, but also a firm house while it is in the body, and also when it leaves this body. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved; we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. v. 1. The soul is the inhabitant, and the body is here called a habitation or a tabernacle, which will soon be dissolved. But such is the care and wisdom of every true Christian, that he sees to provide a better house for his soul at death; that his soul may not then be naked, or without a dwelling-place. "In my Father's house are many mansions," John xiv. 2, saith our Saviour. Many stately dwelling-places, of which "the spirits of just men made perfect," are now possessed. Wicked men are such fools, that they build houses for the body only, none for their souls, and they are such houses that are of short duration, in which they know not they shall dwell one day; but a godly man is so wise as to build an house that will stand for ever. The souls of unbelievers, at death, shall be turned out of their bodies naked, or have no safe dwelling-place to go unto; and since they provide for their souls no house, God in his wrath hath pro-

Caryl on Job, cap. 32. 3.

A great price paid to redeem the soul.

Te so it lives on spiritual food, therefore is precious.

The soul is immortal.

A wise man builds a house for his soul.

vided a dwelling for all such, a house indeed that they will not like. It will be an uneasy and troublesome habitation. "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting fire?" Isa. xxxiii. 14.

III. A godly man's wisdom consisteth in building his house upon a good and safe foundation. A foolish person either builds his house on the sand, on a false foundation, or else without a foundation. "He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, is like a man, that without a foundation, built an house upon the earth," Luke vi. 49.

I. Brethren, some persons build their house or hope of heaven upon God's outward favours or external blessings, which he is pleased to bestow upon them; as riches, honours, and earthly prosperity. They conclude from hence, they are in a good condition, and that God loves them; and since he gives them such a large portion of earthly blessings, he will not deny them the blessings of heaven, But, alas, they mistake! Some men will be rich, they value earthly riches above a portion in God, or an interest in Jesus Christ. Therefore God, in wrath and judgment, may give them the desire of their hearts, and, like an offended and displeased father, (who cuts off his disobedient children by his last will and testament with a shilling, or some small matter) so God, I say, may cut off these with a portion only in this life, therefore our Lord pronounces a woe to this sort of people. "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation," Luke vi. 24. Not because they were rich, but because they desired no better riches; they prized earthly riches as their portion, and chiefest good. Was not the rich glutton blessed with abundance of the good things of this world? Yet when he died, he went to hell for all that, Luke xvi. 19. Is it an argument that the great Turk is in the special favour of God, and many other proud tyrants, because they have so great a portion of earthly riches and honours bestowed upon them?

2dly. I told you the last day, that some build their hopes of heaven on external birth-privileges, because they are the children of godly parents, thus the Jews built. "We have Abraham to our Father," Matt. xxix. 10. When our Saviour endeavoured, by his doctrine, to bring them to believe in him: they answered "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man, how sayest thou ye shall be made free?" John viii. 33. What doth this privilege signify? "The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God," Rom. ix. 8. All are born children of wrath by nature. We read of one of Abraham's seed, according to the flesh, crying out in hell, as he said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame," Luke xvi. 2.

3. Some people build their hopes of heaven on morality, or principles of common justice and civil honesty; doing to all men as they would be done unto, which Christianity teacheth all to do; but if this could save the soul from wrath and hell, Christ is dead in vain, and faith utterly made void. But the truth is, we have such teachers in these days, that strive to subvert the gospel, and establish the old pagan religion, contemning the mysteries of the cross of Christ, and justification by his imputed righteousness.

4. Others build on their learning, and on learned men, like them, who, of old, said, "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him? but this people who know not the law are cursed," John vii. 48, 49. Is it a good argument that popery is true Christianity, because Bellarmin was, and many papists and Jesuits are, learned men; evident it is, the "World by wisdom knew not God," 1 Cor. i. 21, that is, by their own wisdom, by all their human arts and sciences; nor "are many wise men after the flesh called," 1 Cor. i. 26.

5. Some build on their church, they believe as the church believes; thus the papists, and too many common Protestants at this day; as if the church was the only rule, and not God's word; and as if we were to try the word of God by the doctrine of the church, and not the doctrine of the church by the word of God.

6. Others build their house or hope of heaven on their own inherent graces, holiness, and righteousness, with Christ's merits, that is to say, their inherent righteousness is part of the matter of their justification before God; Christ having, by his merits, purchased such a mild law of grace (and by his obedience, removed the rigid and severe law of perfect righteousness) that our faith and sincere obedience is the material cause of our justification: which dangerous error I have lately detected when I was upon Rom. iv. 5.

7. Some build their hope on their duties : they hear sermons, read God's word, pray often, both in their closets and families, and are very charitable to the poor ; this is good, but it is a bad foundation to build our house or hope of heaven upon. Brethren, our duties ought to be performed from right principles, and to a right end : O ! say some, if that man that is so just, so holy, so charitable, do not go to heaven, Lord, have mercy upon us : though they know not what his faith is, his principles are, or what his aims or ends be. Some of the Jews and Pharisees were very devout persons, as Paul before converted, yet they stumbled at that stumbling-stone, "they being ignorant of God's righteousness;" Rom. x. 3, by that means perished for ever. I have mentioned all these, to show they are but foolish builders.

But a true believer, he lays a better foundation ; he builds on a rock, his wisdom appears in that : " he builds on that foundation with God hath laid in Sion," Isa. xxvii. 16. " And other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," I Cor. iii. 11. He builds only upon Christ, wholly upon Christ, or on Christ, and nothing else ; he doth not mix his own works with Christ's merits, nor his own inherent holiness, and sincere obedience, with the complete and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and in this his wisdom cometh.

IV. The wisdom of a true Christian consisteth in digging deep : (I hinted at this in the explanation) but I shall now speak more fully to it, you know the allusion ; if it be a great and famous building, some magnificent fabric which a man designs to build, he will dig deep to lay a firm and sure foundation, he digs until he comes to a rock, or sound bottom : now it is a great and glorious fabric that a Christian is to build, a building that is to stand for ever, and endure all storms and assaults of Satan, and all other enemies of the soul. Besides, pardon of sin, justification, and eternal life, are great things ; and the soul being so excellent, so precious, the house that is to be built for it, ought to bear some proportion unto it ; also Jesus Christ the prince of kings of the earth, designs to dwell with the soul, so that it may be truly said to be a house for the great king ; therefore, on all these respects, it behoveth us so dig deep, and to lay a safe and sure foundation.

Quest. What doth this digging deep, denote, or into what may the soul be said to dig ?

Ans. I. I answer, the soul of a believer digs deep into the nature of God, to find out what righteousness will comport and suit with the righteousness and infinite holiness of God.

1. He digs and searches into the divine nature and perfections of God, or consults his attributes, to see whether God forgives sin, as a pure or mere act of his sovereign mercy, without a satisfaction to his offended justice, or not.

2. Whether it is consistent with the glory of his infinite wisdom, in the salvation of sinners, to raise the honour of one of his glorious attributes, to darken or eclipse the glory of others ; and they find out by searching or digging, that God cannot, will not impeach the attribute of his justice, to magnify the attribute of his mercy. Justice is a property of his nature, or of the divine essence, as well as mercy.

3. He finds out by digging, or by diligent search, that no righteousness can comport with God's infinite holiness, to the justification of a sinner, but that which is perfect, or a sinless righteousness ; and this leads him to build on the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. That is to say, he finds out that a man must either be in himself, naturally and inherently, and absolutely perfect, without sin, or else have the perfect and sinless righteousness of Christ imputed to him, if ever he be justified at God's bar.

4. He finds that a sinner is made righteous, accounted righteous, declared and pronounced righteous in the righteousness of another, (that is, in the righteousness of Christ) and that this only comports with the wisdom, holiness, and justice of God.

2ndly. He digs deep into the nature and tenour of the holy law of God ; and he finds that in point of justification, the law doth require a perfect righteousness, it being a written impression of God's holy nature ; and denounceth wrath, death, and the curse upon all and every particular soul " that continueth not in all things that are therein written, to do them," Gal. iii. 10.

Hence he finds that the law must be perfectly kept, and a full satisfaction must be made for the breach of it by man, or by his surety ; and this leads him to Christ, and wholly to build upon him. Since no man can either answer the precepts thereof, in point of perfect righteousness, nor make an atonement for the breach thereof ; thus " by the deeds or works of the law, no flesh can be justified in the sight of God."

He digs into the decrees and purpose of God.

3dly. He digs deep into the mysteries of God's eternal purpose, design, and council of saving lost man by Jesus Christ; that man might be utterly abased, and God, in a way of free and sovereign grace, might be exalted: "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works; but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." "By grace ye are saved, through faith," &c., 2 Tim. i. 9, Eph. ii. 8. And lest man, in any respect, should boast or ascribe any part of salvation to his own power, or to the will of the creature, the apostle adds (though we cannot have actual interest in Christ, and salvation by Christ without faith) that "Faith is not of ourselves," nor the fruit or product of our natural power, but "it is the gift of God." And thus (as it was foretold by the prophet) man is abased; "And the loftiness of man bowed down, and the haughtiness of man made low, and the Lord alone exalted," Isa. ii. 17.

He digs deep into the depravity of human nature.

4thly. The wisdom of a godly man doth consist in his digging into the depravity of human nature, and abominable evil of original sin, and treacherousness of their own vile hearts; there being naturally in us a propensity to all evil, though not an equal propensity in all to every sin, yet it is so in all more or less; the seed of every sin being in every man and woman that comes into the world: "As all men are said to be in the first man virtually, *in primo cuncti fuimus patre*; so may all sins, in respect to this propensity in all, be said to be in the first sin, the sin of our birth and nature," (Clarkson's, p. 3.)

Hereby man also became miserable, by being obnoxious to the wrath of God, and utterly unable to deliver himself from sin, and that just and deserved vengeance due to it; being "by nature dead in sins and trespasses." Brethren, this sin he sees is worse, and more sinful than the most grievous actual sin, that ever hath, or can be committed.

The evil of original sin.

1. For no man was an actual sinner before he was born, but by original sin all were sinners in their mothers' womb.

2. Actual sin is the fruit, but this is the root of all sin.

3. Actual sin only breaks the law in being, the very time it is in acting; but this is a continual violation of the law, without any interruption, or least intermission, from that instant of the soul's conjunction with the body to the hour of our dissolution.

4. It is the cause of all actual sin, it is the egg that produceth the cursed cockatrice.

5. It is a contagion that hath spread over the whole man, and hath corrupted the soul in all its faculties, and the body in all its members, making both soul and body a lump of filth, and cursed pollution.

6. It is so habitual and so rooted in all, that nothing but the infinite power of God can conquer it; nothing but Almighty Power can subdue its prevailing strength; common improvements of natural light and abilities, may much overcome, or restrain all gross acts of sin; but nothing but saving grace infused, can overcome these vicious habits.

7. It hath defaced in us the image of God, rendering us averse to all that is spiritually good; in this evil nature the devil reigns and keeps his court, and all is subject to his will and lusts.

8. It renders all men naturally brutish, nay, far worse; their reason being lost or corrupted, they are like bears, swine, lions, dogs, from whence it is that the Scripture compares wicked men to such animals; nay it was by this sin that the whole creation came to be corrupted, and the creatures brought into bondage and misery; yea, the very ground was, for this sin, cursed for man's sake.

9. He digs deep into the fulness, (as well as into the freeness) of God's grace in Christ: O what blessed digging is here! I may allude to that passage in Job; "Surely there is a vein for silver, and a place for gold, where they find it; there is a path which no fowl knoweth, and the vulture's eye hath not seen," Job xxviii. 1. But this wise man discerneth this precious vein of heavenly treasure, whilst he digs into the depths of divine love, and that fulness that is in Christ; he finds, (as there is no light but in this sun, nor any water but in this fountain) so there is an infinite fulness of all grace, and whatsoever any sinner or believer needs in Jesus Christ.

VI. The wisdom of a godly man consisteth in building his house of proper and fit materials; others build with corrupt and deceitful matter; whether carnal worldlings, or hypocritical professors. In which their folly doth consist (as shall, God willing, be showed in its place) but this man builds with gold, silver, and precious stones, for so may the doctrine, ordinances, and truths of the gospel, be called; being all pillars of God's hewing.

VII. His wisdom consisteth in building by rule, i. e., according to the exact rule of God's word, and according to the pattern left for all good and gracious men; he

builds by faith, and according to the rule of the new creature; he doth not build upon faith, but by faith only, upon the object of faith, Jesus Christ; as Abraham and all the faithful ever did.

True wisdom consisteth in building by the rule of God's word.

VIII. His wisdom doth consist in building in the proper time. He doth not defer building his soul on Christ to another day, which he foresees is uncertain; but he takes the present time, whilst it is called to-day, not knowing what to-morrow may bring forth.

IX. His wisdom consisteth in setting down to account the cost. Which our Lord intimateth, is necessary in all that will build: "For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish. Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it; all that behold it mock him, saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish," Luke xiv. 28 29.

He therefore counts all the charge and cost he must be at from first to the last. In a fit and proper time.

1. What the digging up the old foundation will cost him.
2. What old habits must be changed, and what right-eye sins must be pulled out, and what right-hand sins must be cut off.
3. What old companions must be forsaken, and what enticements must be withstood and resisted.
4. What reproaches for Christ's sake must be borne, and what external losses and persecutions must be endured.
5. He counts his own weakness and inability to do any of these things, and so consults the power, faithfulness, and promises of Christ, on which he solely and wholly depends, and thereby knows and is sure he cannot fail; he doth not begin nor go on in his own strength, but sees his riches and strength is in Jesus Christ, and therefore strengtheneth himself in that grace that is in him, which is sufficient for him, as Paul was told after he had begun to build, when assaulted by the messenger of Satan.
6. He accounts what temptations must be withstood, from Satan, from his carnal relations, and from the corruptions of his own heart.
7. And what reproaches and persecutions must be endured.

THE APPLICATION.

From hence we may infer, that many men are greatly mistaken about true wisdom; some think that chief wisdom consisteth in being wise, to gain the world, in heaping up gold and silver, or to attain to earthly honour and grandeur among men.

But alas! it lies not in these things, but in providing for another world, to get a true title of the crown of glory, to have an everlasting house for the soul when this life is ended.

Others think it is wisdom enough to hear God's word, or the sayings of Christ, and to be esteemed godly men, or to have a name to live: but such do but deceive themselves; for true wisdom, it appears, consisteth in getting true faith in Christ, such faith that works by love, which leads the soul to yield obedience, yea, universal obedience to all the commandments of Jesus Christ.

Quest. A question might here be propounded, viz., What is the nature of true obedience, or whose obedience is accepted?

Ans. I answer, divers things are to be considered, if a full resolution be given to this question.

1. The person must be one that is accepted of God; it is not our obedience that can make our persons accepted of God, but our persons must be first accepted in Christ, for out of him there is no acceptation; God had first a respect to Abel, and then to his offering: no unbeliever, let him do what he will, is regarded by the Lord.

2. In true obedience, the matter of it must be considered, and that is, the sayings of Christ, which are twofold.

1. All moral precepts.
2. All mere positive precepts; the first are agreeing to the light of nature. The second are contained in the New Testament, given forth by Christ as Mediator.
3. True obedience consisteth in right principles, from whence it proceedeth; all true obedience must and doth proceed from a principle of faith and love.
4. We must also consider the pattern of, true obedience; that our pattern is our Lord Jesus; he hath left us an example, what, and how to obey.

5. True obedience must be considered as to the manner of it; it must be sincere, hearty, or from the heart.

6. It must be universal, all Christ's sayings.

7. It must be done by the Spirit, or in Christ's strength.

8. True obedience consisteth in a right timing of it, it must be done presently, or as soon as the soul is convinced of its duty, not delayed.

9. True obedience consisteth in a right end, i. e., that God may be glorified, or to glorify God; not out of self-ends.

10. True obedience is constant; we must obey always without intermission or growing weary.

11. In true obedience, the rule must be considered, which is the word and will of God, not the traditions of men, but the commands of God in his word. Only,

12thly, and lastly. It must be pure obedience, not mixed; everything Christ hath commanded or doth require, and nothing else.

SERMON XV.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man that built his house upon the sand, ver. 26. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.—Matt. vii. 26, 27.

Our text doth afford us several other points of doctrine besides what I have mentioned, viz.:

Doct. 1. That it is not enough to hear what Christ says, or to be hearers of the word only.

Doct. 2. That it is dangerous to build our hope of heaven on the sand, or without a sure foundation.

Doct. 3. That as such who hear Christ's sayings and do them not, are foolish builders, so the time will come to try their house or hope, and the fall of all such builders will be great and dreadful.

It is the last of these I intend to speak to at this time, and so conclude with all I shall say.

1. Show you what times they are, that will try the house or hope of these foolish builders.

2. Give you the causes or reasons why the house of these builders will fall.

3. Show you wherein the greatness of their fall doth and will appear, or why it is said the fall is great.

1. Times of temptations that will try the hope of these professors, and all others. Temptations may be,

1. From God.

2. From Satan.

3. From the world.

4. At death.

5. At judgment.

1. From God. Thus God tempted Abraham; that is, he tried him, God tried his faith, tried his love, tried his sincerity; the winds of temptations came, and his house stood, for he did what God said to him, though it was hard to offer up his only son Isaac, whom he so dearly loved. Another whose heart was not right with God, could not have stood such a temptation, such a trial as this was, he would doubtless have argued after this manner, viz.:

1. Lord, wilt thou have me be guilty of murder? nay, murder my own son?

2. Will not this bring shame and reproach upon me, and open the mouths of the wicked?

3. Besides, is he not the child of promise? Shall thy promise be frustrated? Besides,

4. My wife Sarah will think me a bloody husband, and a most cruel Father, should I do it.

5. Also he is Sarah's child as well as mine, and the son of her old age; she hath equal right to him, and interest in him; if she will consent that I should slay him, and make her childless, I may the better do it.

6. But, Lord, it may break her heart, should I do this thing.

Sirs, that man whose heart is not sincere, when God calls for his beloved Isaac, it will discover it at such a time, and his house will shake. Thus God also tried Job; certainly, had not he built his hope well, that storm that came upon him had blowed it down; but he stood. God is said to visit man every morning, and to try him every moment, Job vii. 18.

God doth many ways try professors.

1. He brings some men into a state of poverty to try them; he takes away all their substance, to see whether they can trust in him, and depend upon him at such a time, and live by faith on the care and providence of God. "Thy God led thee those forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no, ver. 2. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, &c. And fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live," ver. 3. Deut. viii. 2, 3.

What way
God tries
builders.

2. He, to try their graces, or sincerity, oftentimes sets objects of charity before them who are rich, to see whether they will feed or clothe them or not; God doth not only bring some persons into a state of want and poverty to try them, but also to try others: "The poor ye have always with you;" there shall be objects of charity to the end, that grace in his people may come under trial. "I was hungry, and you fed me, thirsty, and you gave me drink," &c., Matt. xxv. 35. Rich men are but stewards of what they have, and must distribute and give forth of their treasure, or have in their possession, as their Lord directeth them; and if they do not, it will be found they are unfaithful stewards; many persons little think what the end and design of the Lord is, in giving them the riches of this world; they see not it as a trial of their love to him, for what they give to the poor saints, Christ takes it as given unto himself; "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me," Matt. xxv. 40.

3. God sometimes bringeth those who profess the Gospel into the wilderness, or into a bewildered state, to try them, to see whether they can trust in the Lord, and stay themselves upon their God, when they walk in darkness, and have no light, Isa. l. 10. Some in such an hour fall, and utterly despair of God's mercy. Walking in darkness sometimes denotes outward calamities and afflictions, but principally it signifies the want of comfort or inward peace, being under terror of conscience: a false professor may have some seeming peace and comfort, though it commonly doth arise from what he possesseth of riches, outward peace or applause from men, and if these fail, his heart dies within him.

Now God may stop up these springs of false comfort, to show him the rottenness and baseness of his heart, and unsafeness of his condition; that it is not God that he liveth upon, it is not his love, his favour, that is the joy of his soul, but it is self which he aimeth at in all he doeth. But now if a man be sincere, though God takes away all his outward comforts, and suffers him to fall under the frowns of men, to such a degree that they slight and disesteem him; and also withhold the comforts of his Spirit, or hideth his face from him, yet he bears it, and says, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him," Mich. vii. 9. He is not offended, but still holds fast his integrity, as Job did; he endures this trial, and hath hope still in God: "I will wait on the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him," Isa. viii. 17.

Quest. Wherefore doth God try his saints?

(1). Answ. God doeth this to show us, that the spring of all true comfort lies in himself, and that we are depending creatures, and that he himself keeps the key of his own treasury, and hands forth unto us as he seeth good.

(2). That we may have a trial and proof of our faith, and of all other graces; "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than gold which being tried in the fire, may be found to glory, praise, and honour," 1 Pet. i. 7.

4. God, to try men, suffers them sometimes to fall into evil company, to see whether they will stand or fall in such an hour; thus was Peter tried when he was in the high-priest's hall; "A damsel came unto him, and said, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee,

Matt. xxvi. 69. See how he faltered at this time, who had made such a bold and brave confession of Christ before this. Trial he could not bear. "But he denied before the mall, saying, I know not the man: and when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied it with an oath, I do not know the man," Matt. xxvi. 70—72. When God leaves his dear children to their own strength, they fall immediately: some persons who have made a profession of the Gospel, and showed much zeal for God, when they have fallen into the company of wicked men, such who are scoffers, they have faltered and fallen abominably, so that this way they have been tried, and overcome; though all sincere Christians, with Peter, have been recovered again; God would not cast out all the Canaanites, but left them to try his people Israel.

5. God brings sometimes a flood of tribulation and persecution upon his people to try them; and then oftentimes the foolish builder falls: "Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for awhile; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, by and by, he is offended," Matt. xiii. 21. This storm beateth down their house. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the way of the Lord is right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein, Hos. xiv. 9.

Secondly, Satan is suffered also to try and tempt men.

Satan will tempt and try the house we have built. 1. God lets him raise up a storm of trouble upon his people, as in Job's case, that the devil and wicked men may see the uprightness and sincerity of their hearts; nay, and that they may have the clearer evidence of it themselves, for we know not our own hearts, nor the strength of our graces so fully, until we come to be tried.

2. Satan is suffered to tempt us to sin, and violate God's holy precepts, as he tempted our first parents; he presents his golden baits of pleasure or profit, to allure our souls. Tush, saith he, you may do it and have repentance as Peter had; many good men have done as bad things as this is, or that is; thus was Achan tempted by the devil and his own evil heart, to covet a wedge of gold, and a goodly Babylonish garment, Josh. vii. 21; many false professors and foolish builders, fall by this trial, and with the dog, turn to their own vomit, and with the swine to their wallowing in the mire.

3. Satan also tempts men, whose hearts are not right with God, to presume, and though in their sin, and under the power of unbelief, yet to rely on the mercy of God, and merits of Christ.

4. Others he tempts to despair, and utterly to doubt of the pardoning grace of God, through the blood of Jesus Christ; he tells them that their sins are so great, God will not forgive them, or else, that their day of grace is past.

5. Others he tempts to delay the work of their salvation. Says he, It is time enough yet, God will accept of you if you come to him at the eleventh hour; you may be a young saint and an old devil, if you begin so soon you will not hold out to the end.

6. He tempts others to trust to their own doings, their own works of righteousness; by this means some thousands fall into hell, and are never convinced of the need of the righteousness of Christ, but remain ignorant of the way to the Father.

7. Others he tempts to neglect the means of grace; not to hear the word, or to hear it carelessly, also wholly to neglect prayer and reading, or to rest upon these duties.

Thirdly, The world also doth and will try all sorts of professors. I am persuaded great numbers are, by this means, shaken, and their house thrown down; it may be said of the world, as it is of the harlot, or adulterous woman; "She hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her," Prov. vii. 26. Some, by the riches of the world, fall short of heaven. The young man's hope and house which he had built of legal materials, fell with one blast from this quarter; "he went away very sorrowful, for he had great possessions." The love of this world also overthrew Demas, he could not stand that storm of temptation that he met withal. And, as riches, honours, and the sinful pleasures of the world overthrow many on the one hand, so do the cares of the world on the other hand; poverty may prove as fatal as riches; it is the cares of this life as well as riches that choke the word; how good then is it to cry with Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," &c.

Fourthly, But if these trials, and at such times cannot prevail, or do not prevail to beat down the hope and house of foolish builders, yet there is another hour and enemy that will do it, and that is death. If the hypocrites' house doth not fall in the day of

temptation, nor persecution, yet down it goes at the hour of death; if his hope should abide whilst he lives, yet it will fail when he comes to die; "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" John xxvii. 8. Though he hath gained many gifts, much riches, a name and great applause among men, yet death puts an end, and quite cuts off all his hope; when he dies all his hopes die. "And the hypocrite's hope shall perish, whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as the spiders' web," ver. 14. "He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure," Job viii. 14, 15. He builds his house of rotten and false materials, his house or hope is built with worldly or earthly materials, or else with counterfeit or false spiritual materials, as moral or inherent righteousness, or on spiritual or acquired gifts, or on vain glory, and a name among men.

Death will be as a storm against the house or hope we build.

Fifthly and lastly, At the day of judgment his hope and house shall fall for ever; all his cries, his pleading then will do him no good, nor avail him any thing: "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name done many wonderful works?" Down goes his house, his hope, with body and soul, to hell, and he shall perish for ever. So much as to the first thing proposed.

The judgment day the great time of trial.

Secondly, I shall show you the cause and reasons of the fall of his house.

1. It is because he never attained to a work of true saving grace; he never truly believed in Jesus Christ, and so built not his house on a rock; let a man build his house never so high and strong in his own conceit, that never dug so deep as to know what his state was by nature, his house will fall.

The cause of the fall of the foolish builder's house.

2. Because he was blinded by the god of this world, the devil, and his own deceitful heart were too hard for him; he builds his house with such materials that could not bear the shock and storm that comes upon him.

3. Because his heart was never changed, he hath no meetness for heaven; he is unholy, un sanctified, and no unholy thing can enter into the kingdom of heaven, therefore down he falls into hell.

4. The enemy can throw down that house, spoil that hope that is not fixed on Christ, and the sinner has no power to help himself, he cannot keep his house up; such strong enemies come against him, who are clothed with such power, to throw him down, which he cannot withstand: besides, he is alone and hath none to help him, neither friend nor brother; God will not, Christ will not, nor can he stand before the accusing and sin-condemning law, that lets fly its bitter curses against him; much less can he stand against the dreadful and incensed wrath of an offended God. If divine mercy and infinite goodness plead against him for contemning of Jesus Christ, whither will he fly for refuge? Who can stand before God's indignation? it is from hence, and for these causes, his house, his hope, and his soul must fall.

Thirdly, I shall show you wherein the greatness of the fall of these persons doth appear; "and great was the fall of it."

1. It is because it is the fall of their souls as well as their house they had built; the more excellent a thing is, the more great is the loss of it. As life is precious; now if a house falls and kills those who live it, that fall is accounted a sad and dismal fall; or if a king falls in a battle, that is esteemed a great fall, because he is worth many thousand common soldiers. Now the soul is of great worth; what is the whole world to the precious soul which God hath given to us? What is the worth of our natural lives, when compared to our immortal souls? If your souls perish when your hope perishes, the fall of your house be great; other houses may fall, yet the lives of the people who dwelt therein may be saved, but it is not so here.

The greatness of the fall of the house built by a foolish builder.

2. The fall of such will be great, because great was their expectation; they were elevated in their thoughts, doubted not perhaps of a blessed eternity; concluded, with the Jews, their state was good, because they were Abraham's seed; it is therefore an unexpected fall, and so a great fall, like that of Haman's, who thought of nothing less than of the highest exaltation, but sad news came that he must be hanged on the gallows which he had made for Mordecai, Est. vii. 8, 9. It is as when a man thinks he hath found a precious stone of a great value, and is wonderfully elevated thereby, and concludes he is made for ever by it, but when it is tried, it proves but a mere counterfeit. O how is he disappointed, and ashamed of his vain boast! or as when a man thinks he is an heir to a crown, and mighty kingdom, and seems not to doubt of his title; but when his right and title comes to be examined, it is no such matter, he did but deceive himself, and as a false traitor, hath his head cut off; how great is his fall! So it is here, some

men think they have grace, think they are heirs of glory, but when they come to die, they find themselves mistaken ; hence their fall will be great.

3. Because they had built their house so high in their own conceit, that the top of it reached almost up to heaven, this makes the fall of their house the greater : perhaps some of them were not far from the kingdom of heaven, as our Saviour told the young man, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," Mark xii. 35. When a merchant with a very rich ship is come almost home, and quite in sight of his port, is suddenly cast away ; oh how great is his loss ! Some are exalted to heaven in respect of the means of grace, light, and knowledge, and yet fall at last ; their fall is therefore great : "And thou, Capernaum, that art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell," Mat. xi. 23.

4. Because the fall of their house, and hope of heaven, is a falling down to They fall very low, anon into hell hell ; when they thought of being saved, they, alas ! are damned ; instead of being blessed for ever, they are cursed for ever ; instead of dwelling in heaven, they see they must dwell in everlasting fire. This shows the fall of their house will be great.

5. Because their house can never be built again. Their house can never be built again, it will be an eternal fall. When London fell by fire, 1666, it would have been a far greater fall, if it could have been built no more for ever ; but lo, a new city, and far more glorious, is raised out of its ashes, and ruins : but there is no building a house again for the fallen soul, that is in hell ; no Christ for them, no faith, no hope there ; there is no redemption out of hell, they are lost, yea, lost to eternity. This will be the fate and fall of Babylon, and therefore her fall will be great. "And Babylon, &c.—shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah," Isa. xiii. 19. And thus it will be with those foolish builders, who lose their souls and bodies, it will be a final loss, yea, an eternal loss there is no hope for the damned, therefore their fall is and will be great.

APPLICATION.

1. Tremble all ye foolish builders, who hear Christ's sayings, but do them not, that hear his word, but do not believe ; who are reformed perhaps in your lives, but not changed in your hearts.

2. Be exhorted to try yourselves, examine your hearts, see with what materials you have built your house, I mean your hope for heaven ; if it be not upon Jesus Christ, if it be on the sands of your own works, or inherent righteousness, or on your duties, or upon your external privileges, or on gifts, parts, or knowledge, or traditions ; pull down your house and new build it, build it on the only and sure foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.

3. Let all professors prepare for a storm ; the winds will blow, the rain will fall, and the floods will come ; you shall all be tried ; God will try every man's work. If temptations of Satan, if tribulation and persecution from men, do not beat down your house and hope, yet death will.

4. We infer from hence, that the state of false professors, or all such who are no more than bare hearers of the word, is very sad and deplorable, their hope will be as the spider's web.

5. Sinners, doubtless you have got some house, or hope, or another ; but any hope will not serve your turn. O how near may you be to a storm, death may be at the door, and then your hope will perish, and your souls be lost.

6. What comfort is here for believers, they are safe !

SERMON XVI.

And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind ; shall they not both fall into the ditch ?—Luke vi. 39.

OUR late annotators on this place say by a parable, "Here is to be understood, a proverbial saying, which hath some darkness in it, as being brought to express or signify more than the words naturally do express ; proverbial speeches are applicable to more cases than one," &c. I find that tropical writers, as Azorius, Gillius, Morton, &c., say, That a parable is a continued metaphor, or an allegory of words, *λεξιθεωρα*, which is a continuation of

tropes, especially metaphors. Though learned Glassius seems to differ from them. A parable, according to Jerome, is a comparison made of things different in nature: others say, A parable is a comparison or a similitude: hence Marloret, in his exposition of St. Matthew, Every where when we read Christ spake a parable, he saith a similitude, a *parœmia*, a proverb, or an adagy, with respect to its obscurity, and is called *Ænigma*, or a riddle, as Delaun notes. However, this saying is called a parable (i. e.,) a dark saying. Our Saviour, referring to something else than what the literal sense denotes, viz., from one that is blind or without bodily sight, leading such that are blind, he shows the danger of men who are led by blind preachers, or teachers, viz., such that understand not the mysteries of God, Christ, and the gospel, or who are spiritually blind, and without the light of saving knowledge, and the true teachings of the Spirit of God. And evident it is, that our blessed Saviour applied these words more directly to the Scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish leaders, and Rabbins, or those guides amongst them, who, notwithstanding all their great human literature, natural reason, and philosophical learning, were ignorant of Christ, and of the only way of salvation by him; therefore, as Justin Martyr excellently shows, *Infelix est sapientia extra verbum Dei sapere, &c.* That it is not the formality of academical degrees, nor philosophical dexterity, which is to be exercised in the things that may be known by the light of reason, or variety of languages, that qualifies a preacher. And true it is, for a man may understand all languages, and all human arts, and sciences, and yet be but a blind leader, or one that is ignorant of Christ; hence Paul saith, "That the world by wisdom knew not God;" and from most of these was the gospel, and the "Mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," hid, as our Lord shows, Matt. xi. 25. The occasion of these words (as it seems to me) may rise from what our Lord said of the Pharisees and Jewish doctors, in respect to their false interpretations of the law, as St. Matthew shows more clearly, Matt. v. Our Lord called them blind guides: "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat," &c. So that his design herein is to forewarn all people to take heed they are not led by blind guides, or by teachers who are not inspired, or illuminated with the Spirit of God, or endowed with saving knowledge, being not ministers of Christ's making, having not received true grace, nor those ministerial gifts, which Jesus Christ gave when he ascended on high.

The words contain a twofold interrogation. 1. "Can the blind lead the blind?" 2. "Shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12, 13. That is, can they safely, securely lead them? This interrogation hath in it a strong negation, (i. e.) they cannot safely, wisely, or securely lead the blind who are blind themselves; "shall they not both fall into the ditch?" This question contains the highest affirmation; yea, "they shall both fall," &c., that is, both perish; signifying, that such people, that are led by blind, ignorant, or false teachers, shall fall into hell at last. The words being thus briefly opened, I shall observe one or two propositions from hence.

Doct. 1. That some men, who pretend to be leaders or teachers of the people, are spiritually blind, as they also are that are taught by them. The doctrine raised.

Doct. 2. That such teachers or ministers, who are spiritually blind, and all those blind people, who are taught by them, are in danger of perishing eternally together.

I shall speak briefly to both these points of doctrine. As to the first I shall,

1. Show in what respect men may be said to be blind in a spiritual sense.
2. Run the parallel.
3. Shall show who they are that are blind leaders of the blind.
4. Apply it.

There is a threefold spiritual blindness. 1. Such that are in their natural state, being never savingly enlightened; and in this sense all are blind, ignorant, or without the true knowledge of God naturally, or as they came into the world; by nature as all are dead, dead in sin and trespasses, so they are all spiritually blind. "And knewest not that thou art miserable, poor, and blind."—"And the eyes of the blind shall see." Hence our Saviour was sent "to open blind eyes," Rev. iii. 17, Isa. xxix. 18, Isa. xlii. 7. The eyes of their understanding is darkened, and when they receive the Holy Spirit, their eyes are opened, and never till then, Eph. i. 18. 2. Some men are not only naturally in a spiritual sense blind, but judicially blind. God in judgment smites them with spiritual blindness, so that they shall never see, never understand: "In seeing they shall not see, neither perceive: for judgment I am come into this world, that they that see not might not see, and that they that see might be made blind," John ix. 39, (i. e.) some who are spiritually blind with the rest of mankind, I am come to give sight unto, or to open their eyes; but others who think they see, and are able to lead

All men naturally are blind, spiritually blind.

such that are blind. I am come to make them blind, or this will be the effect, or event of my ministry and doctrine, viz. through their perverseness, and unbelief, and contempt of me, I will give them up to utter blindness of mind, and hardness of heart; "But now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth," ver. 41. Some are sensible of their blindness, they are blind in their own sight, none are worse blind, or darker in their own apprehension, than such whose eyes Christ hath opened, or than believers; by reason that some darkness remains in them, they cry out of their woful ignorance, and blindness, declaring they see but in part, and know but in part; nay, know nothing as they ought to know.

Secondly, I shall run a parallel betwixt such who are blind in a literal sense, and they who are spiritually blind.

Sinners are born blind. I. Some are born blind, never saw; so all men (as I hinted) were born blind, (i. e.) they come into the world under the power of sin, and spiritual blindness, for as they are under a privation of spiritual life, so it follows that they are also blind.

Sin hath put out the eyes of sinners. II. Some men are blind casually, by some accident, or through age. Adam before the fall could see; man's eye-sight was good originally, he was created in knowledge, he bore the Image of God; but sin put out his eyes, he lost (and all mankind in him) the true knowledge of God, when he lost God's Image, and so came short of the glory of God.

They know not whither they go. III. Blind men know not whither they go, nor where they are, nor the danger they are in; may be upon the brink of a deep pit, or just entering into a lion's den, or on the edge of a dangerous river, or fearful lake, &c. So those that are spiritually blind, they know not the way they take or go in, neither in respect of their worship and principles of religion; nor the way of their lives and evil practices. They may think they are in the way of God, and that their false notions are the truths of Christ, when indeed they are abominable errors. They being given up to the delusions of the devil, and have their understanding darkened; moreover, they may be just upon the brink of ruin, and ready to fall into hell, and yet may not know anything of their eternal danger, nor know they are in Satan's snares or den, and paw of that lion.

Ungodly sinners never saw the sun. IV. Let the sun shine never so bright, yet a blind man sees it not; it is all one to him as if it was midnight. So though the Gospel be preached never so clearly and powerfully, yet wicked men, or such as are left to spiritual blindness, see not. They know not truth from error, light from darkness, until the eyes of their understandings are enlightened; and this is the grand evil and misery of all mere natural men.

Sinners know not what spiritual light is. V. A man born blind never knew, nor can he know what light is, but only by imagination, or, as he is told, he knows it not by experience. So those that are spiritually blind never knew what the light of God's countenance is, the saving light of Christ, or illuminations of the Holy Spirit are; nor can they know this, until the eyes of their minds and understanding are opened. True, they may be told how raising, how pleasant, and sweet, divine light is, or the knowledge of Christ is, the enjoyment of the love and favour of God is; but they know not any of these things by experience, and therefore all they can know or speak of them, is but what they have read, or heard others declare, or make known of them.

Blind men cannot discern, nor see Christ's beauty. VI. They that are blind, can discern neither the beauty that is in one object that stands before them, nor the deformity of another. So such who are without the saving light or knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, see no beauty, no glory, either in God himself or in Jesus Christ; though he be the most amiable and most glorious object in heaven and earth. For as no blind man can be affected, or smitten with earthly beauty, so can no blind sinner be affected with the loveliness, glory, and beauty of the person of Christ, or with the preciousness of divine things. It is by reason the eyes of our souls are enlightened to behold the Sun of Righteousness, that we cry out with the spouse, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand,—and is altogether lovely," Cant. v. 10, 16. "For the light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun," Eccl. xi. 7. So is spiritual light to believers, whose eyes behold the Sun of Righteousness.

Blind sinners cannot discern things that differ. VII. They who are in darkness, or utterly blind, cannot discern things that differ, nor judge of colours. So men spiritually blind cannot discern nor know the things of God, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God;" that is, no man but he whose eyes are enlightened by the

Spirit of God. "For, (saith the apostle,) we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God— But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12, 14. By a natural man is meant such a one that is in the state of nature, and hath not received the Spirit of God, and the divine illuminations thereof, and so is spiritually blind.

VIII. It is the greatest folly in the world for a man that is blind, to choose a blind person to lead him, he being thereby exposed equally to dismal dangers with his guide. So what greater folly can any be guilty of, than for such who are spiritually blind, or wholly ignorant of Christ, and of the only way to eternal life, to choose such to guide or lead them, who are as blind and as ignorant as themselves, in respect of Christ, and of salvation by him. But, O what a multitude of such foolish and ignorant persons are there in the world. And this brings me to the next thing proposed to be opened.

Thirdly, Who are blind teachers, or blind guides, or how may they be known?

The folly of choosing a blind guide.

Who are blind leaders of the blind.

Now blind guides may be either considered absolutely, or comparatively.

(I.) Such preachers are blind guides, who are utterly in darkness, or without any saving grace and knowledge of Christ. Or (2ndly,) Such who, though they may be savingly enlightened, and have the true knowledge of Jesus Christ, yet in respect to some others, who have received much greater knowledge, abilities, and experience, they may be said to be blind, or ignorant teachers; for all that have grace, and true spiritual knowledge, so as to be renewed, and become truly gracious persons, are not fit to be preachers or teachers of others; yet it is better to be led by a man who hath a dim sight, than by one that is utterly blind. But to proceed, and speak first of such spiritual guides who are totally, or utterly blind and ignorant, as to saving knowledge.

I. He that is not a converted man, a renewed man, having not received the Holy Spirit to enlighten his dark mind and understanding, if he take upon him to be a teacher or a guide to the blind, he himself is to be sure a blind leader of the blind. Yet some of this sort may have knowing heads, though they are blind in their hearts, or without the saving knowledge of God and Jesus Christ themselves; and know not by experience what it is to be born again, neither ever tasted nor know how good God is, and how precious Jesus Christ is. Yet there may not be such danger to be led by some of this sort, as there is in being led by others, whose hearts and heads too are dark, or without the knowledge of the Gospel; (yet having received spiritual gifts and clear heads, or much light and knowledge as to the doctrine of the Gospel,) are not blind guides in that sense, and should therefore be acquitted of this name of blind leading of the blind. They are blind as to their state, but as teachers they are not blind; but were this sort known, they ought not to be admitted to be ministers of the Gospel. Unto the wicked, God saith "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth?" Psal. l. 16. None are true ministers of Christ but such only, which he approves of, or who are gracious men, that truly love him, and can tell what God hath done for their souls, who by their own experience are able to open the nature of true faith, and regeneration. The ministrations of the Gospel ought to be committed to faithful men. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. ii. 2.

(II.) Such are blind leaders that know not who the true Christ of God is, that know not the true Messiah, and yet take upon them to be preachers and teachers of the people. The Scribes and Pharisees knew not that Jesus Christ was the true Saviour, the true Messiah, and yet pretended they were instructors of the foolish guides to the blind, and a light to them that were in darkness, Rom. ii. 18—20. So all such now who pretend they are guides and instructors of the people who deny the Lord Christ, or Jesus of Nazareth, to be God, of the essence of the Father, and truly man of the substance of the blessed Virgin, they know not who, or whom the true Messiah is, and therefore are blind guides, false teachers, and deceivers. For what can betray greater ignorance than this? What, preach a false Christ? Err about the object of worship? If Jesus of Nazareth was not the most high God, but a mere man, he was, as they said, a blasphemer, and so a deceiver; for he bore witness that he and the Father were one, that is, one in essence, and was the only-begotten Son of God; Christ is the Son of God by an eternal generation. Moreover, was he not the Son of God, he could not be our Saviour, because we have no Saviour but God only, none that

All those teachers that know not who, or what the Person of Christ is, are blind guides.

can save us from sin and eternal wrath. "I am God, and there is none else, besides me there is no Saviour," Isa. xliii. 11. And then also, it is idolatry to give the same divine worship to him that belongs to God only; but this worship is given, and ought to be given to Jesus Christ, as Mediator. "All the angels are required to worship him," Heb. i. 6.

The Arians,
Socinians,
Catharites,
and Quakers
blind leaders
of the blind.

Therefore the Arians, Socinians, and the Catharites, are blind guides. Moreover, such teachers that deny the true Saviour is truly man of our nature, without us, now in heaven, and in respect of his human nature can be but in one place at one time, are blind guides. For Christ died as concerning the flesh, but had he not been man as well as God, he could not have died; that Christ therefore that never died, nor could die, is a false Christ; or

who is not "Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." And from hence it appears, the Quakers, who pretend to be teachers, are false teachers, or blind leaders of the blind; for none but he that was the seed of the woman, is or can be the true Saviour. "He was made of a woman, and was of the seed of David according to the flesh.—He took on him the seed of Abraham," Gen. iii. 15, Acts ii. 30, Gal. iv. 4, Heb. ii. 16. But the Quakers say, Christ was never seen of fleshly eyes, and reproach them that say he is a man, consisting of the same nature with us (though glorified) now in heaven. One told me, he knew not where that body is, that rose from the dead.

(III.) All legal teachers are blind leaders. I mean such that preach justification by the works of the law, or by the righteousness of man in conformity to the law. This doctrine the Scribes and Jewish doctors taught, whom our Saviour called blind leaders of the blind, they preached justification by doing, or by a man's own righteousness, and not by Christ, or by his righteousness alone. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. "They sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law," Rom. ix. 32. These men pervert the Gospel of Christ; nay,

Legal
preachers,
false guides.

preach another Gospel than that which Christ and his apostles preached: and hence Paul told the Galatians, "They were removed to another Gospel, by these blind and false teachers, whose doctrine they had too far adhered unto,

Gal. i. 6. "For if righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. 21. and this is to frustrate the grace of God; therefore whoever they are that bring in men's own inherent righteousness to justify them before God, are blind leaders of the blind.

Such that
preach mor-
tality, justifi-
cation to
save men
are blind
guides.

(IV.) Such who preach up morality, or a sober moral life to be sufficient to justify and save the souls of men; or do not strive to take people off from any thing that they can do, or from depending upon any good works of their own, or to trust in any thing, save upon Jesus Christ alone, are blind leaders of the blind, and will all fall into the ditch at last, unless God in mercy opens their eyes; for this sort are as blind as the Jews and Jewish Rabbins were: for had there been a law (any law) that could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law, Gal. iii. 21. While Paul was a Pharisee, no doubt but he was a good moral man, and had as much legal righteousness as any have now in our days. For he says, he had walked in all good conversation, even until that day, Acts xxiii. 1; and as touching the righteousness which is of the law, he was blameless, Phil. iii. 7, 8; but all this he counted but dung, when his eyes were truly opened, and he believed in Jesus Christ. "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 20.

Such that
preach mens
tradition are
blind leaders
of the blind.

(V.) Such teachers that preach for doctrine the commandments of men, or traditions, and inventions of men, or that call devised worship, divine worship, or precepts of men to be the institutions of Christ, and would impose such rites and superstitions upon the consciences of men, are blind leaders of the blind. These things our blessed Saviour charged the Scribes and Pharisees with, whom he called blind leaders of the blind, "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men," Matt. xv. 9; and such who have made void the commandments of God through their traditions.

(VI.) All that preach not justification, and salvation by Jesus Christ alone, or that preach not that holy doctrine delivered by Christ and his apostles, and which was confirmed by miracles, are blind guides.

(VII.) Such that deny the written word to be the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice.

APPLICATION.

1. Infer. Sin is a mischievous evil. O what hath man done in sinning against God! he is become blind thereby, sin hath put the eyes of his understanding.

See the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

2. O what a deplorable state are all men in naturally! O how grievous a thing is it, to be blind, born blind, and never to see the sun.

3. I infer, that sinners are punished with the worst of blindness. (1.) Because it is the blindness of the soul; what is natural blindness to spiritual blindness? Many who have lost their natural sight, are happy, have blessed divine light in their souls, being savingly enlightened. (2.) Others know they are blind, such I mean that have lost their natural sight; but sinners know not, will not believe they are blind. (3.) And such who are deprived of their bodily sight, are glad to accept of one to lead them: but some blind sinners desire not any guide, and others choose blind guides to lead them. (4.) Others that are blind, bewail their blindness, mourn for being dark, and having no sight; but sinners never bewail their want of sight, or mourn in being spiritually blind. (5.) Poor blind men and women would account it no small mercy to have their sight restored to them, but sinners love darkness rather than light. (6.) Such who are naturally blind, are willing and ready to take warning when in danger of falling into a ditch, or into the fire, or into a river. But blind sinners condemn all warning given to them of, or falling into the deep ditch of God's eternal wrath, or into the lake of eternal fire and brimstone. Oh there is no blindness like spiritual blindness.

4. I infer, No man can by any power of his own arrive to true spiritual sight; no, it must be God that opens the eyes of such that were born blind, it requires almighty power. Conversion work is a miraculous work, it raises the dead, and opens the eyes of the blind.

5. Learn from hence to pity the blind, such blind that pity not themselves.

6. Be exhorted to praise God for the Gospel, which is sent to open blind eyes. But if sinners come to see, they must have their eyes also opened. The blind see not the sun though it shines in its strength. O pray for the Spirit to open your eyes, to see the Sun of righteousness.

7. You that see, have a twofold cause to praise God, 1. For the light of information: 2. For the light of acceptation.

8. Terror, why wretched sinners, what do you mean to choose, to be led by blind guides? Whither will you, and they that lead you, fall at last? Take heed who you are led by.

9. You that see, praise and admire infinite grace, and walk as children of the light.

10. Bewail them most of all, that are smitten with spiritual blindness. For as God smote the Sodomites with natural blindness, so hath he smote many with spiritual blindness, in a way of judgment. Some are left to hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, and others in wrath left to believe a lie, or given up to "strong delusions, that they might be damned, because they received not the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved," 2 Thess. ii.

11. Trial. By this all may know, whether they see or not. O what a vast difference is there between being utterly blind, and having clear eye-sight. "One thing I know (said the man that Christ opened his eyes) that whereas I was blind, I now see," John ix. 25. Can you say so? Be sure if you see, you can remember how woful blind and ignorant you once were, and also do know, when and by what means you came to see; and do also not a little admire infinite grace, that God should open your blind eyes, or give you the saving knowledge of himself, in the face of Jesus Christ, and O how sweet is the light of saving knowledge to your souls! Also what wonderful things do you see in God's law, and in Christ, and in the blessed Gospel, what dangers do you see, and know how to avoid them; and what do you experience of a change, that is wrought in you, to what your state was once! And how do you prize the light, and hate darkness, the darkness of sin, and all errors.

12. Bewail them that are blind; are not some of your children and friends blind, stone blind, and know it not? O mourn over them, and cry to God, to open their eyes. Also bewail a blind and dark world, and that is led and resolved to be led by blind leaders. Cry that God would enlighten the earth, and send more leaders, who have clear sight and knowledge of God, Jesus Christ, and of the salvation he hath wrought out.

SERMON XVII.

For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it,

Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish.—Luke xiv. 28, 29, 30.

THIS parable was spoken by our blessed Saviour, to the multitude, as it is expressed in ver. 25. And there went great multitudes with him, and he turned and said unto them, "If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sister, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," ver. 26. "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple," ver. 27. And then it follows, "For which of you intending to build," &c. So that the main design and scope of this and the parable immediately following, of going to war, are to put all persons upon considering, and weighing well, (before they take upon them the profession of religion, or give themselves up to be members of his Church) what it will cost them, what pains, and what loss, or what they must do, and expect to meet withal for his sake.

In this parable the work of a Christian is compared to a building, in the other to a warfare: and to both these things frequently in the Scripture, the work and business of a Christian professor and a holy life are compared, both by our Lord himself, and his apostles: in Matt. vii. 24, a true believer is likened to a wise builder: and a hypocrite to a foolish builder, that built his house on the sand; which I have opened.

"Which of you intending to build a tower;" he that builds, puts what was in his thoughts,

A builder puts his purpose into execution.

intention, and purpose, into execution: he first designs, or resolves within himself, that he will build, &c. So every person, before he takes upon him the profession of the Gospel, or becomes a disciple of Christ, first thinks upon it,

ponder, and weighs well the matter in his mind, and then fully resolves that he will do it. And he that is wise, will also consider well, what cost, and what pains, or labour he must be at, in building of such a tower, or house. (1.) He considers, what cost, and pains, the digging up the old foundation may be to him, and the removing all the rubbish,

It will cost much pains to dig deep to lay the foundation.

for removing the rubbish of the old Temple, cost the Jews much pains and cost; so every sinner should consider, what the digging up the old foundation of nature, and the covenant of works, will cost him, and also the rooting out of all evil habits of sin.

It will cost great pains to remove an old foundation.

2. What pains it will cost him to dig deep, to lay the foundation of a high tower. For that must be done, or his building may soon fall. So every spiritual builder should consider, what it will cost him, to lay the foundation stone, Jesus Christ, at the bottom of all his building, which he cannot do, but

he must dig deep into the eternal counsel and purpose of God, and also into the covenant, and blessed compact between the Father and the Son from all eternity, and this will cost him much wisdom and pains also.

To build a tower. Certainly, our Lord, on purpose, mentioned a tower, rather than any other building, and perhaps to signify, that the top of our spiritual building must reach up to heaven, or otherwise it will be vain to build: for though the builders of Babel were fools, to think that they could build a tower to save them from the deluge of God's wrath, or that way to get up to heaven; yet he that builds in a right manner upon Christ, shall find, and that when he hath finished his building, or received the end of his faith, he shall reach heaven, so that an entrance into it shall be ministered abundantly unto him, (i. e.) he shall receive the salvation of his soul.

"Sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost?" If he be wise, he will not rashly undertake so great a work; so every sinner ought deliberately, not hastily, rashly, or inconsiderately, to enter into a visible profession of religion, or become a disciple of Jesus Christ; but count the whole cost, viz., that he must part with all his sins, though never so sweet, pleasant, or profitable to him in times past; and that he must not only deny, or part with sinful self, but with religious self also, or with all his own righteousness, in point of trust, or dependance, yea, and with natural self likewise, wife, children, brethren, sisters, and his own life also; he must part with all, when Christ calls for it; nay, he must hate all these presently; that is, he must have a lesser love to any of these relations, and to his own life,

than to the Lord Jesus Christ : a lesser love is in the scripture called, a hatred. Leah is said to be hated by Jacob, because he loved Rachel better than she : " And when the Lord saw, that Leah was hated, he opened her womb," &c., Gen. xxix. 31. Moreover, he must consider, that his name will be reproached, vilified, and despised by the men of the world, if he begins once to cleave to Jesus Christ, and become a member of his visible church, and a professor of the gospel ; and be accounted every day as a sheep for the slaughter--" They shall put you out of the synagogue : yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service." John xvi. 2. Now these things our Lord made known, and spake this parable on purpose also, that all persons, who seem inclined to follow him, should consider well of, even ponder in their minds, what it will cost them ; he would have us know the worst that can befall us in following of him, that when troubles rise, none might be offended, nor have cause to say, I was not told of these things before I began to build.

" Whether they have to finish it." We read sufficient, but that is a supplement, whether they have enough, or that which is sufficient to finish the whole work, or to hold out in your Christian course to the end. Now I conceive our blessed Saviour intended by these words to discover the insufficiency, or that great weakness, and inability that is in every person, considered as in himself, to go on to perfect the great building, or salvation of his own soul, that so he might put every one upon considering in whom his sufficiency alone lies, or who it is that is his strength, before he begins to profess the Lord Jesus. Brethren, he that thinks (when he begins to build) he hath in himself sufficient wisdom, strength, grace, and courage to finish, hath neither sat down to count what he hath, nor what it will cost him to begin and finish the building of this tower. But he that counts Christ's righteousness his righteousness, and the strength of Christ, his strength, and that grace that is in Christ, to be treasured up in the Lord Jesus for him, and as he builds on Christ the whole of his salvation, so trusteth alone upon him for supportation, or for whatsoever he sees needful, or necessary for him, in order to finish this spiritual building, certainly he hath wisely sat down, and counted the cost, and knows where he may have sufficient supply, at all times to perfect the whole work : " For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. Our Lord would have us know, that without him we can do nothing, John xv. 5 ; and this we should consider, and know at first, and so count our own weakness, and yet find out that great mine of riches which we have in Jesus Christ, that so we may be able to say with Paul, " I can do all things through Jesus Christ that strengtheneth me."

" Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish ; all that behold it begin to mock him," &c. Parables, as I have told you, do not run always on all four ; the scope of this parable chiefly should be observed : a man may lay a foundation of a house well, and yet may not be able to finish it, but expose himself to shame and reproach ; but he that lays Christ as the foundation of his faith, hope, and salvation, or begins in a true and right manner to build, having saving faith in Jesus Christ, shall be enabled to finish. But some lay the foundation of their building on the sand, or build not rightly on Christ, (i. e.) not upon his merits, on his righteousness, on his power, on his wisdom, on his promises, and on his faithfulness, they build not on Christ, but rather upon their own righteousness, on their own power, and on their sufficiency, they glory in themselves ; and these, when they have begun, or have laid a foundation thus, are not able to finish, and so men begin to mock them ; for suffering some losses in professing of Christ, yet after all fail in their profession : a high tower had need to have a good and firm foundation, for else it may fall before it is finished.

Our Lord here compares the faith and work of a Christian, to a man's building of a tower, and from hence note,

Doct. A Christian is, or may be compared to a man that builds a tower, a noble building, not a cottage, and therefore should count the cost.

1. I shall show you what a tower or building it is, or why it is called a tower.
2. I shall show you why a Christian is said to build a tower.
3. That every believer should consider so well the matter as to count the cost.
4. Apply it.

1. In opening those words of our Lord Matt. vii. (He that heareth these saying of mine and doeth them, &c.) I have showed that every true Christian is compared to a builder, and therefore shall pass by that here, and show you why he is said to build a tower.

1. A tower is no small building, but a noble structure, one of the chiefest of buildings : so a believer's spiritual building is a most noble building. This appears.

I. Upon the consideration of the contriver of it, which was the great God, by his own eternal wisdom : O what a kind of tower is this, a building is this, that infinite wisdom was the contriver, viz. To build us up in Jesus Christ ; " but ye, beloved, building up your selves on your most holy faith," &c. Every believer is a builder, but God contrived the building, and also gives directions how to build ; the foundation, the materials, and the skilful putting all together, was found out, ordained, or appointed by Almighty God.

2. It is a noble building, because the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of it, and was also first laid by the Father, in his eternal decree and purposes. (2.) Christ laid himself for this foundation. (1.) In and by that holy doctrine he taught. (2.) By his own actual obedience, and by what he suffered. (3.) In the holy example of his life, as our pattern.

3. The Apostles also laid Christ for the only foundation of this noble tower and structure, by their doctrine and practice, I have laid the foundation, &c.

4. Every believer also lays Christ for a foundation, by believing, resting, or relying alone upon him.

II. It is a noble building, or a famous tower, because the design of it is to preserve the soul from all its enemies, and from all dangers whatsoever, to eternal life.

III. This spiritual building may be called a tower, because a Christian is a soldier, and this building is to be his fortress, and if he builds on Christ or rightly upon the only foundation, he need not fear all the gun-shot of satan, sin, the flesh, and the world, though he must expect to be battered severely by these enemies.

IV. It may be called a tower, because the top of it must reach up to heaven : he builds for another world, and must gradually proceed until he come to heaven ; he hath not finished this tower until then, not till an entrance be administered to him into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Secondly, why is a Christian said to build this tower ?

May be fit-
ly called a
building
upon Christ.

I. Because he is to believe in Jesus Christ ; faith is required of him, or believing in Christ ; that which we build upon, we trust in it, or rely upon. So in this sense we build on Christ ; that is, we trust in him, venture our souls on him, we build our faith, our hope, expectation, and eternal life on Jesus Christ ; and so may be said to build this famous tower of our salvation.

But pray note, it is God that finds all the materials, our " Faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. So our hope is not only in God, but also of God ; he also gives strength, skill, and courage ; and is at all the charge of the whole building ; but as we are required to work out our own Salvation, so we are commanded to ; " building up yourselves in your most holy faith," Jude 20 ; by trusting in God through Jesus Christ, or by exercising faith in his word and promises, and adding unto our faith virtue, and unto virtue knowledge, and unto knowledge temperance, &c. And thus he may be said to build, and still make a further progression, until he have finished the building, or receive the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul.

Thirdly, that every believer should consider so well the matter, as to count the cost.

1. I shall note here what he should consider :

2. Why count the cost.

I. He should consider well what foundation he builds this tower upon, because there is but one ; " Other foundation can no man lay then that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Because if he builds his hopes of salvation upon any other foundation, his tower will fall, though he build never so high, or never such a glorious profession of religion in the sight of men.

II. He should consider and ponder well what he should build upon this foundation. viz. His faith, his hope, his soul, his justification, his redemption, his sanctification ; in a word his soul, every thing, even all his whole salvation must be built upon Christ alone, and upon nothing else.

III. He should consider when he should build, and that is presently ; he must not delay building one hour, for he is in danger of falling into hell every moment : " I made haste and delayed not, to keep thy precepts," saith David.

IV. He should consider, how he must build, viz., that is by faith, or by believing, by trusting in, or relying upon Jesus Christ only : not by working, not by doing, no, but by believing : not on Christ's righteousness, and on his own inherent righteousness together :

but on Christ's merits and righteousness alone, exclusive of all things, either as wrought in him, and done by him; not on his own sincere obedience, but on Christ's obedience; not on his faith, but on the object of his faith, the Lord Jesus Christ; and the blessed God and Father, in, and by Christ Jesus.

Quest. Why should he sit down and count the costs?

1. Because it will be a very costly building to him. (1.) He must give up all his cursed sins and lusts, though as dear to him in times past, as a right hand, or a right eye. (2.) He must expect it will cost him the loss of whatsoever he once accounted gain. (3.) He must part with all his former companions, and expect they will mock and deride him (as I hinted before) and may be his own life also.

Why a poor sinner should sit down and count the cost first.

2. Because great storms may rise, and floods come, and beat upon his high tower: and he should count the damage he may sustain in such storms.

3. Because he is not able either to begin, nor to build, or lay one stone by his own strength; and if he knows not this, or doth not utterly despair of any power, or ability of his own, he will never be able to finish, and then men will mock him, and say, "This man begun to build, but was not able to finish."

4. He must account, how rich, how strong, and able he is in Jesus Christ; and if he knows, that Christ is his strength, (as well as his righteousness,) he counts the cost aright; and if he depends wholly, constantly, he need not fear, but he shall have wherewith to finish this famous tower, (*i. e.*) the salvation of his precious soul.

APPLICATION.

1. This reprehends all rash and inconsiderate persons, who through some sudden slash of zeal (which may prove like a land flood) set out in a visible profession of Christ and the gospel. Alas, sirs, though men should not delay in closing with Christ, and flying from the wrath to come, yet they should do nothing rashly, or without weighing the matter deliberately. Some young people I fear have showed no small folly this way. Reproof.

2. This may inform us of the reason, there are so many who grow cold, and soon falter, and fall off, or decline in their zeal, and seeming love to Christ, his truth and people, they counted not the cost, what corruptions they must mortify, what temptations they must withstand, and what reproaches they must expect to meet with, and what enemies they may find, and what relations they may engage, and stir up against them. Inform.

3. Let all from hence be exhorted, who have it in their hearts, to begin to build, or to come forth into a visible profession of Christ, to count the cost, and not expose themselves by their inconsiderateness to the reproach of men, either to the grief of the godly, or to the contempt and scorn of the wicked. Exhort.

4. Yet let none from hence be discouraged, or decline closing with Christ, or with his people; for if they are sincere and gracious persons, they will understand, that the almighty power of God is engaged to help them. O what promises hath he made to all who truly believe in him, and rest upon him, though they have no might, no riches, nor strength in themselves; yet they may say with the psalmist, "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," Psal. lxxiii. 26. There are none that have cause to fear, but false professors, or such whose hearts are not right with God; therefore let such lay to heart what hath been said. Encouragement.

5. Count also all the external charge, which a visible profession of religion may expose you to; for the interest of Christ, and the charge of his church, must be borne: I do not call this loss, for it will be none in the end. For by casting their bread upon the waters, they shall find it again after many days. But yet nevertheless this ought to be considered, and reckoned up, before a man begins to build this tower.

6. How great is the work of a Christian; building is not only costly work, but a very laborious work also, especially to build a strong and mighty tower: therefore know it is no lazy life, no, such must work hard: we read of the "work of faith, and labour of love," &c., Heb. vi. 10. Inference.

7. Let all learn, on what foundation to build, and not refuse the chief corner stone, for what foundation soever they lay besides Christ, let them be assured, they will not be able to finish; but shall come to shame, and be mocked at last. O depend wholly upon God in Jesus Christ; you must know his money pays for all: yet you shall not miscarry for want of money to finish, if in all your wants you go to him, by faith, and

prayer! and you that build on him, or on this rock, the gates of hell shall never prevail against you.

Your tower will stand firm, and endure all the battering rams, and roaring cannon Satan lets fly against it; neither need you fear any mines, for your tower is built upon such a hard rock, that the cunning miner, Satan, cannot pierce it, no pick-axe of the devil can enter into this rock, nor can the enemy storm your strong tower; for besides its strength the Lord of hosts dwells therein, and Jesus Christ is always within the walls thereof: your tower is also fenced round with salvation, which God had prepared for walls and bulwarks. For as it is thus with Zion in general, so the same fortification has every believer, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generations following; for this God, is our God for ever and ever; he will be our God even unto death." Psal. xlviii. 12, 13, 14.

Moreover, the enemy cannot starve you, or cut off your provision, "for he shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, and his waters shall be sure," Isa. xxxiii. 16.

O what comfort is here for you that wisely build on the Lord Jesus, whose faith stands in the wisdom and power of God; though others are not able to finish, yet you shall, but so much to this parable.

SERMON XVIII.

Or what king going to war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.—Luke xiv. 31, 32, 33.

THE design and purport of this parable is the same with that which precedes about building a tower, &c., which I have opened according to that small light received.

The scope of this parable. Both being to put all men that purpose to become disciples of Christ, first to count the cost, as to what they must part with, the difficulties they must run, and what oppositions they must expect to meet withal in their Christian warfare.

Though probably this may have more in it than the former: may not the king that comes with twenty thousand refer in a remote sense to the great God?

A sinner here is compared to a King, though he hath lost his kingdom, and is abdicated: all the glory and regal power he had in his first state, is gone; he also is an enemy to God, and while he remains in his unconverted state wars against his Maker; though his men (I mean) all his noble faculties, are corrupted, and have deserted and gone over to his enemy, the devil; and now the mighty king, the dreadful God, is coming out against him, who is more than twenty thousand strong, nay, more than ten thousand times ten thousand stronger than he. O what millions of millions of angels hath God, or what mighty armies hath the Lord of hosts! but alas he needs not any of them; himself alone is clothed with infinite power, might, and majesty, and can crush in a moment like a moth all the numberless numbers of men and devils; therefore a sinner had best sit down, and consult whether or no he is a match for this mighty and terrible king, the Lord of hosts: which alas he may soon understand he is not, though he had all the powers and armies on earth, and devils of hell at his command, to assist him: and therefore it his wisdom, before the great God comes too near towards him in a way of divine wrath, and vengeance, to lay down his arms, and accept of an ambassage of peace, offered to him in and by Jesus Christ.

Indeed the sinner ought to send to treat first, and submit himself upon any terms to the great God of heaven and earth; but this the Lord foresaw man could not, would not do, and therefore out of his infinite love, bowels and pity, he sends his ambassadors to persuade him to submit himself, and be reconciled to his offended Creator: this holds a good analogy of faith: but by considering the scope and design of the parable, this is not chiefly (if at all) intended here, and therefore I shall pass this by, and speak to the parts briefly, by way of exposition.

“Or what king going to make war.” &c. That is, what man or what sinner going to war against sin, the world, the flesh and the devil: Our Lord seems here to put some seeming honour upon sorry man, by comparing him to a king; he was so at first, even the king of this nether creation, all things were put into his hand.

Going to war. “sitteth not first and consulteth whether he is able,” &c. A sinner ought to consult his own strength, and consider that he with all the powers of his soul, is but ten thousand, and all deceitful and treacherous soldiers too.

“Whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand.” Satan hath more than two to his one, nay, more than ten to his one.

1. He hath all the whole hosts of the infernal lake, all the evil spirits, or many legions of fallen angels in his army, and all expert soldiers, and filled also with rage, against the poor, weak, and impotent sinner.

Satan stronger than sinful man, nay than saints as in themselves.

2. The world in all its cursed snares and allurements its riches, honours, and pleasures, Satan has no muster up, as another mighty army.

3. This black king also hath got great strength in the poor sinner's own house, or small isle, viz., inbred corruption, who have corrupted to his party all the strength and powers of his soul. Now is it not necessary for him to consult his own strength, and despair by any force or might of his own to prevail, in this great enterprize? Certainly he must desist and yield himself overmatched, or else look out for some assistance from some other prince, who may espouse his quarrel, and help him; and one also that is every way able to repel and vanquish the powerful prince of darkness, with all his forces and mighty hosts; especially, considering that the king that comes out against him, is a most subtil enemy, that ever drew sword against God or sinners, and as he is crafty, and full of subtilty, and mighty strong and powerful, so also is filled full of rage, enmity, and malice against every poor mortal, that is resolved to desert his service, and return to the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, he is well armed, being called the strong man armed, Luke xi. 21.

Satan has a party in our own house.

What now should a poor sinner do? He cannot once suppose himself able to make head against all the powers of darkness, that are both within and without. And if he enters again into a covenant of peace, with sin, Satan, and the world, he is undone, (the parable runs not so far on all four as to allow him to do that) no, no league must the sinner make either with sin, the devil, or this world.

No peace must be made with sin nor Satan.

From hence note,

Doct. 1. The work or life of a Christian is a warfare.

Doct. 2. That a sinner who designs to close with Christ, and become his disciple, should first consult matters well, and then take courage, and not fear any enemy, but resolutely pursue his great and good design.

It is the last of these I purpose briefly to speak to or open.

By consulting he may know, that he hath one with him, that will assist him, so that he need not fear, nor desist his design and purpose, though his enemy be a hundred thousand strong, and he hath no strength, nor power of his own, to withstand so great a force. And no doubt this our blessed Lord chiefly designed to instruct all his followers in, by speaking this parable, or in making use of this allusion.

The Philistines were greedy to know wherein Sampson's great strength lay, which when his Delilah knew, she, by cutting of his hair, destroyed his strength; but no Delilah, no sin, no devil, can spoil or rob a true believer of his strength, which, though it lies not in his hair, yet it lies in his head (I mean) in Jesus Christ, who is the head of the body, the Church and every member thereof, and this he that begins to go forth on the spiritual warfare, ought to know, and should sit down, and consult; and hereby he will see, that he is able to maintain a war, and be a victor over sin, the flesh, the world, and the devil, though never so weak in himself; and without Christ can do nothing, John xv. 5. But what of this? Yet through Christ's strength, or in the power of his might, we can do all things, and therefore need not fear, but through the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be able to meet the black prince, though he comes forth against us with all his hellish forces.

But to speak more distinctly to this proposition, I shall

1. Show particularly, what a poor sinner, who designs to enter upon this war, should consult.

2. Show, why he should first sit down, and consult with himself, &c.

3. Apply it.

1. He should consult the charge of this war: no war can be carried on without charge and expense, no more can this spiritual war, and this is

Sinners should consult the charge of the war.

hinted in the precedent parable. Building is costly as well as war; we must resolve to lose all things, that we may call our own, or expend all, give up all that we once counted gain to us, for Christ's sake. He that spares one beloved lust, will be worsted, and lose the field; or is not willing to part with all he hath.

II. He should consult what great hardship he must undergo. A soldier's life is attended with hardship many ways. (1.) He must not expect to lodge always on beds of down, but to lie on the cold ground. (2.) Also sometimes to fare hard. (3.) And not have that rest and sleep which others have. (4.) And likewise be exposed to cold and bitter storms in winter, and to hot scorching heat in summer. (5.) And to tedious and weary marches, as well as to the dangerous assaults of his enemy: so the Christian soldier must expect to endure great hardship. Hence Paul (speaking to Timothy) saith, "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," 2 Tim. ii. 3; as a Christian, and much more as a minister, he must look to meet with hardships; the life of a Christian is no easy life; what hardships have the people of God in every age met withal! like soldiers, they sometimes have no certain dwelling place, as Paul saith, and as many poor French Protestants at this very time experience; we are strangers and pilgrims on earth. "I beseech ye, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii.

II. (2.) Sometimes also they meet with days of famine, and years of drought, when the bread of their souls seems to fail, there being no open vision, but seek the food of their souls with the peril of their lives. Nor do they always live on the fat things of God's house, but may want the light of God's countenance, and be ready to say, their hope is cut off. (3.) Besides they must not sleep as others do, but always be on their watch; watch and pray always, &c. "Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids, deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler. (4.) Moreover, what cold blasts and storms of affliction, and temptations do believers frequently meet with! and also what scorching heat of persecution, which some faint hearted soldiers cannot endure. (5.) And sometimes by this means they are forced to long marches, even to fly from one city to another, nay, from one kingdom to another, and that they may do by the directions their Captain hath given them. "When they persecute you in this city, fly ye into another," &c. Matt. x. 23.

III. They should consult the cause of the war, and absolute necessity thereof. Sometimes there is such necessity to take up arms, that if it be not done, a kingdom may be lost: the justness and goodness of the cause, and necessity of a war, are to be considered well.

The cause of war against sin and Satan must be consulted. So likewise every soul that would be a soldier of Jesus Christ, should consider, and carefully consult the righteousness, and justness of the war against sin, and the devil, &c. As also the necessity of it, they must take up arms, and fight, or else perish for ever: for these enemies design the murder of every soul, if possible, and put all to the sword. Sin and Satan are grand and merciless tyrants, and such that we must resist, and take up arms against, and never have peace with, or otherwise remain declared rebels and traitors to the great God and King of heaven and earth.

IV. They should also consult the length, or duration of the war. Whoever takes up arms, and lift themselves under the command of Jesus Christ, must resolve to abide his soldiers as long as they live; this spiritual war will last all our days. "And, we must resist unto blood, (if called to it) striving against sin," Heb. xii. 4.

V. They must consider, at whose charge the war is to be carried on, and maintained, for if any think they are rich enough themselves to bear the expense thereof, they will certainly fail, and be soon overcome. The whole charge is borne by the Lord Jesus Christ, whose riches and treasure is infinite; and therefore inexhaustible, so that we need not fear want of any thing needful for us; "For the Lord God is a Sun and a shield, he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

The time must be considered, when to be listed under Christ. VI. They should consult, or well consider the manner and time, when they must list themselves under this glorious General, the Lord of Hosts, and know also, what armour they must put on, and what the armour is. For if they consult the excellency of the spiritual armour, they need not fear the force, power, and craft of the King that comes forth against them; it is armour of proof. As to the time of lifting themselves, it is just when Christ calls them, that is to-day, "while it is called to-day," Heb. iii. 13. Many are called at the third hour, that is in youth; these are always readily entertained: "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early, shall find me." Prov. viii. 17. They are lifted into some of Christ's companies, in and by baptism, where they must keep rank and file, and learn all the art of order, and

spiritual discipline. The armour is, (1.) Their loins girt about with truth, Eph. vi. 14, 17; being sincere, and always kept in the bounds of truth; and, (2.) Their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; (3.) Also they must take the shield of faith; they must strive for due preparedness to every work and duty, with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord; and by faith as with a shield resist all the fiery darts of the devil; (4.) For an helmet take the hope of salvation, and (5.) Always have the sword of the Spirit in their hand, which is the word of God; and with skill use it to the wounding all their enemies. (6.) Praying always, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.

VII. They must consult the strength, policy, wrath, and cruelty of Satan, and other enemies, which I have already hinted something about.

We must consult the strength of our enemies.

VIII. They must consult, and be sensible of their own weakness, and never engage in their own names, nor in their own strength; but always "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" as David came out against Goliath. So through God we shall do valiantly; "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," Psal. lxxiii. 26. To be strong in the Lord, &c., is always to trust in him, and rely upon him for wisdom, power, and aid at all times; we must not trust in that grace we have already received, nor in any of our own inherent grace, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

IX. They must consult the power, and irresistible strength of their Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ.

They must know, (1.) That he is almighty; and also have a firm persuasion of this.

(2.) Also act faith in him.

(3.) And know that he hath engaged himself, by his faithful promises, to help them, and fight for them at all times, "And that he will never fail them, nor forsake them," as he did not Joshua of old, Josh. i. 5. "Fear not, worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord. Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God," Isa. xli. 10, 13, 14.

X. They must consult the covenant of peace, the oath and promises of God the Father, unto Christ as Mediator, and in him to all believers. Moreover, how in that covenant all the elect are put into Christ's hand, not only to redeem them, to renew them, but also to aid, help, and assist, and to fight for them, yea, and to strengthen and support them, as likewise that the cause is his, and our enemies his enemies.

XI. They must consult that relation they stand into their Captain, he hath espoused and marries them for ever that list themselves to fight under his banner, and that his love is an everlasting and an unchangeable love, so that they need not fear his leaving them to war alone, or suffer their enemies to prevail; who is a match for them, for no sin, no world, no devil, no enemy, but he can subdue and vanquish in a moment.

XII. They should also consult and know, that all their enemies are already conquered; the king that comes forth against him, is a slain or conquered enemy, our blessed Captain hath led "him captive, and hath triumphed over principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly." Sirs, believers are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ, Col. ii. 15. Because other warriors know not assuredly that they shall conquer, but all Christ's faithful soldiers are assured of the victory; they have it already in their head, and they shall have it actually in their own persons, "they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," &c. John x. 28.

XIII. They should consult the honour of God, and the honour and exaltation, and glory of their blessed Captain, and prefer that above their lives. While we seek glory, he will seek our good; should we be worsted, the dishonour would fall on our Lord Jesus Christ.

XIV. Moreover, they should consult the nature of the crown for which they fight. Every saint, every soldier, shall be crowned with a crown of glory. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10.—"I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith." Well, what of this? "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous Judge will give to me in that day," 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. Aye, but Paul he was a nousuch, a champion for Christ. Pray read the next words, "And not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing." And not only a crown but they shall sit on his throne. "He that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21.

Now if thou consultest all these things, thou wilt not be afraid to go forth in this warfare against that king that comes against thee with his twenty thousand, though thou art

weak, and not one hundred strong, provided thou art well armed, a man born of God, and united to Jesus Christ, and in covenant with him.

Why a sinner ought to sit down and consult. Secondly, I shall give you one or two reasons, why sinners should sit down and consult these things, before they enter into these wars.

1. Because man is naturally a self-confident creature, and thinks he can do wonderful things by his own strength, but did he know how weak he is, and how deceitful his heart is, and all the powers of his soul, he would not pride it so in himself, nor ever venture to go forth in his own strength, against one who is so much stronger than he. Is sinful man a match for Satan? or can he destroy and overcome sin who lies dead, or slain, at the feet of sin and the devil already? No, for a man renewed, one quickened, one that is also well armed, is no more able to vanquish his spiritual enemies, without Christ's special and immediate assistance, than a child is able to encounter with a giant.

2. Because all that ever engaged these enemies, not consulting their own weakness, but went out in their own strength, were put to flight and utterly beat and spoiled. When Peter did, thus, he came off with broken bones, "Though all deny thee, yet will not I." He should first have sat down and consulted better, for none indeed denied his Lord so basely as he did, and it was through self-confidence, or through trusting to his own strength, or not consulting his own impotence without special assistance.

3. Because our Lord would have none of his soldiers be surprised, either by the power, wrath, malice, or subtily of the enemy; he hath therefore given us warning of the danger, and discovered what all his disciples may, nay, must look to meet with, that so when troubles come, persecution and trials come, none of them might be offended in him.

4. It is that we might be ready prepared for the worst that can come. Fore-warned, fore-armed; and that we might be much in prayer, and in the exercise of faith at all times of need, and utterly despair of our own abilities. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, and that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead," 2 Cor. i, 9.

APPLICATION.

Information. 1. This informs us, that the work of a Christian is no easy, but a very hard and difficult work. What is a harder undertaking, or attended with greater trouble than that of a soldier?

2. Moreover it may inform us, what the reason is, that so many professors who seemed zealous in times of peace and liberty have deserted in an hour of trial and persecutions. Alas, they did not sit down and consult what a mighty force, or what troops of temptation, &c., troops of opposition from without, and from within, they should meet withal.

3. It may be of use to all poor convinced sinners that purpose to follow Jesus Christ, first of all to ponder and well weigh the nature, troubles, and difficulties of a Christian life, as I hinted under the foregoing parable.

4. It also may tend to convince us of the great strength and power of Satan and other enemies of our souls, and the need we have to be well armed, and to stand always upon watch, and never give way to self-confidence. We (saith Paul) have no confidence in the flesh. My brethren, to trust in ourselves is to depart from the Lord, and yield ourselves up into the hands of our enemies. For whom we (as considered in ourselves) are no match; for if Satan can meet with us alone, or not in the strength and power of Christ, down we go.

Terror. 5. It shows also the woeful condition of such who are in a state of unbelief, who have not the power of Christ to help and assist them. Is it any wonder to see the devil (who rules and reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience) taken captive by him at his will, and led away into all manner of sins and cursed abominations? there is a multitude of this sort; what can a naked man do to oppose, or vanquish a strong man armed?

6. It may likewise be improved by way of encouragement and comfort to all sincere believers. For,

Comfort. (1). From hence they may see what a good cause they are engaged in; a good cause greatly animates pious soldiers in the face of all difficulties.

(2). They may also see, that though they are weak in themselves, and the enemy stronger than they, yet that in the Lord they have such strength, that the powers of hell and darkness cannot withstand. For, 1. The eternal God is on their side, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Jesus Christ the Mediator, their victorious Captain, commands and heads them; he leads them on and encounters with all their enemies, whom none can withstand, and who is not only a powerful Captain, but wise also, even the wis-

dom of God, and can outwit Satan in all his devices. 3. The Holy Spirit is always at hand to assist, aid, and influence them in all attempts and just enterprises, who in power, &c., is equal with the Father and the Son. 4. They have all the heavenly hosts, I mean the holy angels, on their side, and to fight for them, who like horses and chariots of fire, are continually round about them, as they were about the prophet Elisha. "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots, and his servant said unto him, Alas! master, how shall we do? And he answered, fear not, for they that are with us are more than they that are against us. And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see, and the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha," 2 Kings vi. 15, 16, 17. Thus the angels of the Lord are employed to save and defend all the people of God; they encamp round about them that fear him, and that fight under the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ. 5. They have also all the prayers of the Lord's people continually for them; there is not one believer, but hath the constant prayers of the universal church for him, and against his enemies, whose prayers are always most prevalent with God. This was that fire which went out of the mouths of the two witnesses. "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouths, and devoureth their enemies," Rev. xi. 5. Their prayers are like fire to burn and destroy; for as none can stand before consuming fire, so none can stand before the prayers of the saints of God, when God fires their prayers with his Spirit. Now all these things being considered, what little cause have any poor believers to fear what force of hell comes against them? besides, they are sure of victory. But so much as to this useful parable.

SERMON XIX.

No man putteth a new piece of cloth into an old garment, for that which is put to it to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse, Matt. ix. 16, 17.

Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, &c., Mark ii. 21. No man also seweth a piece of cloth to an old garment, &c.

And he spake also a parable unto them: no man putteth a new piece of a garment upon an old. — Luke v. 36, 37.

Our annotators think that our Saviour refers here in these two parables to what precedes immediately the two verses before our text, about his disciples not fasting: viz. "It is not (say they) yet a time of mourning for my disciples, yet do not envy them, there will shortly come a time, when as to my bodily presence I shall be taken away from them; then they shall mourn. The second thing (say they) he illustrateth by a two-fold similitude,—viz. Should I impose upon them the severe exercises of religion, it might discourage them, and be a temptation to them to look back.—This is a portion of Scripture, which much commendeth prudence to ministers in teaching their people as they are able to bear, &c. Though I have a great value for these learned men, in many things they have said upon several dark texts, yet I cannot agree with them as to the design of our Saviour in these two parables, (there being nothing in my judgment, in what they say, that is correspondent with the design of our Saviour herein) for could not the disciples of Christ bear the duty of fasting, &c., without being put upon temptation to leave their Master? Strange! had not they a principle of grace in them sufficient to bear them up in discharge of that duty? or had our Lord not power to strengthen them in it, if he had seen good to have enjoined it upon them?

2. Were the disciples' garments old garments, or such that needed a new piece of cloth to mend them, or were they like old bottles that would not hold new wine? and where are hard duties of religion, I pray, compared to wine? No doubt the reason why Christ's disciples did not fast, was from the reason he gives, ver. 15, "Because the Bridegroom was yet with them:" but he doth not allude to that matter in these two symbolical allusions; for from that foot of an account these similies bear no correspondent signification, but must allude to something else of a quite different nature.

Pool's Annotations.

The scope of the words opened.

The reason why Christ's disciples did not fast.

1. Therefore I shall give you (as I understand) the main scope and coherence of these parabolical allusions, or the drift and design of our Saviour in them.
2. Explain all the terms and parts herein contained.
3. Take notice of such truths or propositions that necessarily arise therefrom.
4. And apply the whole.

The scope
of this pa-
rable

First, I conclude that our Lord rather alludes in these similies to what he said in ver. 12, 13, 14. The Pharisees were offended with him, because he ate with publicans and sinners: "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" ver. 11. They were so righteous in their own eyes, that they despised others. And this made our Lord say, that God "will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I am come, not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," ver. 13. The Pharisees thought that the whole of religion lay in the discharge of duties, in sacrifices, prayer, fasting, and other like performances; and upon this the disciples of John came and asked him, why they and the Pharisees fasted often, and his disciples fasted not at all, ver. 14.

Now, to convince them of the unprofitableness of all duties of religion performed by un-renewed persons, he brings in these two parables: the Pharisees, as if he should say, think themselves holy and righteous persons, and they pray, and fast, but it is all in vain, whilst they remain in their old nature. For all their own righteousness is but as filthy rags, or like an old rotten garment, which cannot be mended by any acts of obedience, as sacrifices, prayer, fasting, &c.

And (2) they are like old broken bottles, that cannot hold new wine, but will let it all out.

So much shall suffice as to the scope hercof.

Secondly, We shall open and explain the parts and terms contained in this two-fold parable.

1. Show what is meant by the old garment.
2. What is meant or intended by the new piece of cloth put to the old garment.
3. What by the rent being made worse.
4. Show what is intended by old bottles.
5. And what by new wine.
6. What by putting in new wine.

"No man putteth a new piece, a new garment, on an old," verse 16.

1. By an old garment, I understand is meant a man's own righteousness: the righteousness of an unrenewed person may be compared to an old garment.

1. Because it is as old as Adam; it is that righteousness which we derived from him in his fallen estate, that garment which is near six thousand years old, must needs be looked upon to be very old.

2. Because it is worn out, being rotten, rent, and torn, and abominably defiled, filthy, polluted, so that it stinks in the nostrils of God, and renders such who have it upon them, loathed also in his sight, as an old filthy garment doth render a person in the sight of men.

3. An old garment pre-supposeth that it was once a new, a firm, and a good garment; and so was man's own righteousness in the state of innocency, a new and beautiful garment; our first parents were curiously clothed, as they came out of God's hand, before they sinned, and fell from that state; but now that clothing or garment which should cover their souls, is rotten, and torn, and good for nothing.

4. An old garment needs mending if it can be mended; so such that know not how to buy them a new one, strive to piece and patch their old. Thus many sinners strive (as did the Pharisees) to mend their old garment, and patch it together with their duties, as prayers, fasting, and giving to the poor; as some now in our days strive to patch their old garment, by putting a piece of a new garment to it, viz., part of Christ's righteousness to their own ragged righteousness, which is, alas, so rotten that it will not hold together to cover their nakedness in the sight of God, nor will it bear a piece of Christ's righteousness; many sinners are ignorant that Christ's righteousness cannot be parted, nor their own bear mending; these cannot mix together; neither will they beg, or seek to him for a whole new garment that hath it ready for them; but unless they can purchase a garment with their own money, they are so proud that they will rather wear their old one: nor do they see any need of a new one, but only to have the old mended with a piece of Christ's righteousness.

Quest. But why is righteousness compared unto a garment?

ANSW. I. I answer, Because a garment is to cover nakedness, so a man sees that he is naked in the sight of God without a righteousness, since the fall, and therefore, like Adam, he goes about to sew fig-leaves together: I mean, he labours to get a righteousness of his own making to cover him.

Righteousness compared to a garment.

2. Because a garment is that which covers the shame of mankind: now sin, or the horrid guilt of a profane and debauched life, is the shame of any soul; as Solomon saith, "Sin is the shame of any people." And to cover this shame some poor wretches pray, fast, read the word of God, and give alms, and do many other religious duties, which like a garment is to hide or prevent that shame or reproach their sins they think otherwise will expose them unto; though others like to mere brutes commit all manner of wickedness and are not ashamed; but are like such as the prophet complains of; "Were they ashamed when they committed all abominations? nay, they were not ashamed, neither would they blush," Jer. viii. 12.

A garment covers our shame.

3. Righteousness may be compared to a garment, because of the usefulness of it.

A garment is good to keep off piercing heat, or the scorching beams of the sun in summer

Even so men need a spiritual garment to keep off the scorching beams of God's wrath, though no garment of our own making can do this. No, no, none but the complete robe of Christ's righteousness.

Because our righteousness cannot answer all the demands of God's holy law. Neither doth it suit with the purity of God's nature, nor can it satisfy his offended justice.

4. Righteousness may be compared to a garment, in respect of ornament; if it be a fair and rich robe, it renders the person that hath it on very comely to all that see him.

So doth a perfect and complete righteousness render the soul that hath it on very comely in the sight of God.

But if it be a ragged and filthy garment it renders the person that wears it to be poor and contemptible; and so doth a man's old rotten and filthy robe of his own righteousness render him odious in God's sight.

5. Righteousness may be compared to a garment, because we judge of the honour, greatness, nobleness, and grandeur of a person, by the garment he wears; "Those that are clothed in soft raiment are in king's houses," Matt. xi. 8; Luke vii. 25.

Such who are clothed with the rich robe of righteousness are persons of no mean quality; they are more honourable than their brethren, or more excellent than their neighbours. Believers are king's children, and are allowed to dwell in his house, and to be richly clothed; they are the most excellent in all the earth, though they are contemptible ones in the sight of the ungodly of the earth.

6. Righteousness may be compared to a garment, because a garment tends to keep a man warm in the winter.

So a perfect and complete righteousness tends to keep the soul warm, such have divine heat in them, they are warm in the winter of afflictions, and in cold storms of tribulation; and in the sharp time of Satan's temptations; it is the righteousness of Christ in justification, also inherent holiness and sincerity in sanctification, keeps believers warm. It is the thoughts of these, the knowledge of these, that comforts and cherishes the souls of true Christians in such a time, like as a garment comforts and cherishes the body in a cold and bitter frost and snow.

7. A garment preserves the body of him that hath it on from thorns and briars, as he passeth through a wilderness, or the like. So the righteousness of God preserves the soul from Satan's darts, and from those pricking thorns of divine wrath; and the scratching briars of a wounded and accusing conscience.

A garment preserves from wounds. So doth Christ's righteousness preserve the soul.

But an old rotten ragged garment, as a man passes through briars and thorns will not, cannot preserve him from wounds or sore scratches he may meet withal; for such a garment cannot preserve itself, but will be torn to pieces thereby.

An old garment can preserve the body.

So the righteousness of the creature, or our own righteousness, that sorry old garment, cannot preserve the soul from the piercing thorns of divine vengeance, nor of Satan's temptations; nay, but justice, the law, and divine wrath will soon tear that garment to pieces, nor can it preserve us from Satan's fiery darts; for notwithstanding this covering, these thorns will soon wound the soul to death.

If otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, &c.

Quest. What is meant by the rent, or as St. Mark saith, made worse; "And the new agreeth not with the old," Mark ii. 21, according to St. Luke?

1. Answ. I answer, it may represent the state of all self-righteous persons, who seek to patch their old garment by that they call new obedience, or by Christ's merits or righteousness added to their own righteousness: for by this means their state is rendered worse than the state of the profane, or ungodly sinners, or that of Publicans and Harlots, as our Saviour shows, the Pharisees made their proselytes "twofold more the children of the devil than they were before," Matt. xxiii. 15, a greater rent makes the garment worse. So patching our old spiritual garment after this manner, makes the state of the soul worse, (i. e.,) it causes a greater wound, or their state to be more dangerous, and they more unlikely to be cured, or brought to believe, and wholly to rely upon Christ.

How the rent is made worse. 1. Made worse, because such, like the pharisees, think their state is better, and that the breach between them and the great God is now made up; whereas it is no such thing; by patching their old garment with duties, or with part of Christ's righteousness, they conclude all is well, and hence they are called such that are whole, and that think they need no Physician: what said the proud pharisee, "God I thank thee I am not as other men, nor as this publican," Luke xviii. 11.

2. Their state is worse, or the wound or rent is worse, because through this means they see no need to look out for a garment, no, they have, they conclude, so well patched up their old one, they have no occasion for a new garment; "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3.

3. A worse rent, because the old garment will not, cannot mix together with this new piece of righteousness, nor the new with that; the old is so rotten it will not hold sewing; our Saviour refers to such an old garment that is good for nothing, it is eaten of moths, or rotten. Cannot grace be joined to works? grace and works, my brethren, will not mix or hold together; "And if by grace, then it is not by works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, or otherwise work is no more work," Rom. xi. 6. There is no mixing of the works of the creature with the free grace of God: the righteousness of Christ will not mix with our righteousness in our justification before God. For one of these tends to destroy the other; for whatsoever comes free is of grace alone, and it is free; but that which is of works is a debt, or else grace is not grace, or work is not work.

Yet we have some in our days, like those in the Apostles' time, who strive to mix these two together, and this will in time make a greater rent in their consciences, if ever God be pleased to open their eyes, or they will have greater condemnation; sad it is to see how some Christians seek justification by Christ, and by their own faith and sincere obedience.

"Neither do men put new wine into old bottles."

Quest. What is meant by old bottles?

Answ. I answer, the old heart, the carnal and unrenewed heart. "I am like a new bottle," &c., that is, my heart. Why is the old unrenewed heart compared to an old broken bottle?

Why the heart is compared to a bottle. 1. I answer, because a bottle is a proper receptacle of liquor, as of oil or wine, &c., so is the heart of man a proper receptacle of divine knowledge, grace, joy, peace, comfort, and the like.

2. Because a bottle of itself, is an empty thing, it must be filled, or have liquor put into it, before there is, or can be any in it; so is the heart of man of itself naturally empty of whatsoever is truly good, spiritually good; grace must be put into it before one drop will be there; all naturally are without God, "without Christ, and without hope," Eph. ii. 12.

3. Because a broken bottle cannot hold new wine; no more can an old and unrenewed heart hold or retain saving peace, joy, and comfort, but the heart must be made new.

Quest. Why doth our Saviour say men do not put new wine into old bottles, for some old bottles will hold new wine as well as such that are new, and not break nor spill the wine.

Why new wine is not put into some old bottles. Answ. I answer, our blessed Lord it is evident refers to bottles that are cracked or broken bottles, or such bottles that are very old and rotten; and the old heart, the unregenerate heart, is like to such a broken, cracked, or old rotten bottle, that will not hold or retain the wine of divine consolations, or the wine of

heavenly comfort, if it were put in; unless at the same time the heart was renewed, it would all presently run out again like a leaky vessel; Heb. ii. 1; nay, grace itself (was not the heart renewed) should it be put into the heart, would be utterly lost; but grace put into the heart, new makes it in an instant. A cracked or broken bottle must be new made, or if it be a glass bottle, it must be by the glass-maker be melted down; so must the old unrenewed heart, like a cracked bell, or cracked glass bottle, melted down by the divine Spirit, and be new cast or new made, before God will pour in the wine of heavenly consolation, the heart must be melted in the fire of God's Spirit, there is no mending of it. Some strive to amend the old garment, and the old bottle, but it cannot be done; we must have a whole new garment, the righteousness of Christ for our justification, and a new heart through the Spirit's operation, for our sanctification.

"Puts new wine," &c.

Quest. 5. What is meant by the new wine?

Ans. By the new wine here may be meant all those choice blessings which are the concomitants of grace.

What
meant
by new
wine.

Wine being put in scripture for all sorts of choice things; "buy wine and milk." &c., Isa. lv. 1. Peace, inward joy, or those consolations of God that are not small, may be here intended; and this wine is only put into new bottles, (*i. e.*) into renewed or regenerated hearts.

1. Wine is a choice thing, the choicest of drink; so inward joy, peace, and spiritual consolation, are most choice things.

2. Wine is the fruit of a good tree, or of a precious plant.

So inward joy, peace, and spiritual consolations, are the fruits of the true wine Jesus Christ, or of the Holy Spirit, and grace thereof, John xv. 1.

3. Wine is highly esteemed for its most excellent virtue; it hath a pleasant taste, and strengthens decayed nature.

Why the
consolations
of God are
compared
to wine.

So the comforts and consolations of God are highly prized, or esteemed by every true believer; they taste most sweet to a regenerate heart, and also greatly tend to strengthen the soul in times of weakness; "The joy of the Lord is your strength," Nehemiah viii. 10.

4. Wine makes glad the heart of man, so these spiritual consolations rejoice the new creature. "Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased," Psal. iv. 7. He that drinks of this wine, though sad before, will forget his sorrows. Note also, that

1. "No man having drunk of old wine," viz., Luke v. 39; the delights of the flesh, carnal pleasures, or earthly comforts, straightway desireth new, that is true spiritual joy and consolation; no, he cannot straightway, or presently upon drinking the old, tasting the seeming sweetness of that, loving and relishing of that, before he is changed, or has got a new heart, desire those joys, and spiritual consolations of Christ and of the Holy Ghost.

"Putteth new wine into new bottles."

6. Quest. What may be meant by putting new wine into new bottles?

Ans. I answer; it may be intended or meant, Christ putting divine consolations into a new heart; at that very time the Spirit brings the soul into union with Christ, and the heart is changed, and so receives and retains those spiritual comforts and consolations; God makes the heart new, or gives a new heart, and then fills it with his precious wine of joy and peace.

Thus I have opened all the parts of this parable; and should proceed to raise one or two propositions from hence, but shall say no more at this time.

SERMON XX.

No man putteth a new piece of cloth to an old garment. Or as Luke reads it, No man puts a piece of a new garment upon an old.—Luke v. 36.

I HAVE already opened all the terms and parts of this parable, and I shall now observe one or two points of doctrine from hence.

Doct. 1. That such who would be saved and accepted of God, must not think to patch

their old garment, by putting of a part or piece of Christ's righteousness, or his merits unto it, but must throw it quite away in point of justification; or that Christ and his righteousness, as a whole new garment, must be put on, before they, or any of their duties, prayer, fastings, &c., can be accepted of God.

1. This I shall endeavour to prove.

2. And then apply it.

Why the old garment must not be amended.

I. Because grace and works will not, cannot mix together, they being directly of a quite different nature, the one will destroy the other, like as a piece of a new garment would destroy an old, rotten, moth-eaten garment (or make the rent worse) but because I opened this the last day, in the exposition of the terms, I shall pass it by now.

II. Because all the saints of God have ever esteemed or looked upon all their own righteousness, in point of justification, as filthy rags; "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," Isa. lxiv. 6.

Some perhaps will say, that these persons that the prophet speaks of, were not believers, nor such who had arrived to faith and sincere obedience, but were ungodly persons, hypocrites, or such like people. I answer, They were such who could call God Father, see ver. 8. "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father." Moreover, the prophet includes himself amongst the rest; though it is true, at that time they were under great declensions, yet by comparing this text with others, it appeareth very clear, that all the inherent righteousness of the best of saints, when compared to the righteousness of Christ, is but as filthy rags, or as mere dung." See what the holy apostle Paul saith; "Yea, doubtless, and I

Gospel obedience, or the saints' inherent righteousness as filthy rags, when compared to the righteousness of God.

account all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ," Phil. iii. 8. He did not only disesteem all his Jewish privilege, and legal righteousness, which he had before converted, and counted them as dung, in respect of his justification before God, but also he shows he did not ascribe his being accepted and justified in God's sight to his own obedience, or to that inherent righteousness which he had attained unto after he was renewed, and had so many years served God in his

apostolic office and ministry; he puts in all, both what he had attained before grace, and after grace; "Yea doubtless I account," I do now account of all things which I have now been helped to do, or is wrought in me, as dung in comparison of Christ, and the righteousness of God in him. But know, Paul did not thus account of his own inherent holiness, &c., simply considered in itself; no, no, for as so considered, sanctification being the work of the Spirit, is to be highly valued; but in respect had to his trusting in that, or dependance upon it, touching his justification and acceptation with God, or in comparison of the righteousness of Christ, which alone (without his inherent sanctification) justified him at the bar of God, or in God's sight.

III. Because to mix works and grace together, or our own righteousness with the righteousness of Christ, is directly opposite to the design of God in the gospel (or in the glorious contrivance of our salvation by a Mediator) and it tends to eclipse the doctrine of free grace, and so to take off the crown from Christ's head; "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. It is alone of the free favour of God, from the first to the last, wholly of grace, exclusive of anything of the creature; that so God might have all the glory unto himself; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us," &c., Tit. iii. 5. "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life," ver. 7. No works either ceremonial or moral, have any hand in our justification in God's sight.

IV. Because to join any thing of the creature's with Christ's merits or obedience, is to let in boasting, or to make way for men to glory in themselves; "Where is boasting then? it is excluded; by what law? law of works; nay, but by the law of faith," Rom. iii. 27. If my own old, or new personal and inherent righteousness, is joined with the merits of Christ, or through the virtue of his merits it justifies me, then I have room to boast: as the apostle speaks of Abraham, "If Abraham were justified by works, he had whereof to glory, but not before God," Rom. iv. 2. But according to the doctrine that some men preach, a man's own righteousness is that which covers him, or, that hides his nakedness; and Christ's righteousness is but to amend a hole, or to patch their old garment: nay, and it is their own hand also that puts this new piece to their old garment. For the Spirit of God will not piece their old garment, he only seeks Christ's honour;

“He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and show it to you,” John xvi. 14. Will the Holy Ghost give part of the glory of our salvation to the creature; Now the tendency of their doctrine is this, viz. That I may be saved, I may thank God, (Christ has made God reconcilable) but if I am saved, I may thank myself, for my diligence in acting faith, and yielding sincere obedience to the gospel procures it; for they affirm, God doth no more for the salvation of them that are saved, than he doth to save them that perish; the will of man being left to determine the whole issue of the ministry of the gospel; not that the Holy Spirit inclines or bows the will, but he leaves the will to act according to its own natural powers, and so this must needs open a door to boasting. But were it thus, certainly not one soul would ever be saved, because the will of all men naturally is so depraved, corrupted, and carried away to sin and vanity, that nothing but the mighty power of God put forth by the Spirit, can remove that averseness, prejudice, and enmity which is in it, to God, and the things of God.

V. Because such a garment is a dishonourable and a contemptible garment, for believers to be clothed with. Doth it, my brethren, become king's children to be clothed with a patched coat? Shall saints, who are the sons and daughters of the God of heaven and earth, the true heirs of glory, be clothed with their old over-worn rags of their own righteousness, pierced with part of Christ's righteousness? What a dishonour would it be to Christ, to work out a righteousness to no other purpose, or end, than to piece our old garment. Brethren, the robe with which the spouse, the king's daughter, is said to be clothed with, is all made of “Wrought gold, and raiment of needle-work,” Psal. xlv. 9, 13, which shows the curiousness, richness, and most excellency of it; and how contrary is this to an old rotten garment pieced, and patched together with a new piece of cloth. Would a man patch an old garment with a new piece of cloth of gold?

The saints have no patched garment on to justify them.

No man will patch an old garment with a piece of cloth of gold.

Object. “The king's daughter is all glorious within,” therefore this must refer to her own inherent righteousness, Psal. xlv. 13.

Answ. I answer, we deny not but that may refer to the glory of the new creature, and so to the sanctification of the Holy Spirit; but pray observe the very next words, “her clothing is wrought gold;” this is not that righteousness wrought in her, no, but that righteousness, or that robe which is put upon her. As it is said in another place, “He hath clothed me with the robe of righteousness,” Isa. lxi. 10; hence it is called “righteousness unto all, and upon all them that believe,” Rom. iii. 22. Our justifying righteousness not a righteousness inherent, a righteousness wrought within us, but a righteousness wrought without us by the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ, and put upon us, or imputed to us by the Lord.

VI. Because our justifying righteousness hath no flaw, no rent, no seam, no spot in it; but it is all glorious, holy, and pure; now to add any part of Christ's new robe, to our old garment, cannot change that which is ours; no, ours would still be sinful and abominable as ever, in the sight of God's most pure and piercing eyes. Brethren, what think you, can a king delight in his bride, to see her clothed in an old patched garment, though it should be “spangled with pearls, and rich diamonds?” See Isa. lxii. 4, 5.

VII. Because that righteousness by which we are justified, is said to be the “righteousness of God,” Rom. x. 3; nor the essential righteousness of God. But

1. It is called “the righteousness of God,” Phil. iii. 9, in contradistinction to the righteousness of a mere creature.

Why Christ's righteousness is called the righteousness of God.

2. Because it is the righteousness which God requires (viz. a perfect and complete righteousness) in order to our justification in his sight.

3. Because it is that righteousness which comports, and every way suits with the holiness, justice, and all other blessed attributes of God; God's infinite justice and holiness cannot find the least flaw, spot, or defect in the righteousness of Christ; but his holiness and justice would soon espy it (the old garment, though never so well pieced) very vile, defective, and abominable, so as to be abhorred by him, and him that trusteth to it, or has it on, how firmly soever it be patched.

4. Because it is that righteousness which the wisdom of God hath found out, and none but he could find it; none could buy it or procure it with gold or silver, nor any other ways; no, neither men nor angels.

5. Because it is a righteousness which answereth all the demands of the holy moral law of God, not only the penal part thereof, (as these men preach) but also the preceptory part thereof; excluding the active obedience of Christ from being any part of that righte-

ousness, which is imputed to us, and where is the sanction of the law; or how is the law made glorious by Christ's obedience to our justification. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, he will magnify the law, and make it honourable," Isa. xlii. 21.

Brethren, do we who assert justification by Christ's active and passive obedience make void the law; is the law violated? The apostle's answers, "God forbid, we establish the law," Rom. iii. 31, inasmuch that we attain through faith to a perfect righteousness, by being interested in the most perfect and complete righteousness of Christ, in respect of the preceptory and penal part thereof. And in that also because hereby every type is fulfilled; and particularly those that disallow of all mixtures, as the ploughing with an ox and an ass, or to wear a garment of linen and woollen, or to cause beasts to gender of divers kinds; clearly intimating that nothing of the creature must be put to, or mixed with the righteousness of Christ in our justification before God (as well as all mixtures in divine worship) are here forbidden.

6. It may also be called the righteousness of God, because it is such a righteousness which wholly tends to exalt the glory of God, and his own free and undeserved grace and favour, and also doth abase the creature.

7. Because it is that righteousness which God hath ordained, instituted, and appointed to justify us in his sight.

VIII. Christ's righteousness alone must be put on, as a whole new garment pieced and patched with it, because that righteousness by which we are justified, is a righteousness without the law, and without works: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, &c., that is, without their own personal obedience to the moral law, or any other law whatsoever. "But to him that works not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5. Were it by works, or by our own righteousness, salvation would be of debt, as Paul affirms. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," Rom. iv. 4. Though we are not taken off of doing works of righteousness by the free grace of God, yet we are taken off of it as to that end, purpose, and design, some speak of, (i.e.,) it is not that we may be justified thereby, nor is it a condition that procures our interest in Christ, or that gives us a right and title to eternal life; but it is to glorify God, and to demonstrate our faith in, and thankfulness unto God in Jesus Christ.

IX. Because, had our own righteousness any part or share in clothing us in our justification, how could the righteousness of another be said to be imputed to us, or Christ be said to be the "Lord our righteousness, or be made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. As Christ was not made sin for us by any sin inherent in him, so neither are we made righteous by any righteousness inherent in us, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.

X. Because then also it would not be by the righteousness of one man that we are clothed or justified: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free-gift came upon all men unto justification of life," Rom. v. 18. That is, as all the seed of the first Adam were brought into a state of condemnation by the imputation of his first sin unto them: even so the free gift of righteousness came upon all the seed of the second Adam by the imputation of his righteousness to their justification, unto eternal life. And as all in Adam died, so in Christ, or all in him, are made alive. Now I say, were it every man's own righteousness, through Christ's merits, that which clothes and justifies them, then it could not be said to be alone done by the righteousness of one, which the apostles asserts it is. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," Rom. v. 19. Adam as a public person brought death on all his posterity, whom he represented: so Christ as a public person, brought life to all whom he representeth, viz., all the elect, or such that are given to him for his seed.

XI. Christ and his righteousness, as a whole new garment, must be put upon us, &c., and not an old garment patched with part of a new one.

1. Because "all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17; wholly new, a new covenant, a new priesthood, a new Church-state, and new church membership, and a new right to that membership: so a new robe of righteousness, to clothe all that are to be members of this new Gospel Church.

Argu. If all things in the new covenant are new, wholly new, then a whole new robe to clothe us, and not an old one pieced with Christ's new garment, or by his passive obedience or merits?

Obj. It is for our new obedience we contend; we do not plead for the righteousness of the old law.

Ans. I answer, what though this be so, that you do not plead for the old garment, as you perceive it is rent, or torn before conversion; yet you plead for it as it is pieced or amended by the Spirit's operations. It is but the old one new vamped, it is the first Adam's still, (I mean) the righteousness of mere sinful creatures, though wrought by him by the Spirit's assistance, or patched by the help of divine grace. We will grant them, that the righteousness of sanctification is a new garment, yet that is not without spot, or stain; besides that needs daily to be amended; but if they intend this by the new garment, then they confound justification with sanctification, and also then no believer is complete, or without sin in point of justification in this life, nor until he hath his sanctification perfect, or complete. But how then can Christ's spouse be said to be undefiled, and to have no spot in her?

APPLICATION.

First I infer from hence that mankind, or all men and women naturally are ^{1 Inference.} blind and wofully ignorant of God's righteousness, in that they go about to establish their own, as the Jews of old did, Rom. x. 3; they think by amending their ways, by their faith, repentance, and reformation of life; by their prayers, tears, and good deeds, to be accepted and justified with God; which, alas, all they who so do, (i.e.,) rest upon these things, or that trust to these duties, or thus seek to piece their old garment; they will certainly perish for ever, as the Jews did.

2. Yet let none conclude, that I hereby discourage any persons from en- ^{2 Inference.} deavouring after a reformation of life, or to amend their lives; no, God forbid; the light of natural conscience doth excite all who hearkens unto it, to cast off all acts of sin, and to live sober and moral lives, as well as the word of God presses this upon their consciences. But the purport of what I have laboured to do, is to take all men off from resting upon, or trusting unto such amendment of life for justification, or salvation: nay, and to show the danger such are in, who think to piece and patch their old garment by holy and religious duties, or inherent righteousness, or in joining their own works, faith and obedience, with Christ's merits, or by walking up to the gospel rule as a new and mild law of evangelical holiness.

3. We also infer, that new obedience, and a holy conversation, though it be ^{3 Inference.} part of our sanctification, yet it is no part of our justification; and that all such that differ from us here, do but go about to patch the old garment, though it be done by the assistance of grace, or the Spirit of God.

4. Moreover we infer, that justification and sanctification are two distinct ^{4 Inference.} things, and ought not to be confounded together; and that sanctification as a garment may be amended, or become more perfect; but that justification is always one and the same, and is complete; it being the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to all that do believe.

5. That for any to trust to a reformed life, &c., is nothing else than for ^{Information.} a man to endeavour to piece his old garment, as the Pharisees did; and that no duties, as prayer, givings alms, fasting, and the like, can render any man to be in a good condition, or in a saved state. Because his own personal righteousness cannot satisfy the justice of God, for the sins he committed in times past, nor can he live (let him do his utmost) without sin, for the time to come: by which means it follows, that all he doth, the justice and holiness of God, and his just and righteous law will find so much sin and filth to cleave unto him, that God will abhor him and all his righteousness, and condemn him to everlasting flames. Besides, it is to mix God's pure gold with the sinner's filthy dross; or to sow Christ's glorious robe of righteousness to his filthy rags, or to put a choice jewel on a swine's snout.

6. By way of exhortation, sinners, be persuaded to cast off, and throw ^{Exhort.} away all your own righteousness, in point of justification, that so you may be clothed with the whole, perfect, and complete garment of Christ's righteousness.

You must come naked to Jesus Christ: "And knowest not that thou art poor, miserable, wretched, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. Some pride it in their own old and filthy rags, as Laodicea did, and think they want nothing, but will trust to their duties, prayers, and repentance, faith and reformation of life; and wherein these seem to be defective, they will fly to Christ, to make up that which is wanting.

1. Direction. Study the nature of God, consider his infinite holiness and ^{Direction.} justice, though he be gracious, merciful, &c., yet "he will by no means clear the guilty," Exod. xxxiv. 6.

2. Study the purity of God's law, that condemns all to eternal vengeance who are not clothed with a perfect and sinless righteousness.

3. Study to understand the end and design of Christ in his taking our nature on him, being made of a woman, made under the law; and in his perfect obedience to the law, and bearing the penalty or punishment due to us for our breaking of it, as our blessed head, and Representative.

4. Attend upon the preaching of the gospel: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed," Rom. i. 17, and by it is faith wrought.

Comfort. For comfort and consolation to you, that have seen all your own righteousness as old rotten rags, and have cast it away, and count it but dung that you may win Christ. O happy souls! blessed are your eyes! for you see. O how richly are you clothed, what a noble robe have you on, the hardest duties to you are easy. You act out of love, knowing you are accepted in Christ, and always are in a safe state, being ever justified; you shall not be found naked, now nor at death, or in the judgment-day, nor to eternity. For in a righteousness excelling that of the holy angels you shall shine for evermore, Amen.

SERMON XXI.

Neither do men put new wine into old bottles.—Matt. ix. 17.

³ *Predic.* I CLOSED with the former part of this parable the last time.
Decemb.
19. 1697.

There is one proposition I purpose to open from the latter, and so conclude with both, viz.

Doct. The heart of man must be made new, or there is an absolute necessity of regeneration, before any person can receive the wine of true spiritual consolation.

1. I shall prove it.

2. I shall apply it.

My brethren, as sin brought a change upon mankind in Adam, from that state they were in by creation, so must a change pass upon all that would be saved from that state of corruption, in which naturally all remain, by reason of the fall.

A two-fold
change pass-
eth on belie-
vers.

1. A relative change.

2. A real change.

The first is a change of state.

The second is a change of heart, or disposition.

The first is made in justification.

The second is made in, and by regeneration.

It is this change I am to speak to, and open, it being that which our Lord (as I conceive) doth here refer to.

And though the first of these, viz., the relative change, may precede in order of nature, yet not in order of time. For a person as soon as he is in a justified state, he is at that very instant of time also regenerated.

But to proceed to prove the proposition, that there is an absolute necessity that the heart of man be new made.

1. In respect of Gospel revelation, (God's word I mean) fully shows this must be; "Marvel not that I say unto thee, that ye must be born again," John iii. 7. Ye must, ye that are Jews, ye doctors and masters in Israel, ye that are sober and religious persons, ye that pray, fast, give alms, pay tithes, ye that are legally righteous, and learned men, ye must be born again as well as pagans, publicans and harlots, or profane persons. "Verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. There is no obtaining the kingdom of heaven without the new birth, or a spiritual and saving renovation of the whole man, soul and body.

II. This is the unchangeable decree of God, as it is revealed in the Gospel. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17, or of the new creation, which, as our annotators observe, argues the greatest change imaginable, and such a one can be wrought in the soul by no other power than the almighty power of God.

Old things are passed away, old affections, passions, notions, &c. He hath the same soul, but new qualities, new apprehensions, and new light in his understanding, new desires, new inclinations, in his will, new thoughts, counsels, and designs, as well as he hath got new clothing, a new robe of righteousness. What signifieth (as if our Saviour should say) all those things which the Pharisees do? though they pray oft, &c., will this avail them any thing, whilst they are in a state of nature, and their hearts are carnal, nay, like old broken bottles? the wine of heavenly consolation my Father will not put into such men's hearts, he hath decreed that all that are saved shall be regenerated.

III. The carnal heart of man must be changed or new made, because until then it cannot hold the new wine, should God put it in, it would all run out, (to follow the metaphor;) what saith the apostle, "The natural man receiveth not the things of God; neither can he perceive them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14. He cannot receive them, because his heart is full of other things, full of sin and filthiness; which like pitch cleaves to the bottle, but put in pure water or wine, it will run all out. The carnal heart is like a sieve which will hold chaff or bran, but it will hold no water or wine.

The heart of a sinner is leaky, like a broken vessel, it is no proper receptacle for spiritual things.

IV. Wisdom teacheth men not to put choice wine into a cracked or broken bottle; so the wisdom of God is such that he will not put his costly and most precious new wine into an unrenewed heart, he will not lose it; for should he do so, both the bottle and wine would perish; for, as I hinted in the explication, if it was possible for grace to be put into a carnal heart, and the heart not changed thereby, grace itself would be utterly lost, as wine put into a sieve or broken bottle. Though it is true, the Holy Spirit is infused into a sinner's heart, but at that very instant that it is infused or put into the soul of a sinner, it works a blessed change therein; and so it retains the wine of heavenly consolation.

V. The heart of man must be new made, or changed, because the carnal heart cannot please God, nor be subject to the law of God. Brethren, the state of sin is a state of enmity against God; will a prince take a swine into his embraces, or will he hang pearls or diamonds upon a filthy stinking old garment? No sure, no more will Christ take a vile rebellious and filthy sinner into his spiritual embraces; now this cursed enmity which is in the sinner's heart naturally, cannot be removed till the heart is changed or new made.

1. True, the nature of men may be restrained from acts of gross wickedness by common grace, or by the prosecution of severe human laws, or by the terrors of God's divine law; but yet neither of these can change their hearts.

2. Neither can good education do it. For no doubt but Ishmael had as good education as Isaac; certainly Abraham was not wanting in his duty to him, what saith the blessed God concerning him? "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," &c. Gen. xviii. 19.

Yet for all this his son Ishmael was an ungodly child, and one that scoffed at religion and true piety. So no doubt but Esau had as good education as Jacob, Isaac gave him the same good counsel and instruction which he gave to Jacob; but Esau still continued a profane person notwithstanding, and retained his old evil nature and disposition still, and became no new man. Education may restrain from acts of sin, but cannot change the heart from the love of sin.

VI. The heart of man must be new made, or changed, because there is in all unrenewed persons, an unfitness, an unwillingness, and an utter inability to do any thing that is truly and spiritually good.

1. There is in them an unfitness; as a fool or ignorant man is unfit to be made a judge, so a man that knows not God is unfit to judge of spiritual things, or to be trusted with them, or to have communion with him; he knows not what they are, he cannot relish or favour the things of the Spirit, "for they are foolishness unto him," 1 Cor. ii. 14.

2. There is an unwillingness in all unrenewed persons to receive these spiritual things. A natural man is like a wild ass-colt. "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt," Job. xii. 12. He is born so, it is natural, and hereditary, and therefore common to all men; they are not only ignorant and weak, but also wilful, stubborn, heady, and rebellious.

No beast is more wild and brutish than man in respect of spiritual things, until he is changed. A man, saith Mr. Caryl on Job, cap. 11, 12, is like a beast, for wantonness, lust, and vanity. And in regard of stubbornness, every wicked man is "a son of Belial, a son without a yoke; "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life," John v. 40. You are unwilling, you have no will this way, to be saved in believing in me, to cleave to me, to

build all your hopes of heaven upon me ; no, you have other ways, you think to be saved by your reading the law, and conforming your lives to the external precepts of that, your hearts are carnal, your wills are rebellious ; now from hence it is that the heart must be changed.

3. There is in all men naturally not only an unwillingness to that which is spiritually good, but also an utter inability or want of power ; and this must needs be so.

I. Because man before grace is spiritually dead ; can a dead man act or do any natural or moral acts ? You will say, no, that is impossible ; even so no man that is spiritually dead can perform any true spiritual acts of obedience unto God. True, he may do that which is naturally and morally good, but not that which is spiritually good. " You hath he quickened that were dead in sins and trespasses," Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3. Beloved, every creature acts according to that principle he hath, or according to his nature.

As a mere sensitive creature acts only according to sense, and rational creatures according to mere rational principles. Hence it is some men in these days, because they have received no higher principles, do deny all revealed religion, and are for no other than mere natural religion, which they can comprehend by their natural reason.

But now a true spiritual man acts and doth every thing by that spiritual vital principle he hath received ; he goes out of himself by acts of faith, and believes that which he cannot comprehend by mere natural reason.

2. Can a blind man judge of colours, or see the beauty of an object to delight in it ? Or can a swine delight in the glory of a king's palace ? All men naturally are in a spiritual sense, blind, and cannot see the beauty of Christ, to fall in love with him ; they can see no beauty in holiness ; no, it is good for nought in their sight ; and as a dead man must be quickened before he can breathe, hear, see, act, and walk ; so must a sinner be spiritually quickened before he hath any spiritual power or ability to do anything that is spiritually good. " Without me you can do nothing," John xv. 5 ; that is, without union with me, or life from me.

VII. Because (as it appeareth from hence,) all men are naturally, wholly depraved and corrupted, like cracked and broken bottles, there is no amending of them, they must (as you heard) be melted down and new made ; their understanding is darkened, nay, they are darkness. " Ye that were sometimes darkness," Ephes. v. 8 ; darkness in the abstract. Their wills rebellious, their affections carnal, " Their minds and consciences are defiled," Tit. i. 15. Now as there is an universal depravation, so there must be an universal renovation.

VIII. Because God doth not, will not, nay, cannot accept of any service but what is spiritual. " God is a Spirit," John iv. 24. Service therefore must be suited or proportioned to his holy nature and being. " We must pray in the Spirit, and sing in and with the Spirit, not only with our spirits, but also with the Spirit of God. Therefore it followeth that we must be spiritual persons, this must be before we can perform spiritual service or taste of spiritual comforts. Some of the kings of Judea did that which was right in the sight of God, but not with perfect hearts ; they did it not from a renewed heart, and so not in sincerity of heart. It was right as to the matter of it, *i. e.*, it was that which God commanded, but not performed from right principles, and also not to a right end. " They have not cried to me with their hearts, when they howled on their beds," Hos. vii. 14. The prayers of unrenewed persons is but as the howling of a dog, in the ears of God, hence said to be an abomination unto him.

IX. The heart of man must be made new, because God accepteth of no service but what is done freely, voluntarily, and not by the mere force of natural conscience, or for fear of hell. But now the old heart hath in it an aversion to any thing that is spiritually good ; none act freely (as well as they act not in love to God, and to glorify him,) but such only who have received a new heart. Holy duties are a great burthen to an un sanctified spirit ; a carnal heart can find no sweetness in divine consolations. " What fellowship hath light with darkness ?" Do but call to mind what conceptions you had of the things of God before your conversion ; was the word sweet to you ? Did you delight in prayer, or in heavenly communication, or were not such things rather bitter and unpleasant to you ? Carnal men love not to hear of spiritual converse or discourse, therefore their hearts must be changed.

X. Because the old heart, or the hearts of all men unrenewed, are full of hypocrisy ; they may profess religion, but it is from false principles, and to wrong ends. Self is in the bottom of all. " Ye fasted not to me, even to me, saith the Lord."

Brethren, there is an artificial, as well as a natural motion. Take off the weights of a clock, and it will presently stand still. So if a mere natural man or a hypocrite, loses his ends in his profession of religion, he presently draws back or grows cold and heartless; but a natural motion continues or abides, because of that life which is the cause of its moving; but so it is not with an artificial motion; the sole of your shoe will soon wear out, but so will not the sole of your foot; no, but they will grow more hard every day if you go directly upon them, because the one is artificial, and the other natural. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands, shall grow stronger and stronger," Job xvi. 9. But all unconverted persons, or mere natural men, will either die in hypocrisy, or perish in apostasy. Though they seem never so zealous for God, and religion, "They do all to be seen of men," Matt. xxiii. 5.

XI. Because, until a man is renewed, they can take no delight in God, nor can God take delight in them; they are only earthly, have earthly and carnal hearts, and therefore earthly and sensual things are their chiefest delight. "They that are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh," Rom. viii. 5. Either they mind such things that are absolutely evil, as "the lusts of the flesh," Gal. v. 19—21; or else such things as are occasionally evil, as riches, honours, pleasures, &c. These are the things of the flesh, and such things as all carnal and unregenerate persons, favour, affect, and take delight in. And it is only the new nature, the renewed heart, that makes the soul to delight in God as the chief good. Interest in God, adoption and regeneration, go always together in the same subject; he that is a child of God, hath the image of God stamped upon his soul. I say, it is the new heart only, which is capable to enjoy communion with God; a likeness in nature is a spring of fellowship. A man will never espouse a beast, as we have a parable, "Birds of a feather will flock together."

XII. And as it is thus absolutely necessary (in respect to a state of grace,) that the heart be made new; so, as revered Charnock shows, it is also in respect to a state of glory; for as an unsanctified, or an unrenewed person can take no delight in God, or find any consolation in Christ in this world, having no grace; so they could not find any joy, or comfort, were they in heaven, for heaven is no place of sensual pleasure. What should carnal men do in heaven? They cannot taste of the joys that are there, because they are all spiritual, and their hearts are carnal; they love not God, nor the things of God, while they are here on earth, nor the saints and people of God, their company is hateful to them, their heavenly converse is grievous to such, and death will not change their hearts; and as they die in a state of enmity against God, so that enmity will evermore remain in them. But, brethren, I do not say that the new nature, or new heart, doth give us a title to heaven; no, it is Christ's righteousness alone that is our title to glory above; but it is regeneration which gives us a meetness for it. "Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12. And, as without this new heart, and new nature, heaven could be no heaven to us; so no unrenewed person can perform, or discharge the duties of heaven, as the same author excellently shows.

1. They cannot attend upon God, who is holy; they cannot come near him, but be consumed, for unto such, God is as a consuming fire. God's presence would be very terrible to such.

2. They cannot contemplate on God, nor be ravished with the glory of his holiness, grace, and infinite goodness.

3. They cannot love God, nor make him the object of their affections. Love is a grace that remains for ever.

4. Nor can they sing the praises of God for what they received from him while on earth; the song of the saints will be sweet in remembrance of his redeeming love, and regenerating grace and love, but they never knew what either of these things were, and therefore cannot sing that song.

5. They cannot love the saints in heaven (were they there) who are all made perfect in holiness; evident it is, that wicked men hate the saints of God here, because of their holiness, and of that likeness there is in them to God; and if this makes the ungodly contemn the saints, who do but in part resemble the Holy God, while here; how much more would they hate them, were it possible for them to be with those glorified saints in heaven, who are all made completely perfect in holiness.

APPLICATION.

1. We infer from hence, that the ignorance of men is exceeding great, about the nature and excellency of the new birth. They, alas! know not what it is, but are ready to say

with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" John iii. 9. The natural man receiveth not the things of God.

2. We infer, that saving and regenerating grace is of infinite worth and value. What must that cause be which hath such most blessed and glorious effects? that is precious seed which produceth such excellent fruit.

3. We also infer, that all those duties, as prayer, fasting, &c. which many (like the Pharisees) rest upon, and trust in, are but vain and fruitless things; for if the duties and inherent holiness of sanctified persons, are comparatively but as dung, what are the duties and pretended righteousness of such who were never regenerated? "No man putteth new wine into old bottles." God will not put in the wine of heavenly joy and consolation into carnal and unrenewed hearts.

4. Moreover, how fruitless and insufficient is all that speculative knowledge which men unrenewed have attained. Knowledge puffs up: what is human learning, or arts and sciences, which those have and glory in, who never knew the nature and power of the new-birth? Are such men fit to be preachers of the Gospel? Can they open the nature of regeneration by experience, who are wholly ignorant of it, or know not what it is?

5. How blind are they that take reformation for regeneration; who think, because a profane man hath left his swearing, his drunkenness, his whoring, cheating, or thieving, &c.; and now lives a sober life, therefore he is a new creature. Brethren, a man may be reformed that is not renewed, though a man can be renewed but he is reformed? a man may have a changed life, that hath not a changed heart; he may with king Saul, become another man, but not become a new man.

6. This also shows that morality can save no person. The heathen (many of them I mean,) were excellent moralists, and multitudes amongst us, think their state is happy upon this account, and yet are in the gall of bitterness.

7. Moreover we infer, that all such who rest on a presumptuous faith, who boast that they rely on Christ, trust in the righteousness of Christ, and yet were never changed or born again, but are under the delusion of the devil, and in a fearful condition.

8. Also what signifies all that an unrenewed person doth, though he reads, prays, is baptized, breaks bread with God's people, and is called a saint? alas, perish he must for all this, if he be not born again.

II. Examine and try yourselves; are you such who have got the new wine in new bottles? Are you such who have passed through the pangs of the new birth? What hatred have you of sin, as it is sin? What love have you of true godliness? Can you taste how sweet pardon of sin and peace with God is? Is this world as a wilderness to you, are you dead to it? Are the riches of grace prized by you above gold and silver? Are your hearts changed, and lives changed? What light is there in your understandings? are your wills bowed to the will of God, and to a loving and liking of the work of holiness, as well as to a loving the reward of holiness? Are your affections changed, your desires, your fears, your passions? what object doth your love run out to?

III. You that find that you have got new hearts, what cause of joy, what consolation may this administer unto you! True, you may be born again, and yet for some time may not know it; all have not arrived to the faith of assurance; yet O how sweet and comfortable is it to know we are in Christ, and born of God.

1. Such who have new hearts, new bottles, shall have the new wine poured into them, and they shall taste how sweet and pleasant it is first or last; and such will not say the old wine of earthly comforts is best, but rather look upon it as ditch or kennel water. Brethren, because you are children, you shall have the best things of your Father's house; you shall be clothed as king's children, and be fed as king's children.

2. Moreover, being children, you are heirs; "if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17.

3. And being children, begotten and born of God, you shall ever be children; for you know we must be children of such parents, and have their nature who begot us; we cannot cease being their children; believers may be disobedient children, and break his laws, &c. But if so, he will but chasten us, as a father; we shall be his children still; children we must be and in his love, for this relation will abide for ever.

Lastly, One word of exhortation, and I have done.

1. Bless God for the gospel, you that are sinners, and for the ministration thereof; for by preaching God is pleased to sow that seed, by which your hearts may be renewed; the word of God is the seed of regeneration. I do not say the bare word is the seed; no, but

as the Spirit does accompany the word: "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word that liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. i. 23.

Where the gospel comes in word only, there no change is wrought; but there is, my brethren, a divine power that goes along with the gospel, where it is made effectual to any poor soul.

2. Highly honour and esteem the Holy Spirit, for it is by his special agency alone that regeneration is wrought; hence it is said, that believers are "born of the Spirit," John iii. 5, 6; and so are Spirit, or spiritual.

3. Attend daily upon the word, neglect no opportunity, because you know not when, whether by this, or by that sermon, the Spirit may work upon your souls: "The wind blows where it listeth," John iii. 8; so the Holy Spirit is a free agent, and works when and how he pleaseth.

4. Cry mightily to God to send the Spirit to work in, and by the word on your souls; and be sure, see you do not grieve nor quench the Holy Spirit of God, nor weary out the Holy Spirit. God told the old world, "That his Spirit should not always strive with man," Gen. vi. 3.

5. Do not trust to your own power, or once think you can become new creatures when you please; no, no, doth the child begotten in the womb contribute anything to its own being, or to its conception? O abominate the evil notion of free-will, and strive to exalt God's free-grace.

CAUTION.

Take heed of the notion that some promote, i. e., as if your state may be good, or you under a relative change, that have not passed under a real change; for know assuredly, you remain children of wrath, until you have the Spirit infused into your souls, and remain condemned in the first Adam. Nay, and the Holy Spirit will convince you this is your condition, if ever he thoroughly works and operates in your hearts. The Holy Ghost convinceth all whom he takes hold of, that their state is bad and miserable before special vocation. O therefore wait for the Spirit, who both works conviction and regeneration; to whom with the Father, and the Son, be glory for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold a sower went forth to sow.
—Matt. xiii. 3,—23.

My Brethren, in the opening of this parable, I shall proceed in that method which I purpose to take in speaking generally unto them all, viz.

First, Give an account of the main design of our blessed Lord, in his speaking of this parable, or give the scope thereof.

Secondly, explain (according to what our Saviour himself hath done) every part thereof.

1. More generally.

2. More particularly, open some things which our Lord hath not.

Thirdly, I shall raise some propositions, or points of doctrine from the chief or principal parts, and prosecute them in my usual method with the necessary improvements.

First, One great design of this parable (as I conceive), is to show the excellent nature of the word of God, in that it is the seed of all grace in the hand of the Spirit; or as it is by the influences of the Spirit, received into an heart prepared by the convictions of the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, (Considering the great multitudes that were gathered together to hear the word of God at that time, as the second verse shows) It is evident, that one reason or main design of Christ's speaking this parable, was to convince them, that it is not enough or sufficient to hear the word of God preached, but that many may hear it, who are never effectually wrought upon by it, but shall eternally perish.

Thirdly, It might be the design of our Saviour, also hereby to show, that but few comparatively, prove right hearers of the word. Three sorts of ground proving bad, and only but one in four good ground; intimating, but very few hearers have their hearts broken up, or prepared by the convictions of the Holy Spirit, to receive Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, Another main design of this parable, might be to show that grace is not of

The year of Christ's life, 31.

The scope of the parable.

Year of Christ's ministry.

ourselves, or from nature; but that is a supernatural work or blessing flowing from the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart must be first dug up, or be ploughed up by the Holy Ghost, that it may become like good tillage, before the seed of the word will take root and bring forth fruit unto perfection, which three sorts of hearers never experience.

Fifthly, Also it might be to discover the cause of men's damnation, or of their final apostacy, viz., Because their hearts were never right with God.

Sixthly, Also to discover that some men who never were sincere or upright Christians, might nevertheless go very far in a profession of the gospel, as is signified by the stony and thorny ground. So that most evident it is, that this blessed parable gives us to understand the different effect, or success the preaching of the gospel hath upon those that hear it. So much as to the design and scope of the parable.

Secondly, Take our Lord's general exposition of the several parts of the parable. For he, upon the desire, and humble request of his disciples, opened it.

"Hear ye the parable of the sower," ver. 18. Mark addeth somewhat more, which seems to be in the nature of a gentle reproof: "Know ye not this parable, how then will ye know all parables?" Mark iv. 13. That is, the sense and meaning of them; considering that God hath graciously opened your eyes, or given you to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but if it be so, you as yet understand it not; hear and consider, that I by this parable, do discover unto you the different effects the preaching of the gospel or word of God hath upon the hearts of the sons of men.

"A sower went out to sow," ver. 3. The sower is the Son of Man; his word it is, "Thou hast the words of everlasting life," John vi. 68. The Gospel is not the word of men, but the word of God. But more comprehensively, the faithful ministers of the gospel; they that preach the word, may be said to sow the seed, but indeed it is our Lord Jesus that is more properly the sower; he it is that sows the seed of the word by them, they are but Christ's seedsmen.

"And when he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up," ver. 4. Our Saviour explaineth this: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which is sown in his heart; this is he which received the seed by the way-side," ver. 19. By the wicked one is meant the devil.

Doct. Satan is the wicked one, or is called the wicked one.

1. By way of eminency, Satan is that wicked one, or may be so called, because he hath utterly lost his original purity, or holy nature.

2. Because he is universally wicked, filthy, and abominable, and so remains, and will abide for ever.

3. Because all wickedness is originally from the devil, as all holiness is from God.

1. Because the devil continually tempteth, enticeth, or draws men to commit wickedness: from these reasons, and many others, Satan may be called the wicked one, 1 John v. 18, in whom all ungodly sinners are said to lie. The gospel is called the word of the kingdom, Mat. xiii. 19, because it is the instrument by which Christ raiseth up his spiritual church, or kingdom in this world; or bringeth men and women into his kingdom on earth, and also prepareth them for the kingdom of glory. The seed is the word of God. By the several sorts of ground is meant the several sorts of hearers, or the natural state of their hearts.

"And some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away," ver. 5, 6. What Matthew calls stony ground, Luke calls a rock, Luke viii. 13. Our blessed Saviour explaineth this in ver. 20, 21. "But he that receiveth the seed into stony places, is the same which heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he no root in himself, but endureth for awhile; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended," Luke viii. 13. By the sun rising up, &c., our Saviour shows is meant tribulation or persecution, which Luke calleth a time of temptation, because such times are times of great trials or temptations, as shall (God willing) be opened, when I come more particularly to this sort of ground. Our Lord showeth two causes of such hearers falling away.

1. Internal.

2. External.

And the former (as our worthy annotators show) is the cause of the latter: by "not

having depth of earth," and so wanting root, &c., I conceive is meant the want of thorough conviction; their rocky or stony hearts were never broken by the hammer of the word; and by wanting root, no doubt is meant a principle of true grace in their hearts, which is elsewhere called the "root of the matter," Job xix. 28. They never were savingly united to Jesus Christ, they had not the true faith of God's elect, nor ever sincerely loved the Lord Jesus, they were never born of God, because the seed remained not in them. There was some seeming work began upon them, 1 John iii. 9; perhaps their affections might be stirred up with some flashes or warmth, and transient joy, but it was but like a land flood; they had self in their eye in all they did, either self-interest, self-honour, &c., they could not lose their estates, liberty, and lives, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

"And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them," ver. 7.

Our Lord opened this part of the parable also, ver. 22, "He also that receiveth seed amongst the thorns is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." Mark adds, "And the lusts of other things entering, choke the word," Mark iv. 19. Luke saith, "And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring forth no fruit unto perfection," Luke viii. 14.

What is meant by thorns, or by the cares of this life, and by the deceitfulness of riches, I shall endeavour to open more particularly when I come to speak to this sort of ground, or hearers of the word; these no doubt went a great way, and made a profession of the gospel, were church-members, or not profane in their lives and conversations; but seemed to bid fair for the kingdom of heaven, like as the foolish virgins did. They might for a great while attend upon the word, and ordinances of Christ; and seem devout persons, but their hearts were never crucified to the love of this world.

"But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, and some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear," ver. 8, 9, 10.

See our Saviour's general exposition of the good ground, ver. 23; "But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty." Luke addeth, "But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and being forth fruit with patience," Luke viii. 15.

Here an objection might be made.

Obj. How can any man before grace is infused, be said to be good? are not all the hearts of men evil naturally?

Ans. I told you in the introduction the last time, that no parable ought to be strained beyond the analogy of faith. Therefore here is more included than is expressed. This must be received as an undeniable truth, that no man naturally can be said to have a good and honest heart. "All are gone out of the way, there is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God," Rom. iii. 11, 12. "All are dead in sins and trespasses, all (even the elect themselves) by nature are children of wrath as others," Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3.

Therefore we are to understand, that what one parable, or simile, or place of Scripture, doth not so fully open or explain, another doth.

2. It is God's grace, or the work of his Spirit only, which makes the heart good; it is he that gives this good understanding. The heart is evil and not good, until it is changed or new made; which none can do but God himself. He therefore hath promised "to take away the heart of stone, and to give a heart of flesh;" all have rocky, stony, and thorny hearts by nature, and so abide, until they are new made.

3. There is a two-fold work of the Spirit. (1.) A work of conviction, this is called "a ploughing up the fallow ground of our hearts," Hos. x. 12.

(2.) A work of renovation, and of sanctification; and both these works of the Spirit tend to the making the heart good; though in order of nature the first passes on the soul before the second.

It appears from this parable, that all believers or sincere Christians do not bring forth the like quantity of fruit to God; some bring forth a hundred, some sixty, and some but thirty-fold, yet all is fruit of the same nature or quality. All have not received the same gifts, the same number of talents, nor the same degree of grace; all are not in the same places, offices, and stations in the church; and so are not in a capacity to bring forth fruit (as to the degree) either of profit to the church (or the members thereof,) nor to the souls of men, and to the glory of God.

2. All have not the same time allowed unto them to continue in this world; the same length of time to grow and to do service for God, and therefore it is not to be expected all should bring forth the same quantity or measure of spiritual fruit.

So much as to the more general exposition of this parable.

I shall proceed to a more particular opening and explication of this parable.

“A Sower went out to sow.”

There are three things to be noted in the words.

1. The agent, a sower. Jesus Christ.

2. His action, he went forth.

3. His design, purpose, or end in going forth, viz., to sow his seed.

The hearts
of men
Christ's
husbandry.

1. Note, That the hearts of men and women are Christ's spiritual husbandry. The whole world is his, he hath power to dispose of all creatures as he pleaseth, either to till, plough, manure; and sow every sort of ground, or to let what part of mankind to lie barren, untilled, and unsown, as seemeth good in his sight; “The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.” An husbandman may do what he will with his own land.

Quest. But some may say, Are not ministers sowers? what difference is there between Christ's sowing, and ministers sowing the seed of the word?

1. Ans. I answer, Jesus Christ is the principal sower, the master sower; ministers are his servants, who have the honour to be “Workers together with him,” 2 Cor. vi. 1: “If we have sown unto you spiritual things,” &c., 1 Cor. ix. 11.

2. Christ sows his own by creation, considered as God; his by redemption and purchase, considered as Mediator, and by the free donation of the Father, “knowing the Father had given all things into his hand,” John xiii. 3. Ministers themselves are his, their hearts are Christ's tillage, he sows the seed of grace in them, they are not their own. Therefore the ground that they sow is none of theirs; also Jesus Christ sows his own seed; a sower went forth to sow his seed. Ministers have no seed of their own, their doctrine, and the words which they preach, is the word of Christ.

3. Christ is a most wise and skilful Sower, he hath a perfect knowledge of all sorts of ground. So have not his ministers; they know not men's hearts.

4. Christ is a universal Sower; all the seed of the word that ever was sown, was sown by him. A minister sows but a small quantity of seed, and but on a little ground.

5. Jesus Christ is an efficacious Sower: he can speak to men's hearts, and cause the seed which he sows to take root, and bring forth fruit. But so cannot a minister. Christ can cause the rain to fall upon the seed that he sows; nay, he is the Sun of righteousness, that must and doth shine upon the souls of men, to cause the seed to grow: “Thou blessest the bud of the earth, thou crownest the year with goodness, and thy paths drop fatness,” Psal. lxxv. 16. But ministers can do none of this; what says the apostle? “Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God gives the increase,” 1 Cor. iii. 6.

II. We have the action of this sower: “A sower went forth to sow.”

Brethren, Jesus Christ may be said to go forth to sow three manner of ways.

1. In his own person, thus he went forth to preach (as soon as he was baptized) or to sow the seed of his word in Judea, Jerusalem, and all the regions round about.

2. In the ministry of his servants. Christ may be said to go forth to sow, (for as he is said to baptize when his disciples did it by his authority) so he may be said to preach, or sow the seed of the gospel, when his ministers do it in his name, in his stead, or by his authority. John iv. 1, 2.

3. He may be said to go forth to sow his seed by his Spirit, and this only is his more effectual and efficacious way: the seed never takes root until it is thus sown in the heart; for though the word is called the seed, yet doubtless the Spirit more properly or primarily is the seed; seeing all the power, virtue, and efficacy of the word, lies in the Holy Spirit; the gospel coming to a sinner in word only, never works a change, no man is born again by the word without the Spirit accompanies it.

III. Consider the end and purpose of the sower sowing his seed, which is, the conversion of sinners by preaching the Gospel: “He began to preach, saying, repent and believe he Gospel,” Mark i. 15; and this is his design by employing of his servants, or in sowing the seed, or in preaching the Gospel. His seed, not cunning devised fables, nor the traditions of men, nor decrees and canons of general counsels, but his own holy and heavenly doctrine: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me,” John vii. 16: Christ received his seed, (i.e.,) his doctrine from his Father; “The things that I have heard of my Father, those speak I in the world,” John viii. 26.

Doct. I. The preaching of the word is the sowing of the divine seed in the hearts of men ; or as the word is compared to seed, so the preaching of it is the sowing of that seed, and ministers are Christ's seeds-men. For

Minister
Christ's
seeds-men.

1. They like seeds-men must sow the seed in its proper season, as Christ himself did ; " I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day," — " Now is the accepted time." 2 Cor. vi. 2.

2. They must sow their seed, let it be what weather it will, a time of peace, or a time of persecution.

3. They must sow no seed of their own, but what is Christ's seed, his doctrine ; " Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers sorts of seed," Deut. xxii. 9.

4. Ministers must sow or preach all Christ's seed : as he showed them all things he had received of the Father, so they must preach the whole counsel of God.

5. Constantly, as long as the seed-time lasteth : " In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand," Eccl. xi. 6.

6. They sow, but the whole success is of God, and though they see but little fruit, yet they must preach.

Secondly. I shall show you, why the word is compared to seed.

Why the
Word is
compared to
seed.

1. Seed springs not out of the ground naturally : no, but before it can grow and bring forth fruit, it must be sowed ; for naturally no ground brings forth wheat, barley, herbs, or choice flowers, until it is first sown, or plauted. So mankind can bring forth no spiritual or sacred fruit unto God, before they sit under the word, or have the seed of grace infused, or sown in their hearts ; it is true, nature improved may produce that which is naturally and morally good ; but not that which is truly spiritually good ; the heart must be made good, before the fruit can be good : " A corrupt tree cannot bear good fruit," Matt. vii. 17. As the earth naturally of itself produceth nothing but weeds, grass, nettles, briars, and thorns ; so all men before grace is sowed or infused into their hearts, bring forth nothing but sin, or the fruits of depraved and corrupt nature, or that which is natural.

Therefore the product of natural conscience, or natural light improved, is not the fruit of divine grace ; much less is it the Christ of God, which the Quakers boldly affirm it is.

2. Seed, let it be of wheat, or barley, or seed of herbs or flowers, or whatsoever else, it is the choicest of each sort respectively.

If it be of wheat, it is the best of wheat ; or if barley, it is the best of barley.

So in like manner the seed of the word, which is called " the incorruptible seed, by which believers are born again," is the best of all seeds ; the word of God, and true grace, is of an excellent nature.

3. Until seed is sown, there will be no increase, the ground must receive it : so the heart of man must take in, or sinners by faith receive the word of Christ, or the choice seed of grace ; or there will be no spiritual increase : as bread feeds no man until he eat it, so Jesus Christ is of no spiritual profit, nor his word efficacious and effectual unto a sinner, until it is by faith received, or Christ spiritually fed upon. " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," John vi. 53.

4. Seed, sometimes which is sown, lies a considerable time in the ground, before it springs up, or visibly appears, it must have time to take root.

Even so and in like manner the Word of God, which is sown in the heart of a sinner, sometimes doth not presently appear, though it be not always so ; for as some ground that is more rich, or by the rain that falls upon it, and the most powerful influences of the sun produceth the visible growth thereof quickly ; so by the divine and more strong and efficacious influences of the Spirit of Christ, some seed sown in some sinners' hearts, presently, or in a very short time, its rooting, its growth appeareth, as it did in those three thousand that Peter preached to, Acts ii. 37, 40, 41.

5. Clods of the earth being not broken, oft-times obstruct or hinder the springing up of seed, or it is from thence it appears not to have taken root so soon as in some other ground ; so likewise through the power of Satan's temptations, or the inward filth and corruption of the heart, the seed of the word is for a time obstructed, or hindered from rooting, and springing up in some souls of men and women.

6. A husbandman observes the proper time and season of sowing his seed : so doth Jesus Christ and his faithful ministers ; " I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day," John ix. 4. " Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. The spiritual seed-time will not last always.

7. Men are not sparing in sowing their seed, but scatter it abroad plentifully, though they expect not that all the seed which is sown, should take root, and bring forth.

So our Lord Jesus plentifully, and in a most gracious manner disperseth the seed of the Word; the Gospel is preached to multitudes, although he knows all the seed which is sown will not take rooting in all sinners' hearts, and bring forth the fruit thereof. Here is but one sort of ground of four, which produceth the desired effects.

8. A husbandman sows his seed on what ground he pleaseth, some he lets lie barren, and never ploughs it up, nor tills or manures it; and who shall blame him if he doth thus?

So likewise Jesus Christ is pleased to send his Word and blessed gospel to one nation and people, and not unto another. Some regions of the earth, he lets lie barren, without the knowledge of the gospel, or knowledge of salvation, they never had the word preached unto them. Moreover, many people in those nations, to whom the gospel is sent, never had it preached unto them, in the power and purity of it, but they are left like unto fallow or unploughed and untilld ground: yet who can say unto God, "Why dost thou do thus," Matt. xx. 15? May not I do what I please with my own? As he himself intimateth in another parable; shall he not have the same power and prerogative to do in this matter, as every husbandman hath?

9. No storms nor bad weather hinder a husbandman from sowing his seed. "He that regardeth the wind shall never sow," Eccl. xi. 4.

So and in like manner Christ's ministers must see that they preach the word in season, and out of season; at all times: even in days of persecution as well as in times of peace and liberty.

10. It is observed that the earlier seed is sown, the better it is rooted, and made capable to endure the sharpness of the winter.

So the word, or seed of grace, the sooner, or earlier it is sown in the hearts of young people, and they receive it in the love thereof, they being renewed, and sanctified thereby, even in the flower of their days: the more firmly are they confirmed in the truth, and having longer experience, it tends the better to root them in grace and holiness.

11. And lastly, some seed (as it is showed in this parable) falls on the highway-side, and some on stony and thorny ground: but none but good ground bringeth forth fruit.

So it is with the seed of the word: yet the fault lies not in the seed, nor in the sower; but in the ground, viz., it is from the evil heart, the unbelieving heart, that the seed of the word brings forth no fruit; "the word preached did not profit them, it being not mixed with faith in them that heard it," Heb. iv. 2.

Quest. Why are the hearts of men compared to ground?

Why the hearts of men are compared to ground.
Answ. I answer, for many reasons: (1.) Ground is sometimes bought or purchased before the husbandman will manure it. So Jesus Christ bought or purchased all his elect ones, and because he loved and purchased them, therefore he ploughs up the fallow ground of their hearts, tills and sows the seed of grace in their souls.

2. Ground is the proper soil for seed to grow in: so are the hearts of men the proper soil for the seed of the word.

3. Ground nevertheless must be first ploughed up, or be well manured (as hath been hinted) before it is sowed, or the seed will not take root, and for want of this oft-times the seed becomes unprofitable. So likewise must the hearts of men and women be dug or ploughed up by convictions of the Holy Spirit, or be thoroughly broken by the plough of the gospel, or the seed of grace can take no root. "Break up the fallow ground, sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy," Hos. x. 12.

Brethren, this one cause, why the highway-side ground, the stony and thorny ground brought forth no fruit to perfection. Had the hearts of all those persons signified hereby, been thoroughly broken, ploughed up and manured, why might not they have brought forth fruit, as the good ground did? what is it that makes barren, thorny, or stony ground good, which naturally is bad? Is it not that cost and pains which the husbandman taketh in manuring, dunging, &c.? Can the ground make itself better? no surely.

So it is that pains and cost the Lord useth (who is called the good Husbandman) John xv. 1) upon the hearts, the evil and barren hearts of sinners, which makes them good. No man hath any skill or power of his own to change those evil and vicious habits of his own heart: but such is the pride of men naturally, they think they have power of themselves to believe in Christ, to repent, and convert, or turn to God, and so never seek to him, or look unto him to do it. And how just is it in God utterly to leave such creatures unto themselves.

If God therefore did not put forth his almighty power in a way of sovereign grace upon the hearts of some men, he would have no right and lasting fruit from any creatures, but all would remain barren, notwithstanding the sowing the seed, or preaching of the Gospel. Nor is God obliged any more to put forth this power upon all that have the word preached unto them, than he is to send the Gospel into the dark heathen nations of the earth. It is infinite mercy in God he is pleased to make any men's hearts like good ground, since he first made man upright, yea, very good, but he by his many inventions hath made his heart so vile and abominable.

4. Ground is not known of what nature it is, until it be dug or plowed up; it may perhaps seem good to the sight, but when it is broken up, stones, and evil roots, and much nauseous filth appear.

The heart not known until it by evens is plowed up.

Even just thus it is with the hearts of men; until God by his Spirit searcheth them and breaks them into pieces, by the powerful operations of his own Spirit, and discovers the filth of them; they alas do not know their own hearts. Those Jews Peter preached to, (Acts ii.) did not know what abominable wretches they were, until they were pricked at the heart, or broken to pieces under the word, as it was an instrument of God's power, in the hand of the Spirit. The like also I might mind concerning the woman of Samaria, who, when Christ's word reached her heart by powerful convictions, she cried out, "Come see a man that told me all that ever I did, is not this the Christ?" John iv. 29. Christ's word laid all her sins before her eyes, which made her to know he was the Christ; and also to loathe and abhor herself. Brethren, the plough makes deep gashes, or pierceth into the ground: so doth the Spirit of God pierce the hearts of poor sinners, causing deep wounds in their souls and consciences.

5. Husbandmen find it hard and difficult to break up some ground, it is so stony and rocky.

So Christ lays on blow after blow by the hammer of his word, in the hand of his Spirit, before some sinner's hearts are broken and made fit soil for the seed of grace. "Is not my word like fire, and like a hammer, to break the rock in pieces," Jer. xxiii. 29.

The best ploughing is when the earth is softened and mollified with showers of rain from heaven; the hearts of men may be compared to ground upon the same account; for the gospel, or word of God, never works so kindly and effectually, for the mollifying, and ploughing up the fallow ground thereof, until God lets

The divine rain of the Spirit softens hard hearts.

the divine rain of his Spirit come down upon them. "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace, and of supplication, and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as a man mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness as one is in bitterness for his first born," Zech. xii. 10. The Holy Spirit is like to rain that falls upon the earth, it makes the heart fit to receive the heavenly seed. This makes that great difference there is between ground and ground; I mean between one man's heart and another. The Holy Spirit causeth a poor sinner to look upon Jesus Christ, whom his sins pierced, and to weep bitterly.

7. Like as that ground is not well ploughed up, where the plough jumps or skips over some part thereof; so the heart of a sinner is not savingly and effectually wrought upon, when any faculty of the soul is not reached, or under a thorough change by the divine influences of the Spirit. Some have their consciences ploughed up or awakened, and their understandings somewhat enlightened, (as it was with Balaam) and yet their wills and affections may not at all be touched. The divine plough as it were, jumps over the ragged and rebellious will, that bows not, yields not to Jesus Christ, nor are their affections renewed, and set upon him as the chiefest object; hence, notwithstanding that light Balaam had received into his understanding, (who spake of God, and of the glory of Jesus Christ, and of the happiness of the people of Israel at such a rate, or in such a raised and elegant manner, as if he had been a true believer) yet how fain would he have cursed Israel, which shows the villainy and rebelliousness of his will; and also it is expressly said, that "he loved the wages of unrighteousness," 2 Pet. ii. 15.

8. New ground is easier broken up than that which hath lain a long time barren and unploughed.

So the hearts of young people are soonest and easier broken and wrought upon, than the hearts of old and hardened sinners, though it is true if God will work, all are alike to him, to whom nothing is hard.

The whole heart must be manured.

9. Some ground (it is observed) continueth bad, after all the pains that an husbandman uses, or cost laid out upon it, nay so bad that it is neither good for tillage, nor pasture, and therefore he lets it alone, and bestows no pains more upon it. Thus it is also with the hearts of some people (as it was of old with the peo-

Young people, soonest wrought upon.

ple of Israel,) God plants some people by a river, and they grow and thrive like to willows, but others are like miry places. "And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth which moveth, whithersoever the river shall come shall live, but the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof shall not be healed." Ezek. xlvii. 9. This river may signify the doctrine of the Gospel. Yet these waters do not heal the miry places and marshes; earth and water mixed together makes a miry place, so when the word is preached, and the corruptions of men's hearts mixed with it, instead of the word being mixed with faith, these men's hearts become miry places, and so like ground that is good for nothing; they may hold some truths of God, or receive divine truths into their heads, but retain the love of sin in their hearts, and their hearts cast up nothing but "mire and dirt." Isa. lvii. 19, 20. Brethren, it is observed, the longer the water stands on some ground the worse it is; so the longer some men sit under the word, and means of grace, the worse they are, even the more filthy, worldly, and unbelieving, until God says of them as of Ephraim, "Let them alone;" or as our Lord of the barren fig-tree, "Never fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever," Matt. xxi. 19.

10. Ground that is to be sowed, is with great skill and care ploughed up; the plough must not go too deep, lest the seed be buried too low; nor too shallow, lest there be not earth enough to cover it from the danger of the fowls of heaven; nor have that depth of earth proper for it to take good root. So the word of God, through the convictions of the Spirit upon the spirits of sinners, is guided by the wisdom of God. So that the plough of the gospel doth not go too deep, lest it drive the soul into despair, nor too shallow; but that it may break up the whole heart, or effectually work (in conviction) upon every faculty thereof.

11. An husbandman, by his pains and cost, can restore lost land, such that was very barren, and unlikely ever to become good and fruitful.

Even so the blessed God can by the work of his word and Spirit, restore barren and fruitless souls, such that were very unlikely ever to become good and gracious Christians: and as an husbandman strives to root out the weeds, and destroy the vermin; and by carrying out his compost to fatten it, he makes the ground good; so God by the efficacious operations of his Spirit, he destroys the weeds of sin, and corruptions of the heart, and so makes the heart good, and gracious, that it is with such souls as it is with a barren tree which Job speaks of: "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease," Job xiv. 7. "Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground;" ver. 8, "Yet through the seent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant," ver 9.

SERMON XXIII.

When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart; this is he which receiveth the seed by the way side.—Matt. xiii. 19.

BRETHREN, I shall endeavour to do three things in opening this part of the parable.

First, I shall show you the nature of the high way ground.

Secondly, I shall show you how the devil may be said to catch away the word out of the hearts of this sort of hearers.

Thirdly, Give you the causes or reasons of it, and also show you why devils are compared to the fowls of heaven.

1. High-way side ground is very hard, or such ground which is not ploughed up.

So these persons' hearts are very hard, not only by nature; but also by a continued custom in sin. Hence they are said to make their hearts as hard as the nether mill-stone. Moreover, these were never ploughed up, by the convictions of the Spirit of God, nor mollified by heavenly rain.

II. The ground by the high-way side, commonly beareth no grass, or but very little, nothing but weeds, or being wholly barren.

Even so this sort of men bring forth, hardly so much as the grass of morality, the common product of nature; nothing proceedeth from them but horrid wickedness, or the filthy

weeds and corruptions of sin, or fruits of the flesh, they are the worst of men, most ungodly and profane persons that are signified hereby. Such who make no profession of religion.

III. High-way ground, or ground by the high-way side, is oftentimes very unprofitable, hence called king's waste. Though perhaps a poor man's cow, may now and then get a mouthful or two of grass on such ground.

So these persons are very unprofitable in their lives unto God and his people; they neither bring forth fruit to the honour of God, nor to the good and benefit of men; no spiritual increase or sacred fruit can be expected from these persons, though perhaps now and then they may be a little helpful to the poor, by giving them a mouthful or two of bread, or giving them some small matter when they die; they may show, though very wicked some small neighbourly kindness.

IV. Every foot treads upon the highway ground, the common path of travellers lies there. Other ground is fenced in to keep them out, as also to prevent the breaking in of mischievous beasts; but the highway lies open and common to all.

1. So in these persons hearts every lust, filthy corruption, and cursed cogitation, hath a free passage; In them is the way of evil. Brethren, every evil habit, or wicked custom in sin, is like a common road or beaten path. A way of sin is far worse than to be overtaken by the power of temptation, with some evil action, or deed of darkness. "Therefore David desired, that God would search him, to see whether there was in him a way of evil," Psal. cxxxix. 23. That is, some evil habit of sin that was never changed; it is, my brethren, this which discovers a man's state to be naught, or that he is not renewed.

What travellers tread on the highway ground.

2. This sort of men is the way of earthly or worldly thoughts, they pass to and fro every moment as travellers on the highway.

3. These persons hearts also is the highway of a worse traveller, namely, the devil, for, like as God is said to walk in his people, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them," 2 Cor. vi. 16, so the devil walks up and down by his evil suggestions, and filthy motions in the hearts of these ungodly ones.

4. Moreover, these people are not by God's care and providence fenced in, to keep Satan out; the careful eye of God is like a hedge to a holy person, and his Spirit is as a strong fence to repulse and keep Satan out; from spoiling and devouring them and theirs. "Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about all he hath on every side?" Job i. 10. Believers are like a field, or garden enclosed, to prevent the danger they are from this watchful traveller; but thus it is not with this sort of men, for they, like the highway, lie open to Satan's temptations.

Highway ground not fenced in.

V. The seed which falls on the highway-side, is either trodden by the feet of travellers, or else caught up, and devoured by the fowls of the air. Even so, and in like manner, the word that is either trodden down by the cursed feet and power of lusts, and love of this world, or temptations, and suggestions of Satan, or else the wicked one catcheth it out of their hearts; by which means they bring forth no fruit of the word, but lose all the profit others receive thereby.

Secondly, I shall show you what ways and devices Satan hath to catch the word out of these persons' hearts.

They received the word; this implies some kind of notional reception of it, but it is as our Lord told the unbelieving Jews, his word had no abiding in them. But,

1. To proceed, no sooner do they hear the word, but Satan darts in evil and hurtful thoughts, perhaps such as these following.

How the devil catches the word out of men's hearts.

1. Why should I regard what this minister says? he is but a man, he tells me, "I must be born again, or I shall never see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. "and that if I do not believe in Christ, I shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. It is but his opinion, his thoughts, he may be mistaken; for if this be so, what will become of the most of men in the world?

2. In another of this sort he raises up prejudice against the preacher; perhaps some have unjustly reproached him, as they did of old vilify the prophet Jeremiah; report, say they, and we will report; and by this means the devil may catch the word out of his heart. Brethren, by this device the devil caught the word out of the hearts of many persons who heard our Saviour preach, i. e., by rendering him odious unto the people by his cursed instruments which he employed, calling him a "gluttonous person, a wine-bibber; a friend of publicans and sinners," Matt. xi. 19.

3. To another Satan may suggest such thoughts as these, i. e., it is evident I am a

Christian, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven ; I was born of Christian parents, and am in covenant with God, and so in the pale of the church, and therefore in a good and safe condition. I was regenerated by my baptism, when an infant, what doctrine is this ? “ Must I be born again twice ? ” Matt. iii. 9, 10, 11, 12. After this manner, or by this subtle snare, the devil deceived the Jews of all the benefit of the word. “ We are Abraham’s seed,” John. viii. 33.

4. Saith Satan to others, “ If you hearken to such doctrine which these men preach, you will become a mere mome, and then farewell to all the sweet comforts of this world ; for you will be mad, or else fall certainly into desperation ; and so become utterly incapable to follow your employment, by which means your family will be brought to beggary.” And unto these suggestions these adhere, and so the devil catches the word away that was sown upon their heart, for into their heart it never entered.”

5. Other of this sort of hearers, Satan fills full of earthly thoughts ; so that as soon as he hath heard a word which greatly concerns him, it is presently lost in a crowd of worldly cogitations ; perhaps the person is poor, and he is thinking where to borrow a little money ; or having met with some losses, or disappointments the week past, this so perplexeth his mind, that he can think of nothing else. Or may be he has some bad debts, and his thoughts are taken up about them. Also another having a good trade the week before, he is thinking how much he hath gained, and by that means the devil catcheth away the word which he newly heard. Or possibly some body hath injured him, and he is thinking how to right himself ; or being defamed, he is so disturbed, that he cannot hear (to his profit) what the minister says, or least wise not retain it in his mind, by which means the devil catcheth the word out of his thoughts, and it becomes unprofitable. Or if a young person, it may be he is in love, and while he is hearing of the word, he is consulting how to act, in order to obtain the person he hath set his heart upon. And this man is by Satan, so filled with these thoughts, that he catches away the word. Or, perhaps the devil fills others of this sort which disquieting thoughts about the times, deadness of trade, and dearth of corn, and by that way he catches away the word they hear preached. Or, says Satan to others (by his inward suggestions) “ Thou art young, and these things belong to aged people, who are going out of the world ; it will be time enough to mind the con-

The subtily
of Satan. cernments of thy soul many years hence ; ” and so the devil catches the word out of their hearts. Or, if the person be old, and is brought under the word, and begins to lay what he hears to heart, the devil presently injects such thoughts into his heart as these, i. e., “ Thou wast called formerly, and thou didst slight that call, and offer of God’s grace, and didst stifle those convictions thou hadst then ; that was the day of thy visitation ; but now it is too late, thy day is gone.” and so the devil catcheth the word out (or rather) off of his heart. Another, Satan persuades to rest on the performance of duties ; perhaps they read and pray, and though they are very ungodly, will swear, lie, be drunk ; yet soon upon it they seem troubled, and get upon their knees and pray, and make promises to reform, but yet are again overcome with the same evils ; but then by being troubled, and by praying again, they think all is well ; they apply these duties to heal their sinful souls, and by that means the devil catcheth the word from them, so that they are never renewed, but perish in their sins. Satan suggesteth in others, that if they regard the word which they hear, so as to become religious, they will be reproached, and derided ; nay, may sometime or another be persecuted and thrown into prison, and be utterly undone ; and the thoughts of such things they cannot bear ; and by this means Satan also catcheth the word away from these. Moreover, Satan strives to deceive them, by telling them that many find repentance at last when they come to lie upon a death-bed ; and from thence, saith a sinner, this is, no doubt, a truth therefore why may not I ? many have taken their fill of all the delights and pleasures of this world, and have been happy for ever in heaven also ; and I hope so may I, and thus Satan catches the word out of their hearts, before it had taken any root therein. Furthermore, the devil tells them, that their condition is as good, as the condition of many thousands in the world. I shall therefore (saith the poor deluded soul) speed as well as they ; as if it were any relief to a poor condemned criminal, that great numbers are like to suffer the shameful death with himself. These and many other ways the devil hath to catch the word out of the hearts of them that hear it.

Thirdly, I shall show you what the reason is why the devil hath such power to catch the word out of the hearts of this sort of hearers.

1. It is because their hearts being hard, and never mollified, the word can have no

rooting in them, what seed can take root in ground that is so trodden upon, that is as hard almost as a rock.

2. It is because God, as a just and fearful judgment, leaves them unto their own hearts' lusts, they being so in love with sin, and the vanities of this evil world, esteeming earthly riches, honours, and pleasures of sin, above Jesus Christ.

The reason why the devil hath such power to catch away the word.

Quest. Why are the devils compared to the fowls of heaven ?

Ans. 1. Some fowls are fowls of prey, ravenous fowls ; the devils are compared unto such fowls, because they are of a destructive nature, seeking how they may prey upon poor innocent Christians, and daily devour unwary and ignorant sinners ; like as some fowls live upon their prey, so those evil spirits live (as it were) upon preying upon, and destroying the souls of sinners.

Why the evil spirits are compared to the fowls of heaven.

2. Some fowls of prey have a quick and piercing eye, as the eagle : even so these evil spirits have a very quick and piercing sight ; if any sinner seems to be secure, they will soon on a sudden prey upon him : for as eagles with all diligence and subtilty watch for their prey, so do these evil and wicked spirits to destroy men's souls.

3. The fowls of prey, especially eagles, have their residence in the air, they love the upward regions ; and by that means have the greater advantage and opportunity to prey upon creatures below ; even so these wicked spirits have their residence in the air ; hence the devil is called " the prince of the power of the air," Eph. ii. 2, 3 ; and also by this means poor mortals are in the greater danger, they having much advantage of us by being above us, and find hereby an opportunity to devour such that are not aware of them.

4. The fowls of the air are great destroyers of seed, when it is newly sown ; and therefore the husbandman appoints his servants to drive them away : so these evil spirits are very busy in the time when the spiritual seed of the word is newly preached, to catch it up out of the hearts, or out of the mind and thoughts of all such that hear it, and hence the blessed God gives strict charge to all to resist them, and by faith and prayer, with a promise Satan shall fly from us.

5. Fowls come down upon their prey on a sudden, as a kite in a moment catches up a chicken.

So the devil here is said to catch the seed of the word out of these peoples' hearts ; which denote a quick and speedy motion. Satan sees there is need for him to do what he doth, (as it were with a jirk) he sees it is not safe for him to let sinners muse and contemplate upon the word, nor on their own dangerous condition ; lest the seed should begin to root in their hearts, (i.e.) get into their understandings, and into their affections.

How the devil catches the seed out of the heart.

It is said, when Abraham had killed his beasts, (viz.,) " an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon, the fowls came down upon the carcasses, and Abraham drove them away," Gen. xv. 10, 11 : even so these evil fowls, or wicked spirits, come down to disturb and disquiet the saints, when they are in the discharge of holy duties ; or are offering up spiritual sacrifices unto God, which they ought to drive away by a stout resistance of them in all their temptations, through the assistance of the Spirit of God. Moreover,

6. Where the seed is newly sown, thither it is observed oft-times great multitudes of evil and hurtful fowls will resort, so that sometimes the ground is covered with them.

So no doubt where the word of God in the assemblies of his people is powerfully preached, there are multitudes of those evil spirits, who strive to catch up the seed, thereby to make a prey of the souls of such they may destroy.

APPLICATION.

1. O with what care and diligence should sinners attend upon the word, and lay it up in their hearts ! This was David's care : " Thy word have I hid in my heart," &c., Psal. cxix. 9. This is the way to prevent Satan from catching it up.

2. Let all that hear the word beware, what thoughts they adhere to, or entertain ; lest they are ensnared by the evil spirits.

3. This also may inform all persons, how it becometh them to find out, and not to be ignorant of Satan's devices : moreover it appears from hence, what the cause is, that so few in the world, who hear the word of God, do receive it in the love of it ; for certainly there are many more people comprehended by the highway-side ground than of any, if not more than of all the other three sorts, I mean such that remain openly wicked, and are never brought into any visible profession of religion.

4. From hence we also may infer, that there is a necessity of sowing the seed of the word. Ministers must preach, as husbandmen must sow; if they sow not, they cannot expect to reap: so if ministers preach not, they cannot expect any souls should be converted by them: he shall reap no harvest that sows no seed.

2. So he that sows sparingly, or but a little seed, shall reap sparingly, or have but a thin harvest.

3. A seeds-man (you heard) must not regard the cold, neither the wind, nor storms: so a minister must not fear reproaches nor persecution.

5. Terror; this may afford terror to careless hearers, such that regard not how they hear. Take heed how you hear. The word of God is to this sort of hearers the savour of death unto death; if the word softens not, it hardens; if men hear not to their salvation, they hear to their damnation. The word of God is like a sword with two edges, if it do not kill their sins, it will kill their souls. If it tends not to fit them for heaven, it will fit them for hell.

6. Careless hearers are the worst of all hearers: as the highway ground is the worst of all sorts of ground; there is no hope, that ever the seed of the word should take root in these men's hearts: true, the seed may fall upon such ground, but it cannot fall into it; the stony and thorny ground was bad, but yet nevertheless they are said to receive the seed; it seemed to be covered, but these tread it under their feet, they despise the word, and let the devil catch it up, or take it off of their hearts: our Saviour, as Gregory saith, *Non indiget expositione, sed admonitione*. Christ hath expounded this to our hand. The word hath no abiding in these persons, they hear, but resolve to continue in their evil and wicked courses, these have certainly the mark of reprobation upon them; they hear, but understand not, it is a mark of a child of God to understand the word: "To you it is given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," Luke. viii. 10.

1. They desire not after knowledge, but are wise in their own conceit, and know as much as is sufficient, as they think to salvation.

2. Such hear negligently, or remissly, and are in a worse condition than those that never had the gospel, their sin is more heinous, and their state is more desperate! "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin," John xv. 22; that is, they had not sinned with such severe aggravations, "but now they have no cloak for their sin," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16. They of old that despised the word, and abused God's prophets, wrath came upon them, until there was no remedy; the higher persons are lifted up to heaven in respect of the means of grace, the lower they will fall into hell.

The gospel, according as it is heard, is either the greatest blessing, or mercy, or the greatest judgment. It is either a blessing, or else a curse; it either binds us with cords of love to God, or with the bonds of wrath and death; it either softens or hardens.

3. Such persons are left inexcusable, they are hereby prepared for judgment, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life; such are justly rejected of God, because they despise and neglect the means of their cure; the preaching of the gospel is to them that believe "the power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16. Let me caution all that hear the word to beware of Satan;

Then cometh the wicked one.

Quest. Whither comes he?

I answer, he comes into the assemblies of God's people, he comes where the good seed is sown. Many devils or wicked spirits attend and wait to catch the word out of the men's thoughts and hearts, whilst it is preached. O take heed of those ravenous fowls.

Quest. When doth Satan come?

Ans. When any begin to hear, and diligently to attend upon the word of God; "Whosoever any man heareth the word of the kingdom," Matt. xiii. 19; he fears no person, noble nor ignoble, old or young; though you see him not, he being a spirit, yet he is by you, he stands among the children of God; Satan, my brethren, comes always to church, he is one of the first that comes, and the last that goes from thence; when any word that suits the state of a sinner, falls from the mouth of the preacher, then comes the wicked one to catch it away.

Quest. How doth Satan come?

1. I answer, he comes by darting into the heart, roving, and wandering thoughts, to take the hearer's mind quite away from that which concerns his everlasting welfare; he comes by putting vain and idle cogitations into his heart and mind.

2. He comes to see if he can rock the hearer of the word asleep, or make him drowsy or heavy under the word: what is the cause, think you, that people are so subject to fall

asleep under the word? nay, more ready then to take a nap, than when they are elsewhere? Alas, it is from Satan. I have heard of a woman that chose to go to the place of God's worship, or where, and when the word was preached, that she might have a sound sleep; she found at such times she could sooner sleep, than at any other time or place.

3. He comes by many inward suggestions (as I have showed you) to stir up their natural corruption, and fill them with prejudice against the word.

Quest. Why doth Satan thus come? What end hath he in it?

Answ. No good end, you may be sure.

1. He comes as thieves comes to rob and steal; his end and design is to steal the word out of the heart. The devil is a great thief, he is not a pocket-picker, but a heart-picker; he comes not to get away your gold or silver, but that which is of far greater value, viz., the word.

2. His end is to hinder all that hear the word, (if possible) from believing; he is not so great an enemy to the hearing of the word, as he is to the believing and right applying of it; he never loses the sinner, until the sinner believes, and truly takes hold of Jesus Christ. Christ prays for all his elect, that they may believe; faith ruins Satan's design, and spoils his kingdom; faith unites the soul to Christ, therefore it is no wonder the devil is such an enemy to believing: faith is that shield whereby we quench all Satan's fiery darts; it is that by which we resist him, and overcome him.

3. He comes to hinder sinners from considering, knowing, and understanding the word; none receive it truly, but such that understand it; that know the necessity and excellency of God's word.

4. He comes to obstruct and hinder sinners of salvation, and so to blind men's minds that they may be lost for ever.

Quest. But why? to catch the word out of the heart?

Answ. Because if he can get it out of the heart, he knows it can do no soul any good; he cares not how much of the word a man gets into his mouth, or into his head, so that he can keep it out of his heart, or catch it out of that.

Why Satan strives to catch the word out of the heart.

2. Because if once the heart truly receives the word, Satan knows it will soon take root there, and cause the soul to bring forth fruit.

3. Because the word rightly received into the heart, is like to leaven that will quickly leaven the whole lump.

4. Because if once the word of God be hid in the heart, he knows he cannot steal it away; David well understood this, and therefore he says, "Thy word have I hid in my heart," Psal. cxix. 11.

5. Because he knows when the word is truly received into the heart, Christ is at that time received also, and the soul is happy for ever. O then a stronger than he comes, and binds the strong man armed.

6. And lastly, Because the devil knows if he can but hinder the word from brooding and rooting on, or in the heart, the best sermon that can be preached will be ineffectual to that person. No wonder then that Satan strives to catch the word out of the hearts of sinners; he doth, it is true, what he can, to hinder a man from hearing the word, for fear he should not be able to prevent its being received; for it must be took into the ear before it can be received (as it is preached) into the heart.

O see what ground your hearts are, examine yourselves; for according to Trial. the nature of the ground, will the success of the seed that is sown be; are your hearts well ploughed up, or has the Spirit of God, by convictions, broken and pierced your hearts, so that you, like them of old, are made to cry out, "Sirs, what shall we do?"

And be sure do not think it enough to hear the word, content not yourselves to come to hear, lest Satan's coming prevents thy profiting by it. From hence we may learn that Satan hath more knowledge of the nature of the word, than many sinners have. For,

1. Satan knows that the preaching of the word tends to the ruin of his interest and kingdom in this world.

2. Satan knows the preaching of the word is an instrument in God's hand to the conversion and salvation of sinners.

3. Satan knows that faith comes by hearing, and that a bare hearing of the word can profit no person to the salvation of their souls. Moreover it informs us, that we can come to no meeting of the godly to hear God's word, but we may expect to meet with Satan there. O watch him, ye poor unwary hearers! have a godly jealousy, lest it is he that

keeps you sometimes at home, and also causes you to be sleepy and drowsy under the word when you do come; or that raiseth such thoughts and wanderings in your hearts, or that fills you with prejudice either against the word or the preacher thereof. Let nothing hinder thee from hearing the word of God; nor let a simple hearing of it satisfy thee. So much to the first sort of ground, viz., the highway-side-ground.

SERMON XXIV.

But he that receiveth the seed in stony places,—Matt. xiii. 20, 21, 22.

THREE things are to be considered in these words.

1. The nature of the ground; some fell in stony places.
2. The success of the seed; for a time it sprang up, but in the end it withered.
3. The cause and reason why and wherefore it withered, and brought not forth fruit unto perfection. I shall begin with the first of these, viz., the nature or quality of the ground.

I. Stony ground wants breaking up; let rocky or stony ground be but well broken up, and mollified and mixed with earth, seed will grow, and bring forth fruit unto perfection.

So these persons enter into a profession of religion, before their hearts were thoroughly broken in the sense of sin; they never saw the baseness and hardness of their hearts; true faith works contrition and godly sorrow only in those hearts where the seed of the word takes root, and who continue fruitful unto the end. But these remain hardened in their sin; their wills being stubborn and rebellious, though they seem to be affected with the word; their consciences may be somewhat awakened and enlightened, and their affections suddenly raised, before they were brought under a true sense of sin: the natural hardness of their hearts remains, of which they are ignorant.

2. Stony ground is cold; what is colder than a stone? So these persons abide without any divine warmth, or spiritual heat in their souls, because they are without a vital principle, they have not the life of true grace in them, from whence all spiritual heat flows; the Sun of righteousness never enlivened them, though they might experience the common illuminations of the Spirit, as the apostle shows elsewhere. Heb. vi. 4.

3. Their hearts may be compared to stony ground, from the heaviness or lumpishness of their spirits; a stone is heavy and not easily removed out of its place; the earth is its proper centre; you may perhaps by your strength cast a heavy stone up a little way into the air, but down it falls again; so these hearers are heavy and lumpish, and not soon removed out of their evil course, but by the improvement of natural powers, or strength of common light and knowledge, they may be somewhat raised in their desires and affections towards heavenly things; but in a short time they cleave again to the earth their own proper centre, still they remain earthly and carnal inwardly.

4. Stony or rocky ground doth not drink in the rain that falls from heaven; it is observed that the rain glides off a rock, and very little of it soaks in: perhaps there may be a little earth, and in that some seed may take some small rooting.

So this sort of hearers do not receive with the word, the Holy Spirit, but do resist the more effectual influences and operations thereof; we read of the former and latter rain, which God's elect receive.

1. The former rain mollifies or softeneth their hearts, and so tends to root the divine seeds, and maketh it to sprout; and the latter rain ripeneth the soul for the harvest of glory, by bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, and of a holy life. But these wanted the mollifying power and operations of the Holy Ghost; they never experienced the Spirit's rooting influences; the apostle prays for the saint to whom he writes; "that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, that they might be rooted and grounded in love." Eph. iii. 17. My brethren, faith roots the seed of the word by the Spirit in the understanding, and in the will; for the rooting of the seed in the heart, chiefly consisteth in the assent of the understanding, and consent of the will, and this is done by the Holy Spirit in its first workings and operations. But these professors who have rocky hearts, taking not in the spiritual rain in either of those respects, Christ is not received, nor doth he dwell in their hearts. And from hence they are not rooted in love; they seem to have some love to Christ, but as it is not sincere, so it abides not; they are not rooted in love. The former rain, by rooting the seed of grace

Where is the former and latter rain of the Spirit.

in believers, infuseth divine habits; whom whence all gracious acts proceed, as the effect from the cause. And the latter rain strengthens those habits, and enables the soul from right principles, and to a right end, to discharge all holy duties, acts of piety, and gospel obedience.

But these stony-ground professors have not the habits of grace, and therefore they continue not in holy duties, but for want of oil in their vessels, their lamps go out. "Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in him," Job xix. 28. By the root of the matter here, is doubtless meant the truth of grace, *i. e.*, The saving habit of faith, and love; he was a sincere and upright man, but this root is not found in these persons mentioned in my text.

5. All the hearts of men are naturally hard, stony, and like a rock, yet the hammer of the word can, and doth oft-times break it to pieces: "Is not my word like fire and like a hammer, that breaks the rock in pieces," Jer. xxiii. 29; therefore it evidently follows, that these persons' hearts were never changed, notwithstanding they become professors of the gospel, and seem to be disciples of Christ.

The hearts of all men naturally bad.

6. Stony ground seems to be the fruit of the curse for man's sin, and it renders that part of the earth barren, and hinders the seed that is sown upon it from bringing forth fruit.

So these persons seem still to be under the curse; for by the stonyness and hardness of their hearts, the seed of the word is rendered as unfruitful as any stony-ground doth, or can render the natural seed to be, that is sown upon it.

7. Stony ground by reason of the little earth that is found there, it bringeth forth only the blade of the corn, it never comes to a kernel, nor to bring forth fruit for him that sowed it.

So these professors for want of deepness of earth, or for want of a sound judgment, a broken heart, and a good understanding, they only bring forth the externals of religion; they get a name, and an outward profession, and discharge external duties and ordinances, or no more than the stalk or blade of a Christian profession, or form of godliness, without the power thereof; no fruit of saving-grace, no inward sanctification, nor gospel holiness: and though they promised fair for awhile, and when they first set out or began to be religious, many thought them sincere, yet they continue not long in their course of a visible profession.

8. Stony ground, when the sun rises high and begins to shine hot upon it, the scorching beams thereof soon causeth the blade to wither and wither away.

So these professors when persecution ariseth because of the word, they fade and wither, they cannot bear the trials of the cross, nor stand in a day of persecution.

Now the cause of their decay is two-fold.

1. Internal, in themselves, for want of root, or depth of earth, this is the chief cause.
2. External, from the scorching sun of persecution, temptation, and tribulation.

From hence they wither.

1. Their hearts are not good nor upright with God, may be aim at self in all they do, or have not inward sincerity, perhaps get a profession to make that as a bridge to carry them to heaven, but cannot wade through the waters of temptations, nor swim through the floods of persecution and tribulation; they cannot bear bitter reproaches, scoffs, and jeers for Christ, nor loss of goods, estates, and life for his sake; when they see they cannot hold their profession without being in danger of losing their names, liberties, estates, places of profit, pleasures, or honours, and lives, they are presently offended.

Thus having showed why the hearts of some sort of hearers are compared to stony ground,

I shall observe from hence one or two points of doctrine.

Doct. 1. Stony or hard-hearted hearers may go a great way in the profession of the Christian religion, and yet be lost for ever.

1. I shall show you how far this sort may go.

2. Show you from whence it is they go so far.

3. Show you the cause or reason why they go no farther. 4. Apply it.

First, They may hear the word of God with diligence, these are not like to the high-way side ground, these do not scoff at the word, nor despise the ministers of the gospel; moreover they do not let Satan steal it away as soon as they hear it preached, but it hath some short abiding in them.

Stony ground hearers go a great way in a profession.

II. They may be zealous hearers, or be very forward to hear, nay, hear it with gladness, as Herod heard John the Baptist.

III. They may receive the word into their hearts, they may suddenly receive it; "anon receiveth it," that is, (saith a noted writer) immediately, they hear Christ died for sinners, and the doctrine pleaseth them, they are affected with these tidings and catch hold of the word, and receive it into their thoughts, and their affections are somewhat raised by it to such a degree, that they seem transported by it.

IV. From hence it is said that they received it with joy. The word is received into their affections, more than it is into their judgments and solid understandings. They did not count the cost, nor did they esteem the word above the love of the world; our Saviour saith of some of John's hearers, "ye rejoiced in the light for a season," John v. 35.

V. It is said they believed for awhile, they are a sort of believers, though not true believers; many of the Jews believed in Christ, "But he did not commit himself unto them," John ii. 24.

They had no saving union with the Lord Jesus, he did not take them into his bosom, he knowing that their hearts were not sincere; these give credit to the truth of the gospel, they arrive to the faith of credence, or a dogmatical faith, like many in our days; they do not doubt of the truth of the Christian religion, of the truth of the Protestant religion; these are said "to believe for a while," Luke viii. 13, but not with a true saving faith; they believe not with the faith of God's elect; "Simon Magus believed," Acts viii. 13. There is mention made in the Scripture of divers sorts of faith.

True faith unites the soul to Christ, in our understanding, will, and affections, and wherever it is, it purifies the heart, therefore that faith which any unrenewed or ungodly persons have, is not true saving faith. Act. xv. 9.

This faith therefore being but a temporary faith is not of the right kind, it is not the faith of the operation of God; true faith never faileth: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," Col. ii. 10, Luke xii. 32; though it may fail in the act, yet it cannot fail in the habit.

2. It is a general faith, or a common faith; it lies I mean in the general and common love of God to all, it comprehendeth a belief of the Scriptures, not a special and particular application of the object of justifying faith, Jesus Christ in the promises.

The devils no doubt believe the truth of the Scriptures, as well as they believe there is a God.

3. This faith is only seated in the understanding, but not in the will; there is an assent of the one, but not a consent of the other; this sort of hearers may believe all the attributes of God, i. e., that God is just, holy, wise, faithful, good, and gracious, almighty, &c., and yet never are brought to trust in him, and rest upon him; they do not make him the object of their souls' affections, holy fear, and dependence; they may have believing heads, but not believing hearts; they believe God is good, but never tasted how good he is; believe he is able to save, but never threw their souls upon him in Jesus Christ, to be saved: it is, my brethren, a faith without experience, they believe the truth of the word, but never felt the power of it upon their own souls; they believe the truth of the promises, but never tasted the sweets of the promises.

4. This is a faith without true brokenness of heart, their hearts (notwithstanding they are said to believe) abide hard and stony. True Christians "look up to him that they pierced, and mourn," Zech. xii. 10. That is, they believe in Christ and are broken, they have soft hearts, but these do not so believe; therefore it is not true faith they have.

5. This faith doth not change or transform them into the image of Christ, nor cause them to abide fruitful; it makes them professors, but not true believers, they believe a man must be a new creature that would be saved, but they are not made new creatures that they may be saved; they believe (as one observes) they must be changed, but are not changed by believing.

VI. The stony ground hearers may yield obedience to all external duties or ordinances; they may read, pray, give to the poor, attend frequently upon the word, nay, may be baptized, as Simon the sorcerer was, Act. viii.

I do not say they may obey gospel ordinances, and perform gospel duties from right principles, nor to a right end, they may be right in the matter of their obedience, but not in the manner of it. They may do that which is right in the sight of God, (as some of the kings of Juda did) but not with a perfect heart; though evident it is, these sort of persons do not whatsoever God commandeth them; some of the hardest things which he requireth of them they do not; they do not "Pull out their right eye lusts, nor cut off right hand lusts, they do not deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ whithersoever he goeth," Matt. xvi. 23, 24, 25.

The nature
of the faith
that is
not saving.

What obedi-
ence is not
true obedience

They are not universal in their obedience, nor is their obedience evangelical, neither constant and abiding; they do not "Obey always even unto the end." Their obedience is not right in the spring of it, the motive of it, nor rule of it; a man may obey the law, and yet not love the law; "if ye love me keep my commandments," John xv.; but they do some of his commandments, and yet sincerely love him not.

VII. The stony ground hearers may become members of a visible church of Christ, and break bread with the church, and be owned for faithful brethren, like as the foolish virgins were, and no doubt the wise took them to be good Christians; they were not known to be unsound to them.

VIII. They may have a great zeal for all the externals of religion, as the Pharisees had; "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God," saith the apostle concerning the Jews, but it was not according to knowledge," Rom. x. 2; commonly the zeal of this sort of professors, appears in their conformity to the smaller matters of religion, as the Pharisees were extremely zealous in payment of tithes of mint, annis, and cummin; but neglected the weightier things of the law, as justice, mercy, faith, and the love of God. Besides their zeal, as it is partial so it is inconstaut; their zeal doth not burn long, it is but for a time, they quickly cool in their zeal. Moreover, it is commonly a selfish zeal; "Come, (saith Jehu) and see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts," 2 King x. 16; when, alas, it was a zeal for his own glory and interest.

IX. The stony ground hearers may leave all gross acts of sin, as swearing, lying, drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like; but for all this they may not hate those sins which they leave. Sin may seem to be out of their conversation, but not out of their affections. They are other creatures, but not new creatures; they are changed in their lives, but not in their hearts. Nor let this seem strange to any, for pray to what a degree of outward reformation did many of the Heathens attain unto, by the improvement of the dark light of nature, as touching all gross sins. Nay, in subduing of many of the unruly passions of their hearts. Now those persons who sit under the hearing of the gospel, have far greater advantages by the means of common light and knowledge, than those Heathens ever had; besides, they have more powerful motives, by hearing of that future reward God hath promised to the truly godly, and the fearful punishment of all that are ungodly, that live and die in their sins.

X. And lastly, They may have some inward joy, as to the hopes they have of heaven; it is said of this sort, "They take delight in approaching to God," Isa. lviii. 2. I do not say, they rejoice in the word, or delight in it, because of the purity of it; no, that no hypocrite can do; but because of the profit of it, or because of the future reward it promiseth; or their delight in the word may arise from the eloquence of the preacher, it pleaseth their ears; "It is as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument," Ezek. xxxiii. 32. These men have hopes to be saved, but it is not built upon a sure foundation. We read of the hope of the hypocrite, and of his leaning upon his house, but because it is not well built, it shall fall for all that; perhaps they ground their hopes upon that external change that hath passed upon them, or upon those external duties they have performed: men of no grace, may be men of great hope; it is not a hope in Christ that riseth from faith and union with him, or from what he hath done for them, but from what they have done; "We have prophesied in thy name," &c. Heb. vi. 16—18. We have fasted, say they; the hope of a true Christian is both sure and steadfast, it is built upon Christ alone, and on the covenant of grace, promise, and oath of God, and the excellent nature of it is known by its effects: "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3; he that is not in Christ, is without any sure hope of heaven. This was that mystery Paul preached among the Gentiles, "which is Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. Such that have Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith, have a certain and sure hope of eternal life: but so had not the stony ground hearers; but because the thorny ground hearers go further than these, I shall say no more unto this head now.

Secondly, from whence is it, that the stony ground hearers go so far?

1. These hearers go so far in a way of profession, and performance of duties of religion, from those common illuminations of the word and Spirit of God; hence they are said "once to be enlightened," Heb. vi. 4, 5, they are brought by the light of the word to see the state of man by nature is very wretched and deplorable; how was hard-hearted Balaam enlightened in this respect; he knew the condition of such that died unrenewed was sad; therefore cried out, "let me die the death of the righteous, let my last end be like his." Natural conscience being enlightened, convinces these persons, that they are sinners,

and in a lost and woful condition, and therefore they cannot rest in the present state they are in, and therefore strive to step out of it into a profession of religion: no doubt Felix was under great convictions, and Herod also, who upon those convictions did many things, and heard John the Baptist gladly.

2. It may be from the effects of that faith they had; for though they had not the faith of God's elect, yet their temporary faith was not wholly without some product; the seed sprang up, there was the stalk or blade of a visible profession, they reformed their ways, and left their old course of life; as the product of that faith, which they had obtained through hearing of the word; a temporary faith will bring forth some kind of temporary fruit.

3. It may arise from a heat of love and affection to some ministers, that this sort of hearers do go so far. One observes, curiosity and novelty goes a great way with this sort of people; a new preacher, that hath a fluent tongue, and an elegant way of delivery, takes with them exceedingly; O how will they run after him, and crowd to hear such an one: you must know they are much raised in affections, but weak in judgment.

4. Self-respect and honour may cause them to go far, merely to get a name, may be they will largely contribute to such a minister they do affect, and seem very zealous for a time, that they may be taken notice of to be men that love religion; many persons greatly affect a name among men, and it is not a little way that this will carry them.

5. It may be self-profit: so long as this sort of hopes of receiving any thing by Christ, they will follow him: how earnestly and zealously did some follow Christ, they took shipping to follow him, but what was the cause, saith our Saviour; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye eat of the loaves and were filled," John vi. 28; but when there is no more profit, no loaves, they cease following of Christ; this sort will adhere to Christ, as Demas did, until they meet with greater advantages or earthly profit, then they leave him, as he did, out of love to this present evil world,

6. It may arise from that seeming sweetness and satisfaction they meet with from within themselves, whilst they continue in the profession of religion, and in the discharge of spiritual duties; hence they are said to "taste of the good Word of God," Heb. vi. 5, 6; it is but a taste of it, they feed not upon it, nor digest it, yet nevertheless that taste they have (though it be but like a cook's licking his fingers) helps them to go forward, and do many things.

7. It may be from a desire they have of being saved; there is a natural desire in all men to be delivered from that which is evil, and hurtful to them, and to enjoy that which is good; now they believe there is a future state of blessedness to be had, and therefore go far in the way of a profession to obtain it. The young man cried out, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" This sort know there is an eternal life to be had, and they think it is to be had by doing; something they conclude they must do for it; they no doubt seek it by their own righteousness, as the Jews did, and this spurs them on to do much, and to go far in the ways of doing and obedience.

8. It may arise from that consideration of that shame and reproach (they conceive) all such that lie under that are openly wicked and profane; an ungodly person is one that exposeth himself to the contempt of all mere moral and civilized people.

9. Moreover, skivish fear, or a dread of hell and eternal damnation, may be the cause why these persons go so far in the way of Christianity; they seem to fly from the wrath to come.

Be sure it is from Satan's subtilty, or the delusions of the devil; for no doubt some of this sort may think they are saints, or true believers, and under the promises of eternal happiness; their hearts deceive them, or Satan deceives them, concluding they are in the ready way to heaven; yet perhaps some of them may deceive their own hearts, for so do all those whose conscience condemn them for hypocrisy, yet not to such a degree, but sometimes they may have hopes their state is good.

Thirdly, from whence is it that the stony ground hearers go no further in the ways of God?

From
whence it
is, these pro-
fessors go
no farther.

I. Answ. I answer, it may arise from that great ignorance that is in them; the god of this world hath blinded their minds, and hence it is they go no further; being persuaded they have received the grace of God, because of that great light and knowledge they have attained unto in the mysteries of the Gospel. Gifts are like grace, and because they have the one, they conclude

they have received the other also ; if a man thinks, or is persuaded he hath got a sure title to such or such an estate, he will trouble himself no further to search records, nor employ lawyers to that purpose ; I mean that so he may make such an estate more sure unto him : because they are so much in duties, so constant in performance of prayer, so frequent under the word, give so much to the poor saints, they do not doubt but all is well with them, and that they need not go further to search their hearts, though they see they have many sins cleaving unto them ; yet what of that ? they see all men, yet the best of saints are not without manifold infirmities ; in many things we offend all : who say they are without sin ? Thus they seem to " make themselves rich, when (as Solomon observes) they have nothing," Prov. xiii. 7. It is a very dangerous thing for a man to think he is rich, and increased in goods, and hath need of nothing ; for many of these " know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. It is lamentable for a man to think himself something, when he is nothing.

2. It ariseth from the unsoundness of their hearts, the ground is not good, and therefore cannot bring forth more fruit, or better fruit than it doth. Our Saviour shows in my text, that their hearts are stony, or rocky, that is, very hard ; yet, in them there is some earth, though not depth of earth, sufficient for the rooting of the seed. Now what doth this denote, but that there is a work upon one faculty, and not upon another. Their understanding is somewhat enlightened, and their conscience a little touched, and in those two faculties the seed seems to be received ; though the work upon those faculties is not efficacious, there is no depth of earth, that is, no thorough and effectual convictions passeth upon them, and as to their wills they are still stubborn, hard, rebellious, stony, and like a rock, being never mollified, bowed, nor broken to pieces ; and their affections are as carnal as ever ; and from hence it is they go no further. And

3. From hence it appeareth, that it riseth from the deceitfulness of the heart, that these persons go no further, as their hearts are divided, so they are deceitful, as every natural man's heart is ; " The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately evil, who can know it ?" Jer. xvii. 10. Many things are deceitful ; we read of the deceitfulness of beauty, of a deceitful tongue, of the deceitfulness of riches, of friends, of the deceitfulness of sin, and of the deceitfulness of the devil, Psal. lii. 4, and Job. vi. 15 ; but the heart is said to be deceitful above all things. Was not the heart of man very deceitful, Satan could not deceive him. O, says some, I thank God, I have a good heart. though I do not make such a show of religion, now these are be sure most fearfully deceived, for where true grace is in the soul, the heart appears to such a one, most filthy and loathsome above all things ; " He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," Prov. xxviii. 26.

4. This sort of hearers go no further by reason of their abominable pride : " God, I thank thee I am not as other men are, &c., not as this publican." Tell these professors that they have cause to doubt of the goodness of their state, their hearts will rise at you, and their spirits will swell with pride and self-conceitedness : look to yourselves, trouble not yourself with me, I know my condition ; thus perhaps they will retort upon you ; a fool rageth and is confident.

5. They go no further, because they never had real union with Christ, they had no vital principle in them, they act rather from an artificial principle, than from a principle of life.

6. These stony-ground hearers go no further because there is some lust, or secret sin or another hid in their hearts ; there is no hypocrite but he hath some Delilah, some beloved lust, that he harbors and lodges in his bosom ; though such may go far, yet they will not hold out to the end ; the young man that came running to Christ, bid fair for heaven, but one sin he hugged in his breast, and would not part with, and that was the sin of covetousness, his heart was set upon his earthly riches ; " He went away sorrowful, because he had great possessions."

7. Another reason may be through a sad mistake, they being not able to discern between the nature of special and common grace ; I am persuaded this is the ruin of many professors. There is, my brethren, a great resemblance between these two ; many are cheated, you know, by counterfeit money ; they take it for current coin ; a man may pass under a great change, and yet not pass through a saving change. He may become another man, but not be a new man. He may (as one observes) take a work of conviction and reformation, for a work of regeneration ; because he is become a religious and a great professor, he thinks he is a true believer, but (as the proverb is) all is not gold that glitters, so there may be an outward sanctification, where there is no inward renovation ; the Pharisees " made clean the outside of the cup and platter," but inwardly were very vile, filthy, and unclean.

8. No doubt, but one cause these professors signified by the stony ground, go no further in their pretended zeal and Christianity, may be, because they were never brought under the convictions of the Spirit, or the application of the law of God to their hearts and consciences; they never saw themselves slain or dead, by the power of the killing letter; "I was alive without the law," Rom. vii. 9. That is, without the true sense of the spirituality and severity of the law. I saw not that I was condemned, and slain by it, by reason every lust or evil thought of the heart, is a breach of the holy law of God, and lays the soul under God's wrath, and the curse; he was for a time without the law, that is, without the knowledge of the law, he was not without the letter of the law, but spiritually he was without it, he felt not the soul-killing efficacy of it upon his own heart, convincing him of his lost and undone condition. "But when the commandment came sin revived, and I died;" that is, when the word or law of God came with power upon his soul, it broke his stony heart to pieces, it was set home so effectually upon his conscience, that then he saw his estate was desperate, and that all his own righteousness was but filthiness, or as dogs' meat; by reason he could not answer all the precepts of it, so as to live and not sin; and that nothing but a perfect righteousness could justify him at the bar of God's justice. But, alas! the stony-ground hearers were never thus broken, slain, and dead; they were never made sensible of their own wretched and deplorable state by original sin, and by reason of their actual breach of God's holy law, but take up with some sudden flashes of joy by hearing the glad tidings of the gospel. But when they find they must forsake all for Christ's sake, persecution and tribulation, because of the world rising upon them, they are offended, and fall away. But no more at this time.

SERMON XXV.

But he that received the seed in stony places, &c.,—Matt. xiii. 20.

"THEY on the rock, are they which when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away," Luke viii. 13.

1. I have showed you that the stony ground professors may go a great way in their religious course.

2. Also from whence it is they go so far. And,

3. Why they go no farther.

I shall now make some improvement of what I have said.

1. *Infer.* 1. *Infer.* From hence we may infer, that many professors may be, and doubtless are greatly deceived as to their eternal state; a man may be taken for a saint on earth, that is no saint in heaven, I mean in God's sight; he may strive to enter into heaven, but shall not be able; people may be forward hearers, and zealous professors, and yet fall short of God's eternal rest.

2. *Infer.* 2. That it is not an easy thing to be saved, the "way is narrow, and the gate straight, that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 14. Though Christ hath opened a door to salvation, and made the way easy by shedding his own blood, yet sin makes it very hard to find; in respect of sinners themselves, it is very hard and difficult to be saved, they are so in love with their lusts, and with the carnal things of this world. Regeneration is a very narrow way, to believe and not to work for life, is a paradox to corrupt mortals.

3. *Infer.* 3. This being so, what will be the end of such that never hear the word at all, who never tread one step in the way of a visible profession, if so many perish that go so far, certainly their state is very sad who never made any beginning in religion? if professors may perish, what will become of the profane?

2. *Exhort.* The second use shall be by way of exhortation to try ourselves.

1. Do not slightly pass over the work of self-examination, nor take up with a bare profession, or with an empty name.

2. Do you see a stony ground hearer receive the word with joy? what will become of thee, that takes no delight in hearing of it? if the sermon be but an hour long, thou art weary, and tired out? O! doubtless, thou art in the gall of bitterness.

3. If an unsound heart may find some sweetness in the word, what wilt thou do, that finds none, that cannot relish it at all, that never tasted of the good word of God?

4. If such that attain to great light and knowledge of the things of God, and truths of the gospel, may be damned, what will become of all ignorant people, such who are without understanding; "They are a people without understanding, therefore he that made them will not save them; and he that formed them will show them no favour," Isa. xxvii. 11.

5. O how dangerous a thing is it to lay a false foundation, and build our salvation upon it? If a man be not right in the main, if he build not upon Jesus Christ, if the root of the matter be not in him, if he miss in the fundamental work, if he be without true grace in his heart, he is a lost man.

6. Beware your hearts deceive you not, trust not your own hearts. O how many deceits are there! because many see they have great gifts, they think that they have true grace; others, because they are reformed persons, they think they are converted persons.

7. Know God will try you at one time or another; "Every man's work shall be tried by fire." When the sun was up, these stony-ground professors withered away; the sun of persecution may rise and scorch men severely, and that quickly too.

8. Moreover, know Satan will try you, he will come with his sieve to sift you; as well as Christ with his fan to fan you.

However, death will try us all, and if deceived when death comes, down to hell such must go.

No man can receive any hurt or injury, by searching his own heart and state; it is be sure a bad sign a man is ready to break, that is not willing to cast up his books, or leastwise he fears things are bad, so it is a bad sign thy heart and state is naught, if thou art afraid to be tried or searched thoroughly; a true Christian cries with David, "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any evil way in me," Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.

Examine thyself, was thy heart ever thoroughly broken? did sin ever Examin. revive by the force and strength of the law, and thou died? didst ever cry out as being pricked at the heart? Is there no secret sin, or way of sin, in thy soul allowed and indulged? Hast thou no Delilah lying in thy bosom? What are thy ends and aims? O look well to them; is not thy end in thy making of a profession, to get a name? is it not self-interest, self-profit, or applause? or is it not merely to get heaven, or to be happy? is not happiness more in thy eye than holiness? O then fear, examine thyself about the nature of thy inward joy; doth thy joy rise from that sense thou hast of God's love, and light of his countenance? Is it in the word, because of the purity of it? Is it holy joy? Is it in God and Jesus Christ? "We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," Phil. iii. 3. Not in what we have done, or in what is wrought in us, but in what Christ hath done for us, and is made to us. Even wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption; is God himself, Jesus Christ himself, thy joy, and chiefest delight? Doth thy joy continue? the joy of an hypocrite is but for a moment, his joy soon abates. Canst thou rejoice in being abused, reproached, and persecuted for Christ's sake? joy in tribulation? Rejoice in the Lord when all outward comforts fail thee? "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls," Hab. iii. 17. "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," ver. 18. Is thy heart low when thy condition in the world is advanced? Canst thou abuse thyself before God, and mourn most for those sins before God, that appear least before men? Dost thou bring forth all the fruits of the Spirit? these stony ground professors bring forth but the blade, or stalk of external duties, not the graces of the Spirit; not faith, love, meekness, humility, long-suffering, temperance, charity, and patience. Doth thy fruit remain? Dost thou not cease bearing fruit in times of drought? if so, no fear of the goodness of thy state.

1. "And some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; verses 5, 6.

"And forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth."

"And when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered."

We shall consider the cause and reason of the withering of the stony ground hearers more distinctly.

But before we speak of that, observe,

Doct. Persecution and tribulation upon the account of the cross, is compared to the sun's scorching beams, or the burning heat and influences thereof, when the sun is up.

By the sun our Saviour shows, is meant persecution and tribulation, ver. 20, 21.

Why the sun's scorching beams is meant persecution.

I. The sun when it is risen high, towards noon, scorcheth such things that want rooting in the earth. So persecution scorcheth those professors that want grace, or the root of the matter in them.

2. The sun so scorcheth such things that they soon hang their heads, and wither. So unsound professors do soon hang down their heads, and wither in their seeming zeal and holiness, as soon as persecution rises high.

3. Though the sun shines never so hot and scorching, yet that seed and tender blade that is well rooted, and daily watered, grows and flourishes the more. So all sincere Christians, though persecution may be never so hot, they being well rooted in Jesus Christ, and watered with divine showers of God's Spirit, do grow and flourish the more in grace and heavenliness. "The more Israel was oppressed, the more he multiplied." It is observed that the saints never thrived, and grew more, than in the times of the ten hot persecutions. See the different effects persecution hath on sincere and false professors.

4. The hot beams of the sun tends to tan or make black those persons that are much under the influences of it; so the sun takes away all that seeming spiritual beauty that was in unsound professors. Common grace is like an artificial beauty, or a natural beauty improved by art, but when the sun of persecution is up, and scorcheth them sore, this beauty vanisheth away; and they seem to be the same persons they were before they made any profession of religion.

5. The sun of persecution makes sincere Christians black also, externally in the sight of men. Yet they are then comely in God's sight. "I am black but comely, because the sun hath looked upon me," Cant. i. 5, 6. Most men judge of blackness and comeliness by a mere sensual eye. Job seemed black when he sat upon the dunghill; and thus all the godly in the sight of carnal persons (when they are blackened and villified by their cruel persecutors) seem black.

6. Many find some shadowy place at noon, when the sun shines most hot: so believers find a shadowy place in the hottest time of persecution. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon," &c., Cant. i.

7. Jesus Christ refreshes their souls in such times by his blessed presence, promises, and ordinances; he is unto them "as a shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isa. xxxii. 2. Thus we see the sun hath quite different effects upon some things it shineth hot upon, to what it hath on other things; and those different effects arise from the nature of those things upon which it shines; and so likewise hath the sun of persecution different effects upon professors of the Gospel; for such who are sincere, it tends to quicken them, to revive them, and to cause such to take the deeper root.

But the unsound and hypocritical professor is soon scorched thereby, and withereth away; but the cause is in the persons, or in the matter on which this metaphorical sun shineth; this brings me to the next thing I promised to speak to, viz., to show you the cause of the withering of these professors, signified by the stony ground.

"And as soon as it sprung up, it withereth away, because it lacked moisture," Luke viii. 6.

Doct. Withering is the fearful fate of all stony ground hearers. I shall speak to this withering and spiritual barrenness.

1. As to the evil or badness of the cause that produces such evil effects.
2. As to the evil or badness of the effects produced by such evil causes.

First. As the badness of the evil cause or causes of withering, and spiritual barrenness.

The causes of spiritual witherings. 1. The principal and positive cause of the withering of these professors is the stonyness of their hearts.

2. Privative cause.

1. Want of moisture.
2. Want of earth.
3. Want of taking root.

Before I proceed, let me premise one or two things.

There is a partial withering or decay. 1. That there is a partial decay, or a partial withering. There is some degree of hardness of heart also attending the best of saints, but I am to speak of a total and final withering, of such that are never renewed again, and of such hardness of heart, that cleaves only to unsound and unmortified professors. And now, I say, the principal and positive cause of this total and final withering, is the stonyness or hardness of these men's hearts, like as this seed fell upon a rock, some ground, though very stony, or full of stones, (we daily see by experience) brings forth fruit to perfection; but if seed falls upon a rock,

though there may be a little earth; yet that seed never brings forth fruit to the harvest. Now these men's hearts were all of one piece, as it were; all a rock, and nothing but a rock; the little earth that was found there (as I conceive) was nothing but natural conscience, somewhat enlightened, or awakened by the preaching of the word, all the other faculties remain under the power of their natural hardness, and original gravity. I say, all the earth that seems to be in these men's hearts (in which the seed seemed to take some small root) was in their consciences only; their understandings being not savingly enlightened, nor their wills brought over to receive Christ; but remained rebellious, and their affections earthly and carnal, no effectual change having passed upon them.

2. A rock will resist the plough, and the strokes of the hammer; so the stony heart is not pierced, nor is it proper soil for the seed to take root in. "Their heart is as the nether mill-stone, or like the leviathan," Job xli. 15. Now this is the evil cause of that barrenness, and withering that is in these men's souls.

To bring forth fruit (you have heard) the ground must be soft, the soil must be mellow; but how can a stone or rock be made soft? These men under the word, or under the means of softening, become more hard; that which tends to soften others, hardens these; in them is not only a natural, but also an acquired hardness. "He stretcheth out his hand against God; and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty," Job xv. 25. "Pharaoh hardened his heart before the Lord, and would not let Israel go," Exod. v.

A rock cannot bring forth fruit.

Let me give you the characters of a hard-hearted person, or the properties of a stony and hard heart.

1. When a sinner sits under the powerful preaching of the word, or under a ministry, where the nature of sin and the law, in its killing and condemning power is opened, and the woful state of all men by nature, is clearly evinced; and yet the man is not stirred, nor in the least measure awakened, but concludes all is well with him; this shows his heart is hard, it is a rock.

Signs of a hard heart.

2. When a minister openeth the infinite love of God to undone sinners, in the gift of Christ, as also the nature of Christ's sufferings in his name, in his body, and in his soul, which may be enough (as some think, to break a heart of stone) yet this and that man regards it not, he melts not, mourns not, or thinks not of the evil of his sins, which thus exposed the Son of God to bear divine wrath, and the pangs of hell for sinners.

The love of God breaks not a rocky heart.

3. It is a sign of a hard and rocky heart, in those who sitting under such a sermon or ministry, where many are broken into pieces; but the word toucheth them not, they are not wrought upon, though the hammer of the word is lifted up, and blow after blow laid on, but no impression is made on their hearts. This shows that their hearts are as a rock. "Is not my word like fire, and as a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" Jer. xxii. 29. It appears some rocky hearts are broken by the hammer of the word, but others are so hardened they are not broken thereby.

4. When all that impression which the preaching of the word doth make on a man's heart is chiefly on his conscience, that may yield a little, and give way, and the affections be stirred somewhat up, but the will of the person remains obstinate and rebellious as ever. This is a sign of a stony-hearted professor; many of the Jews that heard our Saviour, were touched in their consciences, or much convinced under his preaching, and seemed to have some love and affections to him, insomuch that it is said, they believed on him. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them," John ii. 24. Because he knew their hearts remained carnal and hard still, and therefore he told them, "They were the servants of sin, and of their father the devil," John viii. 34, 44.

5. When men, though they hear of the nature of God's justice and holiness, as it is displayed both in the law and Gospel; yet presumptuously rely upon his mercy, and remain without dread or fear of the wrath and majesty of God; these men's hearts are not only hard, but they persist to harden themselves against God more and more.

6. When a person sees the patience of God in his delaying of his judgments, and it makes him rather worse; because God is slow to wrath, he is swift to sin; if the execution of judgment are not at the heels of sin, they conclude there is no danger. It is with them as Solomon observes, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil," Eccl. viii. 11.

The goodness and patience of God hardens some sinners.

7. When a man hath been often reprov'd for this and that sin, and yet he hardeneth his neck; it is not the preaching and lamentations of ministers, nor their tears, nor the tears

of their godly parents, or other relations, that will melt them, or work upon them; this is a sign their hearts are hard.

8. When all the effects, the word and Spirit of God hath upon a man, is only to change his course, or causeth him to leave only the gross acts of sin, or to reform his life, and so to take upon him the profession of religion, but never changed his heart, or infused new habits therein, but that he still remains unregenerate, harbouring this and that lust in his bosom, it is a sign he is a stony-hearted professor.

9. When a person, though a professor, is told of his pride, passion, covetousness, or worldly mindedness, or of the neglect of his duty to God, or to the poor saints; he shall fly in the face of the reprove, and may be reflect on him, and become his enemy; it is a sad sign he is one of the stony ground professors; you know if you sometimes strike at a stone it will rebound, and perhaps fly in your face, and wound you; even just thus do these persons oft-times blemish, or wound a faithful minister, or friend, that reproves them: Whereas a true Christian takes reproof kindly; "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities," Psal. cxli. 5. He that is sincere is far from being offended with him that in love reproveh him; he will rather bless God for the faithfulness, and kindness of his friend, he will the more pray for such in their trouble and afflictions, and not insult over them that pity and pray for them.

10. When a man's conscience shall often reprove him for evils he lives in, or for neglect of duties, and yet he turn a deaf ear to the checks and rebukes thereof, and will not lay his sin to heart, and return to God, but stiles those motions of his conscience; this is another sign of one of those stony ground professors.

Now this is the direct cause of barrenness and withering: it is, I say, the direct, the inward, and positive cause thereof.

The privative cause of withering.

I shall now proceed to the inward privative cause, as they are laid down by both the Evangelist, viz., want of moistness, earth, and root, or rooting.

Now all these proceed from the former cause, viz., the hardness of their hearts, for the heart being hard and stony underneath (as a worthy divine observeth) affords neither earth, or rooting, or moisture to the seed.

The words do not intimate as if there was no earth, or nothing in their hearts for the seed to fasten upon, but there was no depth of earth, or but a slight rooting in the conscience, and affections only, no depth of judgment, small understanding, nor any rooting in the will, *ἐλαγχε πολλοί*, as Mark notes, not much earth.

For want of earth, by which I understand the want of saving knowledge, or an enlightened judgment, and a true understanding; the word rather was received into their heads, than into their hearts: some slight convictions, and some sudden flashes of joy, from the seeming heat of their affections they might have, or such may have; but they take up with a general notional knowledge of divine truths, they taste the good word of God, Heb. vi. 5, but do not feed upon it, nor thoroughly digest it; they taste some sweetness in the word, but receive not strengthening and soul-saving nourishment by it: all the fruit that they bring forth, are but the effects of natural conscience, or work of common grace. They never digged deep enough in their own hearts and state by nature, nor tried and examined themselves, nor did they dig deep into the truths and mysteries of the gospel, to make by saving faith an application of Christ's merits unto their own souls; and from hence in a short time they wither away, like as seed doth that is sown upon the top of a rock.

"They had not root in themselves," Matt. xiii. 6, not the root of the matter in them, viz., no saving faith, no true love to Christ, nor any other special grace of the Spirit; faith cannot take root in these, because there is no ground in the will and understanding for it; grace hath its chief rooting in these noble faculties, so that ignorance is a cause of their barrenness and withering: ignorance of themselves, I mean of their own woful condition, ignorance of God's holy nature and blessed law: ignorance of Christ; they never had a true spiritual knowledge of the Lord Jesus, he was never received by faith into their hearts; see how Paul prayeth for the saints, "That Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love," &c. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii. 17. But in these men there is no rooting, no ground for faith, and love, to take root in.

So that it also appeareth, that unbelief is a grand cause of their withering; what work soever passeth upon a man, if he does not truly believe in Christ, or hath not the work of

faith with power passeth on him, the seed of the word can have no rooting in such a one, and though he may seem a lively Christian, and zealous for the external parts of religion for awhile, and many may think there is some greenness on his branches, yet he will wither in an hour of temptation, or tribulation, and fall away: they have, it is true, some kind of faith; it is said they believed, but their faith was but a temporary faith, they did not believe to the saving of the soul, as the apostle speaks, Heb. x. 39; they had the faith of credence, a historical, or dogmatical faith, but the faith of God's elect they had not, for that never fails in the seed, or habit of it; I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. It is only, brethren, the fruit of such a faith that is not saving these men have, and all the fruit they bring forth, is but the external duties of obedience, and their care is more for the blade and stalk, than for the root that should bear it; their unsettled faith riseth from an unconstant and wavering principle, and not from a sound inward apprehension of Christ; and as is the cause, such is the effects; (i.e.,) they are as changeable as their faith, and every wind of doctrine, and waving, and wheeling of times of providence, carry them about, and they come to nothing.

"It withered, because it lacked moisture," Luke viii. 6.

(1.) By moisture I understand the Spirit of God is meant. The Holy Spirit is compared to water often in the Scripture, and it is the Spirit that causeth that moisture, softness, and tenderness of our hearts; and evident it is, as without rain or moisture no seed will grow and bring forth fruit to perfection, so without the Spirit of Christ the word will be barren, and such that hear it will bring forth no fruit unto eternal life. So that the evil cause of these men's withering, is for want of the Spirit, and the effects of it, viz., the moistening, softening, and fructifying influences thereof. Brethren, pray remember that as the seed which is sown in the earth takes root, grows, and brings forth fruit by the continual showers that fall upon it; even so the seed or word of God is rooted, grows, and brings forth spiritual fruit, by the acts and influences of the Spirit; "without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5; that is, without union with Christ, and a continual supply of the Spirit from Christ, no soul can bring forth fruit.

What is meant by the lack of moisture.

2. By moisture may also be meant, that special effect of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, viz., compunction, there is not the moisture of godly sorrow for sin in these professors, they want effectual mortification, they never (as some of the saints have) "watered their couch with tears," Psal. vi. 6; these waters, these tears of true repentance, they are utter strangers unto; the hardness of their hearts hinder the descent of water from above, as to its abiding upon them; and also the ascent of water from below; it is too great pain for them to afflict their souls, their tears were soon dried up, and the rain that falls from heaven perhaps for a while might lie on their spirits, but it was just as the rain that falls on a rock; there may be some moisture, and the small earth that is thereon, makes it take it in, but when the sun is up, it is dried away: so the common influences of the Spirit may be in these men, and natural conscience for awhile receives it, and there seems to spring up the green blade of external holiness and obedience; but when the sun of temptation and tribulation is up, they wither away.

Mr. Tho. Taylor.

Thus I have showed you the badness of the cause that produceth such evil effects; viz.

1. Hardness of heart.

2. The want of deepness of earth; viz., the want of saving knowledge, a good judgment, or a right understanding, much ignorance abiding in them.

3. Want of rooting, viz., the want of faith, union with Christ, and love to him.

4. The want of the Spirit, from whence all spiritual moisture flows, or all saving graces. Secondly, I shall now show you the badness of those effects that proceed from such evil causes.

1. Barrenness; this is the fruit of the curse, and, as I hinted, it denotes that these men are still under the curse of the law; there can be no true fruit to God without union with Christ; we are said to be "married to him that God hath raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit to God," Rom. vii. 4; but these men were never married to Jesus Christ, they not savingly believing in him, nor partaking of his Spirit.

2. Another evil effect that attend these professors, is earthliness, or worldly-mindedness, their hearts being not changed, they still mind earthly things; as they cannot bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, because not made spiritual, so they bring forth the fruits of the flesh, being carnal and unregenerate; and no doubt but it is partly this sort of professors that expose the name of God, and religion to reproach, and make so much trouble in churches.

Earthly mindedness an effect of a withering.

3. Lukewarmness in religious duties, or that great neglect and remissness in the performance of them, is also the effect of the badness of these men's hearts; what liveliness of spirit can be expected from such who are dead, or without a principle of spiritual life? they discharge all religious duties by the help of natural conscience, or by the power of the common gifts of the Spirit, and not by the grace and special influences of the Spirit.

4. Pride, conceitedness, or haughtiness of heart, is likewise the effects of this evil cause, or causes; viz., it flows from hardness of their hearts, their want of grace, of faith, and the indwelling of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; a tender heart is an humble heart; faith causes a man to think soberly of himself, or shows him his own emptiness and poverty, and that nothingness that is in himself.

But unbelief is attended with pride, and vain glory, and haughtiness of heart; no doubt but many in the Church of the Laodiceans were but stony ground professors, and how rich, full, and proud were they! O how conceited, and confident of their good estate! "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,"

Rev. iii. 17.

5. Another bad effect that is produced by these evil causes, is that great uncharitableness and envy which are in this sort of professors; they being barren of grace, and so wanting particularly that precious grace of love, are filled with prejudice and enmity against such that are far better than themselves. It is, beloved, the character of an hypocrite, to spy the mote that is in his brother's eye, but sees not the beam that is in his own eye," Matt. vii. 3, 4; they will mark every slip, or every blemish of others, and represent them as in a magnifying glass, but cannot endure to be told of their own faults; such that are frequently abroad, and seldom at home, may be suspected to be stony-ground professors; had they not hard hearts, they could not grieve the souls of their poor brethren, and allit and trouble those churches, where they are members, as sometimes they do; if they cannot have their will, or what they would have done, woe to them that oppose them; for they will endeavour to render them odious to all, or cast dirt enough, besure, thinking some perhaps may stick; "Wrath is cruel, and anger outrageous, but who can stand before envy?" Prov. xxvii. 4. Uncharitableness and envy is worse than wrath or anger, because sudden wrath or anger may soon be gone, but envy is more lasting; wrath or anger also may be caused by some great provocation, or injury done to a person; but envy and an uncharitable and censorious spirit may not rise from any such cause, but rather from the pride of the person's own heart, and that malignity of his mind, being grieved for another man's happiness, or that honour and respect others may have above himself. Envy is also more deeply rooted in the heart, and implacable; whereas the other passions are soon allayed. Moreover, this vice has more hurtful and mischievous effects; such care not if they ruin the person they malign and envy. It may be a question, whether envy is consistent with grace, or a gracious heart, or not?

6. Contention is another evil effect of these bad causes, and the immediate fruit of envy and malignity. What contention do some professors make in their families, and amongst their neighbours, and between one member and another? nay, what strife and contention in churches, which is worst of all, do they too often make? A sower of discord among brethren, is one that the Lord hates; he hates both the sower, and the seed he sows.

Strife and contention sometimes ariseth from pride and a Diotrepheous spirit, occasioned by such that love to have the pre-eminence amongst churches, saith John, speaking of that evil person, "I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious words," 3 John x. This hath of late times too much appeared in some persons, which gives just cause to fear they are but stony-ground professors.

7. Sedition, schism, and divisions in churches, is also the evil effects that flows from these stony-ground professors, tearing and rending congregations to pieces, to gratify their own lusts and horrid pride; were not these men void of the true grace, or not hard-hearted persons, could they act so much like the devil as they do? Sure they would rather let their own names and reputation suffer, than disturb, divide, and break to pieces the church, or churches of Jesus Christ; I know a gracious man may be overcome with grand and grievous temptations, but it may be feared most of this sort are ill persons. For this fruit is too much like that which stony-ground, or a rock beareth, viz., briars and thorns; you may perhaps see thorns and briars grow on a rock; so nothing seems more like to thorns and briars than contention, sedition, and divisions. O these are grievous pricking and piercing thorns, wounding all gracious and tender-hearted Christians, and making whole churches to bleed.

8. Inconstancy, unsettledness of mind, or waveringness of heart, is likewise the effects of a stony heart; they being not well rooted in the truth, or not receiving the truth in the love of it, are often left to delusions; "And are carried away by every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," Eph. iv. 14. That tree, or plant, that is not well rooted, is soon shaken down, or rooted up. What is the cause, think you, that Quakerism hath carried away so many professors? Alas, you may soon come to a solution in the case, they generally may be such, and I am persuaded are, that never had the root of the matter in them, they were not men well rooted in Christ, had no true faith in, nor love to Christ, nor were they men of a good, solid and settled judgment, but rather led by affections, and something they call heat and warmth of heart, as if that was the way to judge who were in the right way, and who in the wrong: how easy is it for Satan to transform himself into an angel of light, and fill deluded souls with false joy, and pretended raptures! A comet, or false star, may make a great blaze, and give more light than a true natural star may.

Inconstancy
another effect.

9. Decay of love to God, to Christ, to religion, and to the truth of God, and people of God, is another effect produced by these evil causes. Love may decay, it is true, in sincere Christians, but those decays are but partial, but in this sort it is total. O how soon is their zeal for God, and love to God and his truth and people, quite gone, the interest of Christ may stand or fall, sink or swim for them, they care not; their hard and stony hearts will not be moved, by all the arguments poor ministers may use, they will not stretch out their hand to preserve it; they will not part with their money, though ministers want necessities, and the poor starve; sure this must needs be the fruits, and effects of an hard and rocky heart; the tears of ministers, nor cries of the church, and of the poor saints, will not melt them, nor move them to love and pity. They are like Ephraim, their "Goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away," Hos. vi. 4. Their zeal for God, his name, honour, worship, and interest, and seeming piety, is soon gone; it is not the zeal of God's house, but for their own house, which eateth them up.

Decay of
love a sign
and effect of
witherings.

10. Moreover, that fearful neglect of the worship of God, in attendance upon his public ordinances, is an effect of these evil causes. Brethren, as they neglect, or are remiss in private duties, a small matter will keep them from hearing the word, and the holy table of the Lord; thus their blade and leaves wither, they cannot keep up an honourable profession of religion; as they have not true faith, so they hold not fast a profession of faith, it is no marvel they bear not fruit, when their very leaves are withered. The blessed man the Psalmist says, "His leaf shall not wither," Psal. i. 3; he shall be green and flourishing in his profession, and fruitful in his conversation.

Fearful neglect of
God's worship another effect.

11. Backbiting, whispering, and a detracting tongue is also another effect, that attends these evil causes in these men. It is no wonder they will reproach their brethren, when their hard hearts stick not at a worse evil; viz., to expose the holy name of God to contempt, by their pride, carnality, covetousness, and earthly-mindedness, and other evils, they are found guilty of. All these things are the fruit, the sad fruit of a stony and hard-hearted professor; "He that backbiteth with his tongue, and taketh up a reproach against his neighbour, shall not ascend God's holy hill," Psal. xv. 3.

12. Apostacy is also another sad effect: brethren, none of the stony ground hearers, but they either die in hypocrisy, or perish by apostacy.

Apostacy
an effect
of decay or
of witherings.

1. Their apostacy in this may be but partial, but it doth not always so end; this apostacy in them, ariseth for the want of union with Christ, or not having a vital principle in them; and it may be considered under four general heads.

1. In judgment.
2. In affection.
3. In practice.
4. In respect of means.

1. Many of them decline, or let go the true orthodox faith, as to some of the main fundamental principles thereof; and either sucking in Socinian errors, or Baxterian errors, or some as bad as they; being sadly corrupted in, and about the doctrine of justification; some of them, as at this day, assert, that unbelievers and vile ungodly sinners, may be actually justified, and in a good estate. Others make faith and obedience a part of the matter of our justification; this I call a partial apostacy, in respect of judgment, though it may extend to more principles than these I here mention.

Apostacy.
1. In judgment.

2 In affection.

2. They fall from their first love; I mean that seeming love which they pretended to have at first. They appearing once fervent in spirit, and most devout in maintaining of religion, but afterwards cool and become indifferent.

3 Apostacy in practice.

3. They grew careless and carnal, and walk like other men, conforming to the base and odious fashions and customs of the world, and are light and wanton in their words and gestures; they seemed once to be like the Galatians, (*i. e.*) could pull out their eyes for their ministers, or thought nothing too much to part with which they wanted or stood in need of; but now it is quite otherwise, they draw off, and may be stick not to violate, and break their own covenant with the church and ministers thereof.

3 As to the use of means.

4. Moreover, as to the use of that means God hath left for the preservation of the soul in life and liveliness; that there may be greenness on our branches, and no withering; they fall off and forsake the assembling of themselves with that church with which they solemnly covenanted to walk, and to attend upon the ordinances and ministry therein, Heb. x. 25; may be, formerly, the word seemed sweet to them, but now perhaps it is like dry bread to them, or light manna; they forsooth cannot profit by that ministry, under which they pretended they received their new birth.

Others may be formerly prayed much or very often, and read the word of God, and with some seeming fervour of spirit discharged those duties; but may be now pray but little, or very seldom, and that with a cool and flat spirit; their hand grows heavy, that (as one observes as in Moses' case) Aaron and Hur have much ado to support them; may be some of their families were once praying families, but now prayerless families. And so by degrees they decay until they become nothing, but cleave wholly to the world, and perish in apostacy. But no more at this time.

SERMON XXVI.

But he that receiveth the seed into stony places, &c., Matt. xiii. 20, 21. They on the rock, &c., Luke viii. 13.

Doctr. Withering is the fearful fate of the stony-ground professors. They all fall away from that grace and holiness they seemed to have.

1. I have opened the badness of the cause, or causes, that produceth such evil effects.

2. I have also showed the badness of those effects produced by such an evil cause or causes.

3. I shall now proceed to show the great danger and fearful condition of such that thus wither and fall away.

4. Give you the signs of withering.

5. I shall apply the whole, and so conclude with this sort of professors.

1. Such seem to disappoint the holy God of his expectation (to speak after the manner of men) for properly God is not, cannot be disappointed; but like as a man when he hath taken pains with a piece of ground, and hath sowed it with good seed, he expecteth that it should bring forth fruit answerable to that cost and pains he lays out; so the Lord is said to look for, or expect fruit from such persons, he by his ministers takes pains with in order to their fruitfulness in grace and holiness; "Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes," &c. Isa. v. 4.

2. These persons are hateful to God, in that they seem to declare to all the world, there is not that good to be found in God, and in his ways, which the blessed word, ministers, and all sincere Christians do affirm there is; nay, and this also upon a taste and trial they have made of the ways and things of God. For by their cleaving to their former lusts, and to the love of this world, after they have made a profession of religion, they hereby clearly intimate, that the pleasures of sin, the riches and honours of this world, are better than whatsoever good can be found in God, or in his Son Jesus Christ, and in his ways and ordinances. For like as a good man in renouncing all the ways of sin, and vanities of the world, for Christ's sake, and (like Moses esteems reproaches of Christ better than all the glory of Pharaoh's court) do thereby cast contempt upon the devil, his works, ways, and kingdom; so these men on the other hand by forsaking God and his holy truth, do thereby cast contempt upon God, Christ, and his ways, works, and kingdom, which must needs be hateful to the blessed God, and to our

Lord Jesus Christ. For they like the evil spies of old, bring up an evil report upon the good land.

Secondly, The danger and evil of withering is further demonstrated by considering the evil effects of it, in respect of the church of God, and gracious Christians.

The evil effects of withering in respect of the church of God.

1. They bring an horrible scandal upon the church, on the saints, and on all that dwell in heaven, by their forsaking the good ways of God; this tends to bring the Lord's people into reproach, to the grief of strong Christians, and the stumbling and offence of the weak.

Thirdly, In respect of the world these men's sin, and danger is also aggravated; "Woe to the world because of offences—But rather woe to him by whom the offence cometh," Matt. xviii. 7. The wicked are hereby stumbled, and their mouths opened to blaspheme God, his ways, and people; and many of them are hereby confirmed and hardened in their evil ways. You see, say they, what they are, they are a company of hypocrites, and deceivers.

Fourthly, In respect of this sin itself, no sin is more odious, and dangerous.

1. We commonly say, relapses are far more dangerous than the disease. Also,

2. Satan, when he returns to his former house, and finds it empty of grace (however it had been seemingly swept and garnished) "takes with him seven more wicked spirits than himself."

3. This sin of withering and barrenness is commonly punished with other sins, viz.

1. With blindness of mind.

2. With judicial hardness of heart.

3. With a seared conscience.

4. And with final impenitence; "So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels," Psal. lxxxii. 12.

5. It leads them to sin the unpardonable sin; it is none but this sort, and those comprehended under the thorny ground, that sin the sin against the Holy Ghost; "They are such that have been once enlightened," Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.

Fifthly, The evil and danger of such is great in respect to themselves, who thus decline, wither, and fall away. And thus appears,

1. It is an evident sign, that they are hypocrites, and were not such they seemed to be; for the good ground brings forth fruit to eternal life; no sincere person can finally fall away; "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands, shall grow stronger and stronger," Job. xvii. 9.

2. They are near unto cursing. That ground that is barren and unfruitful, "is nigh unto cursing," Heb. vi. 8; nay, under the curse already, barrenness is a fruit of the curse.

3. They by turning with the dog to his vomit again, and with the sow to her wallowing in the mire, "show their latter end to be worse than the beginning," 2 Pet. ii. 20.

4. Their end will be burning, as they are nigh unto cursing, so their end is to be burned, what, alas, remains for this sort, who finally fall away? "But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 27.

Quest. How may it be known that a man is in a withering, decaying, and dying condition?

I. Self-confidence. When a person resteth in a general hope of his good estate, without searching, trying, or examining himself, this is a sign his condition is naught, and that he is in a decaying state; a lively Christian will not take up with a fancied hope, but does try himself, and search his own heart, and cries to God also to search and try him.

Self-confidence a sign of withering.

II. When a man doth not love, nay, he cannot bear a trying, nor a searching doctrine, it is another sign of withering; he is like to a tradesman, that fears he runs behind in the world, but loth to cast up his books, lest he should find things worse than he perhaps hopes they are; or he is like a man, that hath a sore skinned over, and because he is in no great pain, he hopes it is near cured; but if you lay your hand hard on it, he cries out, being not able to bear it.

III. When a man's conscience is not so tender as it once was, now he can talk vainly, frothily, and in other things, as to his garbs, gestures, and behaviour allow him or herself that liberty, which once their conscience would not suffer them to do; this doubtless is a sign he or they are going back, or in a withering estate; strictness of life, and holy and circumspect walking, is a good sign of a growing in grace, and the contrary of spiritual decay.

When the conscience is not tender.

When prayer is neglected.

IV. When a man's prayers are short, or prays but seldom, and that with some difficulty too, being hardly able to bring his heart to it; this is another sign. As you know it is a sign, that a person is in a languishing condition as to his body, when he fetches his breath short, or breathes with difficulty.

V. When corruptions of the heart, especially that sin that doth so easily beset a man, gets strength, or prevails more and more; this is a sign he is in a decaying and in a withering condition.

When a man falls in an hour of temptation.

VI. When a man cannot stand in an hour of temptation, but is overcome, it may be a sign of his withering condition; for pray observe the words in my text, "In times of temptation they fall away." This is what the apostle James shows, "For the sun is no sooner risen with burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof faileth," Jam. i. 11. It is the grass, observe it well, that which is the product of nature, the sun doth not cause the wheat to wither; now these professors bring forth only the fruit of natural conscience, not the fruit of saving grace. And hence it is that they cannot stand in an hour of trial and temptation; "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," ver. 12.

When there is a gnawing worm at the root, sometimes the seed though it be come up, yet the blade is observed to wither; and yet the cause is not soon discerned. but when the husbandman comes, and searches the root, he finds a worm there, that has spoiled it, which made it hold down its head. So in these there is a worm at their root, and they wither; I mean some secret sin allowed and lived in, and conscience upon this gnaws them, an accusing conscience, a condemning guilty conscience, shows such are in a withering and dying condition.

VII. When sweet showers that fall from heaven, and blessed shinings cause others to thrive, fructify, and flourish; and yet these thrive not, grow not; it is a dangerous sign of withering.

So when a man sits under a fruitful ministry, that God is pleased to own, and graciously to bless it to the growth of many souls; but some that sit under it grow not, or receive no spiritual profit by it, it is a sign of their withering; and it must needs be so, when the chief means of growth in grace is wholly ineffectual to them.

VIII. Feebleness of knees, or lameness, is a sign of decay in grace; how many are found to halt between hope and despair, they halt perhaps between two opinions, between truth and error, and know not which to choose; one while they seem to take up a resolution to abide in the truth which they have received; and at another time that resolution is near gone, and they are ready to resolve, to cleave to some other new and strange notions, and thus they halt and are ready to be turned out of the way; or may be they halt between God and man; one while they seem to be for God and religion, but at another time grow cold God-ward, and set their hearts upon the vanities of this world; now this is a great sign they are in a decaying and withering state.

IX. Deadness of spirit is another sign of withering; when a man is cold and dead, and without a heart, or not so lively and brisk in spirit as he was formerly; he has a prize in his hands, but hath no heart to improve it, Prov. xvii. 13; spiritual discourse was once more sweet to him than it is now, the word more sweet than it is now, he had more sense and feeling in him than he hath now; now small sins are no sins with him, and great sins but small and little; he can do that which once he could not, but his conscience would fly in his face. No heart to attend on the word, no heart to cherish convictions, no heart to obey Christ's precepts, nor apply his promises, no heart to do good, and to communicate, no heart to plead for God and his people; no, he is grown dead and cold to all these things.

X. Sleepiness, love to sleep, and will not be roused up, though the man hears that wrath is just ready to be poured forth on the whole land, nay, on the whole earth, and many are awakened, and get upon the watch tower; but no warnings, no thunderings, either by the word or works of God, will awaken these; this is a sign they are in a dying and withering condition. They are both insensible of their sins and of their estates, and also of their dangers, neither grieve for their own iniquities, nor for the sins and iniquities of others.

XI. When the blade of corn is weak and sickly, it is a sign it is in a decaying and withering condition.

So when a professor seems weak, and can hardly hold up his head in his external profession, but it is in a sickly state of soul, weak in knowledge of divine things, weak in his affections, weak in his purposes and resolutions, it is a sign he is in a decaying state.

XII. Blasting is a sign of withering ; sometimes corn looks well and hopeful, promising fair, but on a sudden the husbandman sees it is blasted, which makes him fear he shall reap no crop there.

So some professors for a time seem to promise fair, and are very hopeful : but God for just cause (as a judgment upon them) blasteth them in their gifts and seeming graces, and presently they decay and wither away ; many times it is observed, it is thus with some men : God has sent a blast and a mildew upon their souls, that they are not like the persons they seemed a little before to be ; and this is another sign of withering.

APPLICATION.

Infer. From hence I infer, that it is no certain sign a man is a child of God, and shall be saved, because he hears the Word of God preached, or loves to hear sermons, or makes a visible profession of religion, and becomes a church member, and does many things that are commendable, or praiseworthy, for all these things are common to reprobate or unsound professors as with elect ones ; nay, though a man holds out in religious practices for many years unsuspected, yet afterwards he may decay and wither.

Be exhorted to take heed lest you wither away, as the stony ground hearers do ; “ Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God,” Heb. iii. 12. Unbelief, though it is in itself but a denial to assent to, or to rely on God in Christ according to the revelation of his will in the gospel ; yet it is the rise or spring of all other sins ; and the seeming womb (as one observes) from whence issueth all unrighteousness, hardness of heart, and it is the root of withering, and oft-times of final apostasy.

Quest. What should we do to prevent withering ?

1. Answ. Never rest until you do arrive to some good and certain demonstrations of your union with Christ ; for if a man be not grafted into Christ by the Spirit, he will not abide long in a profession of the Gospel, before he withers and decays in his profession, zeal, and seeming piety : “ Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine : no more can ye except ye abide in me,” John xv. 4. No man can abide in Christ, that was never grafted into him ; true he may be externally in him, by a visible profession, or in the vine the Church, that sometimes bears Christ’s name ; and such are said to be in Christ. But without our being spiritually or internally in him, we can bring forth no fruit to perfection : “ We are married to Christ, that we might bring forth fruit to God,” Rom. vii. 4.

What we
must do to
prevent
withering.

2. Be sure see you are truly regenerated, or born again ; the tree must be made good, before the fruit can be good, as to the nature of it, as well as to the abiding or duration of it. It is the good ground that brings forth fruit to eternal life : now no man’s ground (I mean his heart) is naturally good, it is grace only that makes the heart good.

3. Be sure, see that your faith is of the right kind, or is the faith of the operation of God. True faith is always attended with good fruits, yea such fruit that remains ; true believers shall not cease bearing fruit : “ Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is ; for he shall be as a tree planted by the water, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease yielding fruit,” Jer. xvii. 7, 8.

Trusting in God, and believing truly in God through Jesus Christ, is one and the same thing ; such always draw saving or divine virtue from Christ, which keeps them alive, and prevents their withering ; a temporary faith is not the faith of God’s elect, they that believe but for a time, will bring forth fruit but for a time ; such cannot bear the heat when it cometh ; nor stand in the year of drought.

4. Labour to have a sound judgment, to discern between truth and error ; this is commonly obtained by sitting under a sound true Gospel ministry ; if we would not wither, we must be grounded, and built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles : it is for want of a good understanding that some fall into errors, and so wither and die away.

5. Get also a sound and steadfast persuasion of the truth thou professest ; be not satisfied with having the truth in thy bible, nor in thy head, or mouth, to talk of it, or dispute for it ; but get it into thy heart, see thou hast an experimental knowledge of the nature, and power of divine truth, in thy own soul. Many do not receive the truth in the love of it : and they are such that wither and fall away ; either by being carried away by the craftiness of deceivers into detestable errors and heresies, or else are overcome with the love of this present evil world, as Demas was.

If a man hath tasted how good and gracious the Lord is, and of Christ's love, and his merits, he will never totally wither, and fade away; sincerity will preserve him.

If you experience how sweet the favour of God is, the love of Christ is, you will find it stronger than death; no waters can quench it, nor can the floods drown it; you will not hang down your head, nor remain in a doubtful suspense of your salvation, nor ever wither away and come to nothing.

6. See that thy heart and conscience is always kept tender, making strait steps for thy feet, and do not give way to the sin, or any time to the neglect of thy duties; it is for want of tenderness of heart many wither; the stony ground is hard, therefore brings no fruit forth unto perfection; inward guilt will be like a worm at the root; if we allow ourselves in any known sin, or regard iniquity in our hearts, in vain do we pray for grace and the influences of the Spirit, to keep us alive; for God will not hear thy prayers, as David shows, if we regard iniquity in our hearts.

7. See that you daily attend upon the word, and ordinances of God, and be much in meditation. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint," Isa. xli. 31; This will be an excellent means to prevent withering, and decaying in grace and holiness. Can a man expect to be strong that forsakes his food, or will not eat? if once our appetite is gone, our strength will soon be gone; now the word and ordinances of God are the food of the soul, it is that which tends to strengthen our hearts: I mean, God thereby doth in a gracious manner strengthen us; "Wait upon the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait I say on the Lord," Psal. xxvii. 14. But do not only wait on the Lord in hearing of his word, and in the Lord's Supper, and in meditation; but also in prayer: be much in prayer, cry often, and mightily to God, if you would not wither, and decay in grace; a man may live that cannot breathe, or without breathing, as well as a Christian may live, and be lively without praying; for prayer, spiritual prayer, is the breath of the new creature; two things are absolutely necessary in order to spiritual growth.

First, our being born again, or getting a changed heart.

Secondly, our being fed, and daily nourished with the food of the word: "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2.

8. See that you daily keep close to God in the holy fellowship and communion of the saints, in receiving and communicating with them, and let not small things impede or hinder thee from thy indispensable duty herein, if thou wouldst not decay and wither: nay, abide constantly in that place and fellowship where thou art a member; let not thy place be empty at any time, if thou art able to go thither. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon," Cant. i. 7. At noon, that is when the sun is up, and shines very hot, i.e., when persecution rises because of the word: it is to be feared, the stony ground hearers did not take care when the sun was up to get among the saints, under the shadow of Christ, in his house, but abode alone, abroad in the word; and so they were scorched. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another daily, so much the more as we see the day approaching."

9. Think often of the shortness of your lives; many think they shall have time enough to recover themselves hereafter; whereas did they but look upon themselves just a going to die, or that death was at the door, they would act and live otherwise; that is to say, be more serious and careful in watching their hearts, and ways. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man will come," Matt. xxiv. 44. We know not how short our lives may be, therefore should be always on our watch. "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord will come." This doubtless (as we find by experience) will be a great help to our leading of a sober, and heavenly life, and so prevent withering.

10. Add one grace to another. "Besides this, giving all diligence add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity," 2 Pet. i. 5—7. Faith being in exercise it will set all other graces on work; "For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," ver. 8. Nay, more, they will make us active, lively, green, and flourishing in our profession, and blessed knowledge of Christ; and that to such a degree, that we shall never wither nor decay in grace and holiness.

11thly. If you would not decay or wither, you must see that you early weed your own

hearts; you know that weeds oftentimes choke the seed, and cause it to be weak, and so to wither; therefore you will weed your corn and your gardens. So must we weed our hearts day by day, or else one sin or corruption or another, will spoil the seed of grace that is sown in them. We must weed out that pride, that inordinate love to the world, that passion, that unbelief, that carnality of our affections, and that hypocrisy, and deadness out of our hearts that remain; this we must do, if we would not wither and decay in our souls, as the stony-ground professors did.

Our hearts must be daily weeded, to prevent witherings.

12. See that you are never offended at the word, as the counterfeit Christian sometimes is. "When tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." Men may be offended three ways.

1. When the word puts them to this choice, *i. e.*, whether they will have Christ or the world; whether they will have Christ and forego their trades, their goods, their friends, their liberty, and their lives for Christ; or forego Christ, forsake Christ for these things. Now when this choice was put to the young man in the Gospel, rather than he would part with his possessions, he bids Christ farewell; he was offended and went away sorrowful. This choice hath offended many in our days, and therefore some have cleaved to the false church, and to human rites and ceremonies, rather than be exposed to suffer loss and want in the world, and bear persecution for Christ's sake.

Men are offended three ways because of the word.

2. When the doctrine of Christ is too hard for their understanding, or because it lies above their own human reason, they are by and by offended. They will have no religion that wholly depends upon the revelation of God's word, but only that which comports with their natural reason, and natural knowledge. They must do something for to save themselves, must work for life, to believe for righteousness, to trust to and depend upon another's righteousness, this doctrine they are offended at. Hence in these days what dangerous books are published, asserting that there is nothing in the Gospel which is above our own human reason to comprehend. Thus the Jews that heard our blessed Saviour say, "That unless a man eat his flesh, and drink his blood, he had no life in him," John vi. 60. They were offended, and went their way.

3. When the word pursues them close, and follows them home to their consciences, telling them that every secret sin and lust, though never so pleasant or profitable, must be parted with; they are offended when it tells them their right eye must be pulled out, and their right hand must be cut off, or begins once to touch or meddle with their Herodias, their bosom sin, they are offended, and they wither away. Now a true believer takes Christ for better or worse, whithersoever he goes, he will follow him, though it be to the cross. Whatsoever he commands us to do, we must obey him, though it be to offer up our own beloved Isaacs, if we would never wither or decay in grace and holiness.

13. Resolve to endure any hardness for Jesus Christ: the design of Christ in persecution and tribulation is to try his people, that it may be seen and known who are sound and sincere, and who are not. A mighty wind many times shakes down an old rotten house, and floods overthrow houses built upon the sands: a weak and feeble person cannot go up a mighty hill; also a tender and sickly man cannot lie all night in the field, on the cold ground, in a frosty and bitter season. So none but such whom grace fortifies and enables to endure hardness, trouble, and persecution, can abide to the end in their holy profession under trials.

4. From hence we may infer, from whence it is that so many professors fall away in a time of persecution. Alas, their hearts were not right with God, their hearts were hard and stony.

SERMON XXVII.

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.—MATT. xiii. 7.

Verse 22, our Lord opens this part of the parable, and shows what are meant by thorns. "He also that receiveth the seed among thorns, is he that heareth, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

Thorns, by what our Lord here declares, do signify or mean two things.

1. The cares of the world, which refer to the poorer sort.
2. The deceitfulness of riches, which refer to the richer sort; both the poor and rich are in danger by these thorns to be undone for ever.

1. I shall show you the nature of thorny ground.
2. Show why the cares of this world are compared to thorns.
3. Why the riches of this world are so compared also; and likewise why they are called deceitful riches.

To begin with the first of these.

What sort of ground thorny ground is. 1. Thorny ground wants ploughing up and manuring. "For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem. Break up the fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." Jer. iv. 3. The meaning is, they should take care about their hearts, and labour to root out the thorns, *i. e.* the inordinate love of this world, and not let either worldly cares, nor the deceitfulness of riches, hinder the rooting of the word, or the grace of God in their souls.

2. The plough must go deep to reach the roots of every thorn. So the root of every sin, particularly unbelief, the inordinate love of the world, and cursed hypocrisy, the immoderate love of, and cares about the things of this life, are not easily rooted out.

3. Thorns choke the seed; they spread this way and that way, so that the seed cannot spring up but the thorns spring up with it. So unbelief and sinful cares spread themselves into many branches, which choke the word and make it unprofitable and unfruitful.

(1.) Pride. This is one evil branch; they know enough, yea, as much as the preacher (in their own conceit) they are rich in their own eyes, and have need of nothing.

(2.) Self-confidence. Who were more confident as touching the goodness of their condition than the Jews? see Rom. ii. 17, 18. Faith makes the soul very diligent to try and search the heart, but unbelief makes a man careless; he regards not his own heart, not doubting but Christ is his, and his state is safe. "I went by the field of the slothful, by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and so it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof," Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.

4. From hence immoderate cares spring up, they have no time to pray, no time to hear with diligence the word of God, no time to meditate; no, all their time is little enough to get bread, and to think how to get out of debt, or how to improve what they have, or increase and keep their worldly riches.

5. Thorns hinder the influences of the sun from causing the seed to take root. So the evils of these men's hearts, particularly the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, hinder serious meditation; by which means the influences of the Spirit are obstructed, also they quench the Spirit's motions, and the common operations thereof, nay, resist the Holy Ghost in this respect.

6. All the showers of heaven cannot make the thorny ground to bring forth fruit, until the thorns are rooted up. No, though the rain falls upon it very often. So such who are filled full of earthly cares, and set their hearts upon the riches of this world, though the divine rain falls often upon them, yet their hearts are never the better, they bear nothing but thorns and briers. Heb. vi. 7.

7. It is a very unpleasant sight to see a field of wheat run over with thorns, briers, and nettles, and it greatly grieves the husbandman to see it. So it is grievous to Christ, and to a faithful minister, to see his hearers so earthly, worldly, and carnal; they cannot attend upon the word timely, nor with holy diligence, the world has got so much room in their hearts,

8. That ground that brings forth thorns and briers is rejected, and is near unto cursing; so those men who bring forth no fruit to God, though the heavenly rain falls often upon them, yet nothing but thorns appear; all their talk is about the world, either bewailing their losses, or speaking of the badness of the times, nothing of the badness of their hearts; "These persons are rejected, and are nigh unto cursing, whose end will be burning," Heb. vi. 7, 8.

Secondly, why are the cares of the world like unto thorns?

Why the cares of the world are likened to thorns. 1. As thorns have their rooting in the earth, or ground that is naught; so the cares of the world have their rooting in an evil and carnal heart.

2. Thorns and briers, as one observes, are dens for serpents, and receptacles for poisonous and hurtful worms. So the cares of the world, unmortified lusts, and an earthly spirit, is a fit den and receptacle for Satan, that old serpent, and the gnawing worm of an accusing conscience, there this worm is bred and nourished.

3. Thorns are every way (as it were) armed and ready to wound and tare him that meddles with them; so they that give way to the inordinate cares of the world, and will be rich, labour to be rich, fall into many "hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

4. Thorns are unprofitable things; the fruit they bear is of little worth, but commonly tends to feed the fowls of the air; so the cares of the world and an heart set upon riches, are good for nothing but to feed the devil and a devilish sensual heart. "Who by taking care can add one cubit to his stature," Matt. vi. 27.

5. Thorns quite cover some ground, and eat up the heart of the land where they grow. So cares and the love of worldly riches overspread some men's hearts, and eat up all their time and thoughts, that should other ways be employed about their precious souls.

6. And as thorns at last are cast into the fire, and are burned; so should we cast all inordinate cares and covetous desires into the flames of the divine fire, that the Holy Spirit may burn them up, and utterly consume them.

7. Thorns must be rooted out of land if ever it be made good tillage; so must all worldly cares be rooted out of our hearts if ever they become good soil for the seed of the word.

8. A man that lies upon thorns can have no sweet rest. So he that gives way to the cares of the world, or that sets his heart upon deceitful riches, shall never have inward peace, joy, and comfort in Jesus Christ; nay, many cannot by the means of worldly cares take their natural rest, their troublesome thoughts hinder them from bodily repose and quiet sleep.

Doct. The cares of this life and love of riches are very sinful and dangerous, or lawful things, by an inordinate thoughtfulness about them, and love to them, are pernicious to the soul.

1. I shall prove this proposition.

2. Apply it.

1. What hath been said, makes this truth very clear; but consider further, that these hearers appear better than the former, their hearts are not so hard; there is somekind of tenderness in these; the seed of the word seems to have some deeper rooting in these than in the stony ground hearers, they hear with more joy, and stand longer in their profession; but yet their hearts retaining an inordinate love to the world, after all, they fall utterly away, and perish eternally.

The curses of this life and riches dangerous.

2. These cares choke the word, and make it unfruitful, therefore most dangerous and pernicious to the soul.

3. The stony ground hearers no doubt did allow themselves in such sins, that this sort could not, may be these cast off all gross acts of immorality, while the other lives in some secret course of wickedness, though hid from the world; yet these lose their souls by overloving, or setting their hearts upon the lawful things of this world. And from hence we may see what a mischievous thing it is to become a professor without a changed heart, or being renewed.

4. That which is the root of all evil, must needs be a most dangerous thing; but the love of money is the root of all evil. And the inordinate love of any earthly thing, or enjoyment, is idolatry; the Apostle positively saith, "that covetousness is idolatry," Col. iii. 5. That which a person chiefly sets his heart upon, or loves with a superlative love, is his god, whether husband, wife, child, gold, silver, house, land, or his own belly. No notorious and open acts of wickedness, is more hateful to God than this; it is as bad as to fall down before a graven image. Moreover, in vain are all those directions that some worthy men give to sinners to get rid of these cares, and love of the riches, honours, and pleasures, of the world, unless first they obtain union with Christ, and feel the efficacious operations of the Spirit in true regeneration. "For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh," Rom. viii. 5, 6, 7. And will until they are born of the Spirit.

True the blade of a visible profession, may spring up, but the seed of the word that should be rooted in the soul, is choked by these thorns.

They may receive the word into their understanding in some measure, but their wills are never brought over to a full and hearty consent, to love and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, or to receive the truth in the love of it; the word of God hath no abiding in these; it is not hid in their hearts.

The thorns sprung up and choked it. Note, that not only unlawful things, but the abuse of lawful, do shut men out of the kingdom of heaven. It is not only whoredom, adultery, drunkenness, swearing, murder, lying, or stealing, that tend to choke the word, but the abuse of lawful profits, lawful cares, and lawful desires; the old world (as one observes) eat and drank, built and planted, married and were given in marriage; why all these things were lawful, but they abused these things. What is more lawful than to purchase a farm, or a yoke of oxen, or to marry a wife. But if

The sad effects of abusing of lawful things.

men will in doing these things refuse to come to Christ, or prefer it above a marriage with the Lord Jesus, the Lord saith, they shall never taste of my supper.

Eating and drinking may become a snare. Eating and drinking is lawful, but when men feed without fear, or eat and drink to make provision for the flesh, it is not only unlawful, but a damning evil; to put on apparel decently, to cover our nakedness is very lawful, but they that dress themselves in immodest apparel to tempt unto uncleanness, or in new, strange, and fantastical attire, that exposeth religion to reproach, such putting on of apparel is abominable, or when people can spare pounds to deck and adorn their body, and can hardly afford a poor child of God a shilling, or will have fine clothes, and yet cannot pay their debts, it is hateful to God, or take more care to adorn their bodies, than their souls.

Marriage may become a snare. What is more lawful than marriage? but when men marry the portion rather than the person, or marry such that they like and never regard the divine precept, in the Lord, and to please his wife, casteth off his profession; or when the husband or wife is more beloved than Jesus Christ; or the marriage-bed becomes a snare, or is defiled, it is abominable, or when a man abuses his wife, and makes her life uncomfortable to her, or takes no due care to provide either for wife or children. How is marriage, though a lawful thing, abused!

What is more lawful than company or society with men? but when a man shall choose evil company, and be a companion of drunkards, it is abominable.

Or what is more lawful than for a man to take care to get bread, and to provide for his family, and in an honest way to keep or get out of debt? but if men neglect the worship of God, or be in their shops when they should be in the Church, or to get bread will take unlawful courses, or to enrich themselves, pinch or grip the poor, or labour more for the "meat that perishes, than for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," John vi. 27, or when carking and distractful cares fill their heads and hearts so that they forget God, and take his name in vain, or steal, it is abominable.

A trade may become a snare. What is more lawful than for a man to follow his trade and employment? And if God bless him, so that he grows rich, he may comfortably enjoy what he hath, but if he in trading over-reaches his neighbours, and tells a company of lies, praising goods beyond what he ought and knows of them, or minds his particular calling more than his general, or neglects the poor, and all acts of bounty, this lawful and necessary thing, is abused. Or what is more lawful than a feast, but if men or women will eat and drink to excess, such feasts are abused.

APPLICATION.

1 Inference. See what ways Satan hath to ruin the souls of men, and to hinder the blessed effects the word of God should have on their hearts.

2. If lawful things when abused may destroy the soul, and be as piercing thorns, what venom and poison is there in those things, the very bare use of which is unlawful or a palpable breach of God's law, what thorns and snares do such walk upon. Our Lord speaking of the people of the "old world in the days of Noah," Luke. xvii. 28, makes no mention of their more beastly sins, as pride, uncleanness, sodomy, &c. And this might be (as

2 Inference. Taylor observes) to show what fearful plagues such vile enormous courses bring upon men, when lawful things immoderately used were punished with the vengeance of God.

1 Exhort. 3. Take heed you offend not, exceed not in the use of lawful things, although you venture not upon things unlawful in themselves, it is bad sleeping upon a bed of thorns; but how then do such wound themselves, saith one, that dare venture over a hedge of sharp and fearful curses by which God hath fenced and hedged his law. O that bold sinners, shameless harlots, whoremongers, debauched, drunkards, blasphemers, and profaners of the Lord's day, would lay these things to heart!

2 Exhort. 4. Do not go to the out-side, or top of your liberty; it is better to pinch thy carcase than pamper the flesh, and so wound the Spirit. Take St. Paul's counsel: This I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not, and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not. And they that use the world as not abusing it, for the fashion of the world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. In the use of the earthly things learn to find out the profit and sweetness of spiritual things; whilst thou cherishes and feeds thy body, think how thou shouldst have food and refreshment for thy soul, and in labouring for bread, think what great pains thou shouldst take for the bread of life; and in thy enjoying of lawful pleasures, remember the joys and pleasures of heaven, that are at God's right hand for evermore,

that have no snare attending them, but are satisfying and eternal. This (saith one) is an holy alchimy, to draw gold out of lead, heaven out of earth, and grace out of nature.

5. When you enjoy peace and plenty, take heed your hearts do not forget God or grow wanton like to Jesurun of old, "who waxed fat, and kicked against the Lord—and lightly esteemed of the God of his salvation," Deut. xxxii. 15. How abominable is it whilst God loads us with his mercies, we should load him with our iniquities, or whilst we receive his wages we should do the devil's work; when God raiseth our states highest, let us strive to have our hearts lowest.

"And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful," ver. 22.

These two things undo the thorny ground hearers.

(1.) The cares of this world.

(2.) The deceitfulness of riches.

A little farther to both these, as to cares.

1. They are cares about the things of this life. (1.) What we shall eat, what we shall drink, or wherewith we shall be clothed.

2. Care how to get out of debt, or fear of want, or lying in a prison.

3. Care about the times, or what will become of us or our children, such dismal days being expected.

4. Being perplexed about losses, badness of trade and disappointments, they are of this nature.

Quest. But are all earthly cares sinful, and unlawful?

Ans. "Be careful for nothing," Phil. iv. 6; that is, solicitously, or anxiously careful, or be not overwhelmed with inordinate cares, they are these cares which choke the word; for not all kind of care is unlawful.

1. For we may take notice of our outward condition, we may take notice of what we have, and what we have lost; yet be content with our present state. All kind of cares not unlawful.

2. Every one ought to have a moderate and provident care of his own worldly concerns, and follow his business so as to eat his own bread, and provide for his family, or he is worse in that than an infidel.

3. We may be affected also with our outward losses, though not to distress our minds, but lay it so to heart, as to enquire why it is thus? Have we not sinned?

4. If we are prosperous in the world, we should be so thoughtful, as to remember what our state was once, and how God has blessed us; "With my staff I came over this Jordan, and now lo I am become two bands," said good old Jacob.

5. How in a lawful way to repair our losses, and how all we have may be employed to the glory of God, and good of his people.

6. Lawful cares may be attended with moderate fear, hope or joy; such that ariseth from the sense of the little worth of all earthly things; our fear or joy should be according to the nature of those things, our thoughts are let out about.

7. Moderate joy for the good things received, or moderate grief for the evils we lie under, are both lawful.

Quest. How may a person know when his care is excessive, inordinate, and sinful?

1. When the mind is wholly, or almost altogether taken up about earthly things, there being hardly any room for better thoughts in our hearts; our thoughts being too many, &c., too frequent running out to these things. When cares are sinful.

2. When we let our thoughts and care run out on earthly things in an unseasonable time, as when we are in God's holy worship; the Jews on their sabbath day, were not to think their own thoughts; what shall we present our bodies before the Lord, and let the world, nay, sin and the devil, have our hearts? God looks at our hearts, sees and observes our thoughts when we are in his service; "their hearts go after their covetousness."

3. When cares or earthly thoughts hurry, and hale our souls and spirits into disorder, or when they throng and crowd in upon our minds, that we find inward commotion, and our souls like the restless sea, be sure then your care exceeds all due bounds.

4. When worldly cares and thoughts are perplexing and vexatious, so that we cannot sleep quietly, by reason of our thoughtfulness about the things of this life, the soul being filled with pain and great sorrow.

5. When our care is more to get the riches of this world, than the riches of grace and the riches of glory; more about earth than heaven, more on time than on eternity; "While we look not on things that are seen," 2 Cor. iv. 18. Alas! but all do not thus; some look on things that are seen, and but little on things that are eternal, or not seen; some take

more care to make sure an estate than to make their calling and election sure; more thoughtful to get bread, or heap up gold and silver, than to get eternal life, or the meat which perishes not, "Labour not for the meat that perishes," that is, not chiefly, John vi. 27.

6. When our cares and careful thoughts hinder us from enjoying what we have, or eats up all the comfort of what we do profess; when a man lies in his bed, as if he lay upon thorns. Earthly cares (as you have heard) are of a pricking and piercing nature, they embitter the soul, wound the soul.

7. When so disquieting, that they indispose us to holy duties, so that we cannot break through the crowd of careful thoughts, to converse with God; or if we do it, it is but seldom, and with much difficulty.

(1.) Perhaps rarely think of the soul, or what that wants.

(2.) Nor on what God has done for our souls.

(3.) Nor can we meditate but little on spiritual things and objects; the mind is so filled with earthly cogitations.

8. When through worldly cares and thoughtfulness we forgot the time of God's holy worship (as some say) alas I forgot the hour when such a meeting was to begin, my thoughts were so hurried with many things. O what abominable a thing is this! certainly they do not forget their dining-time, nor their supper-time, they forget not to feed their bodies, but forgot to feed their souls.

9. When distracting cares have got the ruling and predominating power over a poor creature, so that he cannot recal them, but they carry him away captive; they cannot say as Abraham did (in another case) to his servants; "stay you here while I and the lad go up yonder to worship."

10. When your cares and thoughts are unbelieving and distrustful, and take the heart off depending upon God, you cannot rely upon his promises and faithfulness, or when they carry a man into a lawful way and means, either to get bread, or increase their substance, or in a way that is doubtful, or whether lawful or not. Perhaps it is an unlawful trade, or it is to live upon extortion or unlawful use for money, or by selling of goods for unlawful gain or profit; or above what they may be had for of others, or by pinching the labourer, or forcing a man to sell his goods cheaper than he can afford them, and so feed on his necessities.

Lastly. When we care more for earthly things than for the things of God, "The unmarried careth for the things of the Lord," &c., 1 Cor. vii. 32.

USE.

Exhort. O be exhorted to fly all sinful and perplexing cares!

MOTIVES.

I. It is a breach of God's holy precept; "Take no care what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, nor yet for your bodies, what you shall put on," Matt. vi. 25, 26; will you violate Christ's command or holy precept?

The sinfulness of inordinate cares. II. The sinfulness of these inordinate thoughts and distracting cares are further aggravated.

1. It argues that such are not contented with their present state, which every one is commanded to be; "content with such things as you have;" not what others have, or what you had once.

2. It argues, such like not God's providential government of the world; they seem to arraign the wisdom of God at their bar, as if they knew better than God, what was best for them; O, say they, what abundance of riches have some, and I am poor, and want bread! why is this thus? they have much health, and I am always weak, sickly, and in pain! sirs, God knows that sickness is better than health for you; and may be the riches that some have, are given them in judgment, to their hurt, and not for their good, or perhaps it is all they shall have, it is their portion; and would you then change your condition and estate for theirs?

III. Consider, all your perplexing cares are vain and fruitless; "Who by taking care can add one cubit to his stature?" Matt. vi. 27, this is not the way to get bread. It is vain to rise up early, and sit up late, and to eat the bread of carefulness. It is the worst food you can feed on; care will never fill your bellies, nor your purses; no, it will sooner break your hearts.

IV. Because there is no need of it; one is enough to take care, if he be one that is able to supply all our wants, and willing and faithful also. Brethren, Christ takes care of us; "Cast your care upon him, for he cares for you,"

No need of their anxious cares.

I Pet. v. 7. Again he saith, "In nothing be careful," &c., Phil. iv. 6. Nay, Christ does not only take care of us, but the Father also; "Your heavenly Father knoweth you have need of all these things," Matt. vi. 32. Can you not trust God with all your concerns?

V. To give way to these inordinate cares, is to act below a rich man's child, the child, may be, hath but a little or nothing in his own possession, perhaps, no money at all; but what of that, saith the child, my father is a rich man, he hath many thousands, I shall have what he sees I need; so he takes no care. O learn wisdom by such a child, is not your Father very rich? "is not the earth the Lord's, and the fulness thereof?" What, though you and I have but a little in our own keeping, our Father is the King of heaven and earth, and shall any of his children fear they shall want any good thing; but we must leave him to judge in the case. David saith, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack;" but he might have said, the Lord is my Father, I shall not lack. The relation of a child is nearer than that of a sheep to the shepherd.

VI. It is a reproach, and scandalous to religion; it shows (1.) As if you cannot find satisfaction in God, without the creature. (2.) Nay, it is a sign you are carnally minded, and that you have not your dependence and trust in God, or doubt of his care and faithfulness. (3.) That you are not well taught, or else ill proficients; you have not "learned in whatsoever state you are, therewith to be content," Phil. iv. 11. This was a lesson that Paul had learned: moreover, it shows you have not seen that all earthly things are vanity. See, saith the ungodly, how this man, this woman, who are professors, and boast of a part in Christ, and know how good God is, how uneasy he is, because he wants the riches of this world, or enjoys no more health, or meets with losses and crosses in his temporal affairs; what faith has he more than other men? is this the man that makes his boast of God?

VII. They are very sinful, because they hinder better thoughts, they thrust all good thoughts and heavenly care out of the heart; nay, thrust Christ out, who should dwell in our hearts, in our minds and thoughts, continually, but there is no room for him in this house.

VIII. It is heathenish, and it is a sign you are no better than others, and Mr. Dodd. have no higher dependence on God than heathens have; nay, that you are like them. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek," Matt. vi. 32.

IX. That it is hurtful to your own souls, further appears.

1. May it not disoblige Christ from taking care of you, to take his work out of his hand, and take care for yourselves.

2. It hinders the efficacy of the word and ordinances of God; "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word," Matt. xiii. 22. No wonder you profit not under the word; may be your thoughts are on the world when you sit under the preaching of the gospel.

X. It hinders us from preparing for Christ's coming; "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

XI. It shows that the hearts of such are naught.

1. That they are earthly, and mind carnal things.

2. That their wills are not bowed to the will of God, but that much unmortified lusts remain in you.

3. And that you do not first, chiefly, and above all things, "seek the kingdom of heaven," Matt. vi. 33.

Quest. How shall we get rid of sinful care?

1. Ans. Consider the evil of them, and how dishonourable it is for you thus to let your hearts run after earthly things.

2. Consider the relation you stand in to God, and that you are his children. O remember what a Father you have.

3. Live by faith upon the promises; "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed," Psal. xxxvii. 3; "They that fear the Lord, shall want no good thing," Psal. xxxiv. 10.

4. Believe in the all-sufficiency of God; "I am God Almighty," Gen. xvii. 1; this is enough. Thus Abraham was supported.

5. Consult the wisdom of God, so you will be content with the portion he gives you, or what things you have, not what others have, or what you have had, but what you now have; "Having food and raiment, therewith be content," Heb. xiii. 5.

6. Remember God is faithful, who hath promised that he will help you, and never leave or forsake you.

How to be
rid of dis-
tracting
cares.

7. Call to remembrance your former experience, how in former straits he helped you, and appeared for you. Thus David was relieved, when in fears and straits.

Lastly, Live much on the thoughts of death; a little will serve our turn while we are here.

SERMON XXVIII.

And thorns sprung up and choked them.—Matt. xiii. 7.

SEE our Saviour's exposition, ver. 22, "And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

1. By thorns are meant

(1.) The cares of this life, and that I have spoken to.

(2.) The deceitfulness of riches.

Mr. Taylor. Wealth (saith one) in *spina purigens*; pricking thorns, full of molestation. How riches are like thorns. "They that will be rich pierce themselves through with many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 10, will be rich; they pursue after riches, whether God please to give them in a way of mercy or not, yet their hearts are set upon wealth, though they prove like pricking thorns to him; as a man walking through thorns is pricked on every side, before him and behind him." So saith my author, a man greedy of gain, the craving thoughts of getting, the labour and toil of increasing, the fear of losing, the sorrow of leaving, prick him on every side.

2. Thorns are choking. So it was riches that choked Demas, he loved this present evil world, he would cast off Christ and sacrifice to an idol, before he would miss of riches. Riches choked also the young man in the gospel, so that he could not swallow down Christ's holy doctrine, of selling all, and giving to the poor; multitudes have been this way choked in every age of the church.

3. Thorns, when the blossom is upon them, are deceiving, they seem pleasant to the sight, but let men touch them with their tender hands, they soon wound him. So riches are deceitful things, they smile in a man's face, and secretly pierce his heart; also a man thinks he has fast hold of them, but lo, on a sudden "They take themselves wings, and fly away like an eagle to heaven," Prov. xxiii. 5.

Doct. Riches are dangerous, deceitful, and hurtful things.

1. Negatively, they are not evil nor hurtful in themselves.

2. But in the affirmative, through the evil of men's hearts, and the temptations of Satan, they are hurtful, evil, and deceitful. Riches to a godly man, who hath a heart to use them to the glory of God, are a great blessing, but to most men they prove a plague and a curse.

1 shall endeavour to do two things.

1. Show the evils and snares that attend riches.

2. Show they are deceitful.

3. Apply it.

1. The evils that attend riches, are expressed by our blessed Saviour, viz., "They choke the word;" like as thorns choke good seed where it is sown.

How riches choke the Word. 1. They tend to choke the word by filling the thoughts of such men to such a degree, that the word can have no room in the hearts of such persons to take root; they mind earthly things. They take up room (saith one) where the seed should root and grow. The inordinate love of the world stuffs the heart with worldly desires and motions, so that they cannot think of any of their spiritual wants.

Taylor.

11. They are in their love and affections to such a degree that they are the rich man's god; they prefer riches above Christ. The young man in the gospel left Jesus Christ rather than he would part with his great possessions. And Demas, for the love to the riches of this present evil world, cast off Christ and the Christian religion; "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world," 2 Tim. iv. 10. Not that riches are the cause of carrying away the heart; no, but are as an occasion; the cause is not in them, but in the evil heart of man, that is so prone naturally to be set upon them, they so suit and agree with the corruptions and natural inclination of men's evil hearts.

III. The evil of riches appears from what our Saviour saith, viz., "It is as hard for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xix. 24. He never saith thus of poor men, or that a poor man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven; no, but saith he, "the poor received the gospel." So that it appears, though poverty has many snares attending it, yet riches have more and greater; but not that it is impossible for those who are rich, to be saved; (no, all things with God are possible;) but it is exceeding hard and difficult, to speak after the manner of men, they are so great a snare and obstruction to them who have their hearts set upon them.

IV. The evil of riches lies in their bewitching nature; they have a strange influence upon men's hearts. Riches are of a bewitching nature.

1. This appears by that greedy desire men have after them, when they see them coming; O how restless are they, to add heap to heap, join house to house, and land to land; a little will not serve their turn, Job. v. 5.

2. By the great pains, they take, and amazing dangers they run, to grow rich and great in the world. "He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots," Job. xxviii. 9. If rocks stand in his way of finding gold or silver, he will batter those rocks; or if mountains do hinder him, he will undermine them, or cut through them; what hazards do they run by sea, and what perils and dangers by land, to get riches and honours: they will venture their lives for them, and sooner lose their lives than part with them. The reasons may be these why they thus prize riches.

1. Because they are connatural unto man: man is (saith Mr. Caryl) a kin unto the earth, and the things of the earth; he was made of the earth, or of the dust, and what is gold but yellow earth, or the dust of the ground? He whose original is of the earth, and hath obtained no other birth, seeketh the earth: "He is of the earth, and speaketh of the earth," John iii. 31, and minds earthly things.

Why men so highly prize and esteem riches.

2. Earthly things, gold and silver glitter, or have a shining beauty or glory in them, and so are a bewitching or ensnaring object of the eye. I saw a wedge of gold, and a goodly Babylonish garment; Well, and what then? I coveted them; my eye was smitten with them, and my heart desired them; covetousness is called the lust of the eyes, 1 John ii. 16; it is that which the eye lusteth after, and earthly men walk by the sight of their eyes, they only look at things that are seen; they have no spiritual sight, they cannot see eternal things: and gold, silver, and earthly treasure, are best of all things their eyes can see or look upon.

3. Because they find the continual need and great usefulness of these things: money is a defence, Eccl. vii. 12. Nay, money answereth all things, Eccl. x. 19. What may not a man have of all desirable things here, that has abundance of money? It answers beauty, gallantry, nobility, and what not?

4. It raiseth men up in repute and honour in the world: estimation and grandeur flow in with riches: poverty bringeth contempt; the poor are trod upon, and despised, but the rich have many friends. Such who are of low and base birth, if once they grow very rich, they may be made knights, earls, lords, &c. Money procures great titles, and great places: poor men are not made rulers, and governors of towns and cities, &c., no, they are the rich.

5. Because riches deliver men from many outward evils, and supply men with all earthly comforts; when the poor suffer want, and are in necessities.

V. Riches are evil in respect had to many temporal dangers, they expose men's lives: how many have lost their sweet lives for the sake of their money! the son has murdered the father, the heir the prince, out of love to riches and honour, to get their estates, crowns, and kingdoms: and we might fill a volume of stories of this kind. "Come cast in thy lot with us, let us lie in wait for blood; we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil," Prov. i. 13, 14.

Riches evil in respect of temporal dangers.

VI. Riches are evil and pernicious things, because multitudes of men for the love of them, have pierced themselves through with many sorrows: "they fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts," &c., 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Again, he saith, "While some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Some by outward losses have run distracted; others have laid violent hands upon themselves, and many have wounded their own consciences.

Riches evil because they expose to many snares.

VII. Many by the love of riches have lost their precious souls; and this our Saviour

showeth in this place, in respect of some of these hearers. Therefore riches are evil and dangerous things.

Riches are deceitful. Secondly, riches are deceitful things.

I. In respect of what things they deceive men of.

2. In respect of the way by which they do deceive.

What riches deceive men of. I. Riches deceive men of the blessings of the word of God; they are by the love of wealth cheated of, and have lost those convictions which they have had in their hearts, of the evil of sin, and of the need of Christ.

II. Riches deceive men of their time, cheat and rob them of those seasons they might have had of hearing the word; what opportunities by the inordinate love of the world have many been deceived of! They must attend their trades, their shops, or see to get in their debts, or tell their money, when they should have been at a meeting, or in hearing the word of God.

III. Riches deceive men of profiting under the word when they come to hear it; their hearts run after their covetousness, they can give no account of what the minister said, their heads and hearts were so filled with other things; perhaps they are thinking of what is owing them, or what they have got by this or that bargain, or how to lay out their money to their further advantage, when they should hear, and labour to receive the word of God into their hearts.

IV. Riches, or the love of the world, deceive men of Christ, or of espousing of Jesus Christ; when they are bid to come to the marriage, one hath "brought three yoke of oxen, and he must needs go to try them; another hath bought a farm and he must go and see it; and another hath married a wife, and he cannot come." Matt. xxii. 5; no doubt it was a wife that was an enemy to religion and godliness, but perhaps she was fair, or had a great store of money; however, these outward things, or riches were so in their heart, that Christ is slighted, these men make light of those great things of another world.

V. Riches deceive them of eternal life, they cannot part with their money for Christ's sake; a place in God's house would be too chargeable for them: what give so much to the pastor, and so much to the poor? and may be, saith a rich man, troubles may come, and I may lose all I have at once: therefore he will rather lose his soul and heaven, than expose his estate to such hazard.

VI. Riches deceive men of the love of God; "for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," I John i. 15. And as men by the love of riches are deprived of God's love, so hereby they incur his wrath; some bless the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth, Psal. ciii. 3. God hates a covetous person, and no wonder, since he is an idolator, Col. iii. 5.

Secondly, in what way, how or after what manner doth riches deceive wicked men?

How riches deceive. I. By its promises (I.) They promise peace, satisfaction, and content to his mind, but the poor wretch is deceived, he finds none, for these satisfy not. "He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver," &c., Eccl. v. 10. We see this true by daily experience, let men get many thousands, yet they covet after more, and are never satisfied.

2. Riches promise security; the man thinks when once he hath got them he shall hold them, keep them, and be for ever sure of them; but, lo, on a sudden they fly away; for "Riches certainly make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven," Prov. xxiii. 5. Which denotes two things. (1.) That riches sometimes fly away swiftly, they are soon gone. (2.) That they often fly away irrecoverably, there is no recalling them; they are lying riches they promise to continue with the owner, but deceive him, and may be called lying vanities; yet they are not deceitful objectively, as sin and the devil are, but by means of the evil of men's hearts that trust in them, man deceives himself by them: they are only deceitful through the deceit of the heart.

(3.) They promise safety in times of trouble, and in this respect they deceive men also; "for riches profit not in the day of wrath," Prov. xi. 12. "Your silver and your gold shall not deliver you," Ezek. vii. 9, neither in the day of conscience, when God that way lets out his wrath; nor in the days of outward calamity, nor at the hour of death, nor at the day of judgment, yet the rich man's wealth is his strong tower, (i. e.) he trusteth in it.

VII. Riches do not only deceive the possessor, but the poor also. Perhaps a poor man hath a rich brother or sister. O, saith he, I shall not want, nor be exposed to beg, because my brother is worth thousands: but riches are so got into his brother's heart, that there is no love, no pity, no charity to be found in him to so near a relation, the poor man is de-

ceived; many have lain in prison for debt, who have had rich relations; many times a stranger is a better friend than a brother.

VII. They deceive a man's own heart: O, saith a poor man, had I but the riches of such, or such men, what good would I do? but sometimes when God hath raised such to great riches, they have proved as niggardly and as covetous as those which before they condemned upon that account; such deceitful things riches are to a carnal heart.

Quest. Who are they that are deceived by riches? how may they be known?

1. Such who through love to riches will not attend upon the word, but prefer the world above the word, the present good more than future good. Who are
deceived by
riches,

2. Such who desire more after the riches of the world than after grace: many say, "Who will shew us any good?" Psal. iv. 6; and but few say, "Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us." Many thirst more for gold, than for God or Jesus Christ.

3. Such are deceived, who look upon riches and other earthly things of this world, as the chiefest things or business they have to mind, or seek after while they are here.

4. Such who will run themselves into great snares or temptations for the sake of wealth and riches. What hazards will some men run, though they are told of the snares of such a trade, of such an office, of such a company; yet because it is gainful, nothing can change their minds, but they proceed in it, and will not be dissuaded from it.

5. Such that clog themselves with too much business, so that their hearts are almost distracted; alas, they allow themselves no time for holy duties, no leisure for the service of God, neither pray morning nor night; they regard neither the public nor private worship of God, they have no time to meditate on the word, or on what they perhaps hear on the Lord's day, and so the word is choked by these thorns.

6. You may know who are deceived by riches, by their talk, their speech betrayeth them. "Out of the abundance of the heart their tongues speak, they are of the world, therefore speak of the world." No sooner do they go from hearing of a sermon but (if you observe them) they are discoursing of worldly things, not a word of what they heard.

7. Such who place their chief delight, content and happiness in the things of this world, when riches flow in upon them, that is their greatest joy, and if they lose, or go behind hand, and fear their estate declines, that is their chiefest and greatest sorrow and grief.

8. Such who do that which is unjust to increase their wealth, even dig down to hell, or fall down before the devil as it were, to get riches, they care not who they wrong or ruin, so that they can but augment their riches, and go off with it without danger from men, or from the law of the land.

9. Such whose hearts are earthly, where your treasure is there is your heart also. Now some men show that the riches of this world are their chiefest treasure, because there their hearts are. "They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh," Rom. viii. 5. These men will be rich, that is, their resolution and all their study and contrivance, their hearts are fully set upon the world, let who will take heaven, they are for a present portion, they are for a heaven here, though they lose their souls for ever.

These are they that the riches of the world deceive, and by these thorns the word is choked.

10. Such that hear the word, and make a profession of it, and are counted saints, who nevertheless retain the love of the world in their hearts to such a degree, that they give but a little to the poor saints, nor to support the ministry, and that grudgingly also, it is more too out of fear they should be suspected, or out of shame, than from love to Christ, or to the poor saints and faithful ministers. May be a man that gets his bread by his hard labour, will give more than these persons, though they may be have hundreds, but that is for their children, or relations, not for Christ, not to uphold his sinking interest, no, let that stand or fall, they lay it not to heart, may be when they die, they will give hundreds to this son, or to that daughter, but five or ten pounds they think enough, nay, a great deal, to give to the poor, or to support the Church or ministry where they were members, thus they also are deceived by the riches of this world, and prove themselves part of the thorny ground.

APPLICATION.

I. Look upon riches as dangerous things, and learn from hence to pray Inference.
as Agur did, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," &c. Prov. xxx. 8. O how few pray against riches.

II. If riches increase, take heed of your hearts, and as David saith, "Set not your heart upon them," Psal. lxxii. 10. They tend to steal the heart away from God.

III. Happy are they who are in a middle state, neither rich nor poor, these men are in the best condition of all others, therefore let such be content, though they never grow rich.

Inference. IV. I infer that, such men who are rich, and yet good, great, and yet gracious, have great cause to praise God; riches to such are a great blessing. O what a mercy is it to a church to have many of this sort among them! they give liberally according to their abundance; riches to them are given in mercy to themselves, and to others also.

V. Do not take undue ways to be rich. O beware of that, follow no unlawful calling or ways to get riches, or to get a livelihood, but choose honest trades, and beware of extortion.

VI. Let such that are rich, labour to be rich in good works, and to be humble, for riches are apt to puff men with pride.

SERMON XXIX.

But the other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, &c.—Matt. xiii. 8

But he that received the seed into good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it, and beareth fruit, and bringeth forth some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty, ver. 23.

But that on the good ground, are they which with an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.—Luke xviii. 15.

THIS is the fourth sort of ground, and that only which is good; all the other three was very bad and unfruitful.

First, there are five things mentioned concerning this good ground, or those who are honest hearers.

1. They hear the word.
2. They understand it.
3. They keep it.
4. They bring forth fruit (though not all to the same degree).
5. They bring forth fruit with patience. Though all do not bring forth the same quantity of fruit, yet all have good and honest hearts, and it is the same fruit in quality.

Doct. Some ground is good, or some hearers are sincere and honest-hearted persons.

In speaking to this,

1. I shall show you, how this ground came to be good.
2. Show what a good and honest heart is.

All ground naturally bad. 1. Negatively, there is no ground naturally good, but all is alike evil and bad. Warren. "Every imagination of men's hearts (yea, the hearts of men) are evil, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5. All by nature are children of wrath, there is none that understandeth, &c. Eph. ii. 3. "All are gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, no not one, there is no difference, &c. Rom. iii. 11, 12, 13. Jews and Gentiles, the elect and reprobate, are all alike by nature.

2. Therefore in the affirmative, the difference is of God's making; as he makes one Christian to excel another in gifts and graces, so he only it is that makes the difference between some hearers and others.

(1. Good ground pre-supposeth a previous work of the Holy Spirit, to prepare it and make it fit to receive the seed, at, or before the sowing of it, which is showed by another metaphor; the Word of God is compared to a plough; "He that sets his hand to the plough, &c." Luke ix. 62. The plough is the Gospel, and he that setteth his hand to it, is one that professeth the Gospel. Plough up the fallow-ground, and sow not among thorns, that ground that is not well ploughed and manured before the seed is sown, is bad. Every man's heart naturally lies barren, stony or thorny, until by the convictions of the word and Spirit it is prepared or ploughed up. This way only the heart of a sinner is made good. God breaks the hard and rocky heart to pieces, and makes soft and tender; "He takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh," Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Not that this is done be-

fore the seed of the word is sown, or grace is infused, but it is at one and the same time ; the same word is as a plough, and also seed to these hearers, yet the first work of the Spirit on God's elect in order of nature, as to its operation, is that of conviction. "He shall convince the world of sin," &c. John xvi. 7, 8. And then follows regeneration, a new heart, in which heart the seed of the word (i. e.) true holiness springs up, and such only brings forth fruit. The tree must first be made good. No man can make his own evil heart good, he cannot make himself a new heart, no, that is the work of the Holy Spirit. "Create in me a clean heart," Psal. li. 10 ; it is done by Almighty power, it is a creating operation, "A new heart will I give them," &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. The same seed that produceth faith in the soul, doth by powerful convictions melt and mollify the heart, and also purges and purifies it, and so the ground becomes good. And this work is done at once, in a moment. God works not as man works, man first ploughs, and then sows ; but God doth both together by the seed of the word, and workings of his Spirit on the soul.

1. There is therefore first the grace of preparation in order of nature, the ground is ploughed up ; i. e., every faculty of the soul is effectually wrought upon ; the work of the plough, (saith one) is but *opus ordinabile*, a preparative work ; in order to sowing the seed, the ground must be well ploughed ; there must be no baulks, all the thorns, briars, and nettles must be turned up by the roots. So the Holy Spirit works upon the whole heart, and changes every faculty as to its evil quality, both the conscience, judgment, understanding, the will and the affections.

2. Then the new heart follows, or the renovation of the whole soul appears.

3. There are also the heavenly influences ; the seed is watered by sweet showers, and by the shinings or fructifying influences of the sun : so God causes the dew and showers of his grace, and the shinings and fructifying influences of the Sun of righteousness, to descend upon the hearts of these hearers ; the Spirit sprinkles daily the blood of Christ, or applies the virtue thereof to their souls, and that causes them to grow and bring forth much fruit : and as it is observed, the blood of beasts, applied to the root of trees, makes them very fruitful ; so the heart, I say, becomes fruitful through the virtue of Christ's blood applied by faith.

Secondly, I shall show you what kind of a heart a good heart is, or in what respect it may be called a good heart.

I. A good heart is a new heart, and regenerated heart.

How to know
a good heart.

II. It is a heart united to God and to Jesus Christ : union with Christ makes the heart good ; it is a heart that loves Christ, delights in Christ, that cleaves to him in all cordial affections ; it is not divided between Christ and sin, nor between Christ and the world.

III. It is a believing heart ; such believe with all their heart, or with a whole heart, trusting in Christ, resting on Christ alone, and on nothing else, for righteousness, justification, and eternal life, Acts viii. 37. They that have a good and honest heart, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3 ; such account all things but as dung in comparison with Jesus Christ ; he is most dear and precious to them ; they suffer the loss of all things for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, Phil. iii. x, 9 ; whatsoever they did before, with Paul, account gain to them, is parted with for Christ.

IV. A good and honest heart is a humble heart, a tender and contrite heart, Hab. ii. 4 ; it is not a heart lifted up ; "Behold his soul, that is lifted up, is not upright in him."

Qnest. What is it to have a heart lifted up ?

1. Answ. To be strongly conceited of themselves, as to their parts and attainments above others, because of their learning, natural or acquired parts, or spiritual gifts, casting a slight and contempt upon others, as if they were not worth regard, in comparison of themselves ; some men glory in their knowledge of the tongues, and cast all others under reproach, that have not human learning, magnifying that above the Spirit's teachings, or the gifts and graces thereof ; "Be not wise in thine own eyes," Prov. iii. 7 ; there is more hope of a fool than of him. A humble Christian thinks he knows nothing, or has not the knowledge of a man ; thus Agur ; "Sure I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man," Prov. xxx. 2 : but a proud person is puffed up with a conceit of his own understanding.

2. Such who think others can teach them no more than they know already.

3. Such who are so conceited of their own wisdom, that when they have sucked in a principle, wherein they differ from the whole body of the godly, and have no arguments to defend it from God's word ; yet will go on and maintain it, and though they have no answer, yet will not hold their peace.

4. When the thing is of small moment (perhaps the observation of a day), yet they will lay great stress upon it, and disturb the peace of a whole congregation about it; this shows they are proud and conceited.

5. Such who when they have proselyted others to their notion, glory in it, whereas he should keep it to himself, and not seek to ensnare weak and unwary persons, who are ready to be tossed about with every wind of doctrine.

6. When men aim at self-applause, or are vain-glorious, the souls of such are lifted up.

7. When a man's notions are directly against plain and express Scriptures, and such that cast reproach upon religion, and upon the office and operations of the Holy Ghost: some say the elect were in as good a state and a condition before effectual calling as afterwards, and so a vital union with Christ, and regeneration, is rendered as a small thing; or such who glory in their own strength, or magnify the power of the creature, and will of man.

8. Or when a man endeavours to make others little to exalt himself.

9. Or such who are uneasy under the providences of God, and foolishly in their hearts condemn the wisdom of God, and are impatient under his hand, or seek undue ways to deliver themselves, have a heart lifted up: this is a dangerous thing; "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," Prov. xvi. 18.—God has made no promise to such; no, "He resisteth the proud, but gives grace to the humble; God abhorreth the proud," Prov. xvi. 5. And such Paul shows, "Know nothing, but dotting on questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railing, and evil surmisings," 1 Tim. vi. 4.

V. An honest and a good heart is an understanding heart; he heareth the word, and understandeth it.

1. He understandeth it is not the word of man, but the word of God.

2. He receives it not from the eloquence of the preacher, nor because it affects his ears, but because it reacheth his heart.

3. Not from the love he has to the minister, but in love to Christ, whose word it is.

4. He receives it into his understanding, or believes it not barely with the faith of credence or human faith, but with a divine faith, a faith wrought in Him by the Holy Ghost, or with the faith of the operation of God, he doth not receive the word into his head only, but into his heart also.

5. He understands the worth of the word, he sees it is rich treasure, he knows that Christ is hid in this field.

6. He understands the doctrine of the Gospel, and the word of righteousness, and it is so called.

7. He understands the power and efficacy of the word; he experienceth "that the word is like fire, and a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces;" and that it works physically on his soul.

VI. A good and honest heart is a perfect heart, a sincere or upright heart (i.e.), he wants no essential part of a true Christian, as a perfect man-child hath all the parts, and wants no limb, no member, or no essential part of a man: he follows Christ not for leaves, nor for profit or applause; he is the same in private as in public, and no changes change him; he is for the work as well as for the wages, for the cross as well as for the crown.

VII. It is an obedient heart; he follows Christ whithersoever he goes; he will do whatsoever Christ saith, because he loves the Lord Jesus; such "obey from the heart the form of doctrine, Rom. vi. 17: his obedience is evangelical, universal, and continual; he obeys from right principles, he obeys Christ in every command, yea, in the hardest thing, and continues to obey to the end.

VIII. It is a faithful heart, will do everything as God requires it to be done, that, and no more; neither diminish from the commission Christ hath given, nor make any alteration, nor add thereto; "Beloved, thou doest faithfully all thou doest," &c., 3 John v. Abraham, Moses, and all the godly, acted in all truth and faithfulness in their obedience to God.

IX. It is a jealous heart; such take great heed lest their hearts should deceive them, or not be right with God; "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart," Psal. cxxxix. 23; "try me, and know my reins;—make my heart found in thy statutes, that I may never be ashamed," Psal. cxix. 80. They know the heart is deceitful, therefore are jealous over it.

X. It is a fruitful heart.

Thirdly, What fruit does a good heart bring forth ?

1. Fruits of holiness.

2. It brings forth the fruits of the Spirit, the fruits of faith, love, and meekness.

3. The fruit of mercy, and charity.

4. Justice : Lo, half my goods I give to the poor ; such also will (if able), if they have wronged any man, make restitution ; “ If I have taken away from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”

5. They bring forth much fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty-fold : all do not bring forth the like quantity ; some have not so great a measure of grace, nor like gifts ; one receiveth two talents, another five, and each brings forth fruit according to the degrees or measure of grace and gifts received.

6. They bring forth ripe fruit, and fruit in due season ; it is good fruit, and it is fruit also according to the cost and pains God is at with us ; “ What could I have done more for my vineyard than I have done ?” Isa. v. 4. Some answer not the charge and cost Christ is at with them ; if a man lays out more cost on some ground than on others, he expects more fruit from that ground : so doth Jesus Christ.

7. They bring forth fruit with patience. They continue in well doing, and wait on God for all the good which he hath promised ; they bear up under trouble and afflictions with patience. “ He that believes shall not make haste :” they endure sharp providences, like as the wheat endures sharp frosts, and also abide fruitful in years of drought, Jer. xvii. 8.

APPLICATION.

I. Infer. From hence we may infer, that the cause why many that hear the Word are unfruitful, and profit not, is by reason of their corrupt, barren, and evil hearts ; it is impossible that an unconverted person, or a carnal heart, should bring forth good fruit : a bitter fountain may as well send forth sweet water, or a fig-tree bear olive berries, or a thorn bear figs.

II. That God accepteth of no religious duties, which are performed by an unrenewed person, though he may preach, read, hear, give to the poor, yet being all done by a man void of grace, or by one whose person is not accepted, his duties are not accepted, but are rather an abomination unto the Lord ; neither can anything which sinners can do, bring them into a state of acceptance with God ; none are accepted but only in Christ ; “ who hath made us accepted in the Beloved,” Eph. i. 6.

III. That the hearts of all men naturally are evil, or like bad ground, bring forth only evil and corrupt fruit.

IV. That God alone prepares the heart for the seed ; it is he that makes the ground good ; no ground can make itself good, no, it is the work of the husbandman ; the sinner is wholly passive in the work of regeneration, grace works physically on the heart.

V. That the reason why some men fall away from the profession they make of religion, is because their hearts were never right in the sight of God, or were never changed.

VI. That no sincere believer doth, or can fall away totally and finally, so as to perish ; all who received the work into good and honest hearts, brought forth fruit unto eternal life, they hold out to the end. “ We are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul,” Heb. x. 39. Apostates are of another sort, i. e., either of the stony or thorny ground, and indeed of all either of those sort of hearers fall into apostacy, or perish in hypocrisy. But good and honest hearted professors hold out to the end. This being a great and comfortable truth, though denied by many persons (and some of which I hope are good Christians, whose experiences I am persuaded contradict their principles) I shall here give some reasons or arguments to prove they who are true believers cannot totally and finally fall away.

Sincere believers cannot totally and finally fall away.

I. Arg. Because they are elected or chosen to eternal life, all that are elected do truly believe in Christ, and they are ordained to be saved as well as to be sanctified ; if it be impossible for the elect finally to be deceived by false prophets, then it is impossible for the elect totally and finally to perish ; but it is impossible for the elect finally to be deceived, *ergo*. See what our Saviour saith, “ If it were possible they should deceive the very elect,” Matt. xxiv. 24. Our Saviour by these words shows, it is impossible for the elect finally to be deceived ; though they may fall, yet they shall rise again.

2. Arg. If the elect are not ordained only to be saved, but also to be fruitful, and

that their fruit shall remain, then they cannot totally and finally perish. But the elect are not only chosen to be saved, but to be fruitful, and that their fruit should remain, *ergo*. See the words of our Lord, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain," John v. 16. It is worthy of our noting, that our Saviour in these words anticipates his disciples as to a doubt that might rise in them; he having just before told them, that some branches that were in him by an outward profession, or externally in him, might wither and be cut off, and be cast into the fire. From hence they might say, Lord, if this be so, we may also become unfruitful, and as withered branches be cut off and perish for ever.——Now to prevent any such doubt, he brings in these words, pray observe the scope and rise of what our Lord here said, and then will appear to you the exposition of what he spoke in the beginning of this chapter, which many bring as an argument to prove, that such who are in Christ, may utterly perish; whereas he shows, he does not there refer to his elect, or such who obtain a vital union with himself, but to such believers as the stony and thorny ground hearers were.

O, it is a mighty word, "Ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit." Can the absolute decree and purpose of God be made of none effect? Nay, and "that your fruit should remain," Jer. xvii. 8; that is, that you shall not cease to bear fruit, as the prophet speaks,

3. Arg. The covenant of grace secures them from final falling; Christ has engaged in that holy compact for all the elect, to preserve them unto eternal life; the Father hath put them as sheep into his hand, as their Surety and Shepherd: ————— "They shall never perish, nor can any pluck them out of my hand," John x. 28. Moreover, God hath sworn to Christ the true

David in this covenant, "that his seed shall endure for ever." His seed are all true believers; all that are born of God; this covenant is "ordered in all things and sure," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; it cannot be dissolved nor broken; it is made with Christ for us, who is obliged to perform all the conditions that were agreed unto between the Father and Himself, before the world began; which was to die for us, to renew us, and to preserve us to eternal life.

If the love of God be unchangeable, and everlasting, if the covenant between God the Father and God the Son as Mediator cannot be broken, if God hath sworn that the seed of Christ shall endure for ever; if Christ hath undertaken to preserve us by his almighty power to salvation, and hath said none of his sheep shall perish; if none, i. e., neither sin, Satan, the world, nor any thing else, can pluck them out of his hand, or separate them from the love of God; then true believers can never totally and finally perish; but all these things are so: *ergo*.

4. Arg. Taken from the death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Jesus Christ.

If Christ in the room and stead of all his elect, and hath borne all God's vindictive vengeance for them, and God is for ever reconciled to them by the death of his Son; if they were all virtually quickened and raised from the dead in him, and they did representatively also all ascend in him who was their Head, and are all virtually now glorified in him in heaven; if Christ intercedes for all his elect, or prays that their faith may never utterly fail, if he prays that they may be kept from all evil that is damnable, and may all be with him where he is; then no true believer can fall totally and finally from a state of grace, so as to perish. But all these things are undoubtedly so, as I could abundantly prove: *ergo*.

5. Arg. Our union with Christ is an indissoluble union, and this secures all true believers from final falling. It is like the union that is between the Father and Jesus Christ as Mediator; "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one," John xvii. 23, or into one; into this union Christ prayed all that believe may be taken; "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," &c., John xvii. 20, 21.

If the union between the Father and Jesus Christ can never be dissolved or broken, and believers are brought into as firm a union, then believers can never finally fall, but the former is true, *ergo*.

6. Arg. My next argument is taken from the indwelling or cohabitation of the Holy Spirit in all believers; the Spirit hath taken up his abode in them for ever; "He dwelleth in you, and shall be in you,—that he may abide with you for ever," John xiv. 17, verse 16. If the holy Spirit dwells in believers, and shall abide in them, to uphold, guide, lead, strengthen, support, confirm, and preserve them to the end of their days, they can never finally fall. But this I have, and might more abundantly prove, *ergo*.

Lastly. If all that receive the word into good and honest hearts, do bring forth fruit unto eternal life; then none of them shall finally fall; but this our Lord doth positively affirm, *ergo*.

VII. We infer, that the Word of God is not understood as to its worth, excellency, power, or efficacy by many hearers; they feel not, know not, experience not the worth and virtue thereof; no, none but sincere Christians experience this.

Exhort. 1. O, prize the Word of God; esteem it above your necessary food; value it more than much fine gold; it is with the Spirit the immortal seed, by which an immortal babe is begotten, and fed to everlasting life.

2. Show you are good ground by your fruitfulness, in holiness, in grace, in all the graces and fruits of the Spirit, and in all good duties, good deeds, and good works.

MOTIVES.

That I may press you to labour after fruitfulness in grace and holiness:

1. Consider you were chosen to be holy, or ordained to go and bring forth fruit, &c. You cannot know you are God's elect, unless you are holy and fruitful persons.

2. You are united and married to Christ, that you should bring forth, Rom. vii. 4.

3. God hath made your hearts like good ground, to the end you should be a holy and fruitful people.

4. God hath bestowed much cost and pains on us, that we might be made fruitful Christians, and as the effects thereof, he looks and expects we should be fruitful.

5. He gives us fruitful seasons, fruitful showers, and fruitful shinings, and all to this end and purpose.

6. It is our fruitfulness in grace and holiness that is the glory of believers, and that which commends religion to the blind and barren world.

7. This tends also to the glory of God; "Hereby is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit, and so shall ye be my disciples," John xv. 8.

8. If after all the showers that fall from heaven, any remain like evil and bad ground, "bring forth briars and thorns, such are near to cursing, and whose end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 7, 8.

9. We are created in Christ Jesus to good works, and ordained to walk in them, Eph. ii. 10.

10. No man's faith is known to be true, but by its fruits or good works, though holiness and good works cannot justify our persons, yet they justify our faith, and render us justified persons before men, and to our own consciences also.

Obj. If believers cannot fall away, what need is there to press them to lead an holy life?

1. Answ. To glorify God: besides they are as much ordained to holiness as they are unto happiness, or to use the means, as well as to enjoy the end.

2. It is in well-doing we are to seek eternal life: "to them who by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour, and immortality, eternal life," Rom. ii. 7.

Quest. Why are there so many cautions and take heeds, given to us in epistles the apostles wrote, lest we fall, if believers cannot finally fall so as to perish?

1. Answ. The epistles were wrote to the churches, and all were not true Christians that were got into the churches of the saints; therefore there was need to caution all to abide steadfast, and to take heed, lest some appeared to be but false professors.

2. Because believers may fall foully, though they cannot fall finally, they may through Satan's temptations, and the evil that remains in them, wound their own souls, and greatly dishonour God; and therefore there is need of those cautions and take-heeds. But if they are sincere, they cannot finally fall; "if they had been of us, no doubt but they would have continued with us." Therefore those in Heb. vi. 4, 5, who tasted of the good word of God, &c., and fell away, were not true believers, as Paul in ver. 9, shows, they had not those things which accompany salvation, or do always accompany or attend true grace.

And thus I shall close with this parable.

SERMON XXX.

Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearl, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.—Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

The year of Christ. 32. In speaking unto this parable, I shall in my usual method.

1. Open what the design or chief intention of our blessed Lord is, in speaking of it.

2. Open the parts thereof.

3. Raise one or two points of doctrine therefrom, and in our usual method prosecute them.

The design and scope of the parable opened

1. Doubtless our blessed Saviour in this parable designeth two things.

(1.) To set forth the excellency of the gospel dispensation, there lying in it a precious pearl, which they that are truly wise will seek, and part with all to purchase.

(2.) To set forth the transcendent worth and excellency of the pearl of great price.

This I conceive is the main scope and design of our Lord in this parable.

2ndly, I shall explain the parts thereof.

“Again the kingdom of heaven is like,” &c.

What is meant by the kingdom of heaven.

By the kingdom of heaven I understand is meant the gospel dispensation; (as it is in several other Parables) or the true and spiritual administration thereof; in which the special grace and favour of God is comprehended, and extend unto the sons and daughters of men.

The year of Christ's ministry 2.

To a merchantman. The merchantman may mean, any person who seeks after, or labours for such things that are of an excellent and spiritual nature.

Who is meant by the merchant man.

Seeking goodly pearl. Pearls are the choicest things, merchants trade or venture to sea for: Therefore doubtless these goodly pearls that a spiritual merchant seeks, are some of the choicest things of God; as peace and reconciliation with God, pardon of sin, and eternal life.

Who when he hath found one pearl of great price: by this one pearl of great price is meant our Lord Jesus Christ; and so I think it is taken by all expositors generally.

Went and sold all that he had: that is he parted with all things, which before he valued, or did esteem to be gain to him, that he might obtain this precious pearl, as Paul speaks, Phil. iii. 8, 9. Whether external riches, honours, pleasures, so far as they are sinful, or carry the heart away from God: he parts with all his sins, his unrighteousness; moreover, he parts with his own righteousness, also in point of justification, that so he might have Christ and his righteousness to justify him in the sight of God.

“And bought it:” but it is “without money and without price.” Isa. lv. 1, 2; he came to accept of Christ, or to receive Jesus Christ upon those very terms he is offered in the gospel, viz., freely.

So much briefly by way of explanation of the several parts of this parable.

Thirdly, I shall take notice of two or three points of doctrine from this short exposition, and shall, God assisting, more fully prove and demonstrate the truth of the exposition, and make improvement thereof.

Doct. That a man in seeking after heavenly things, viz., grace and glory, may be compared unto a merchant.

2. I shall show, in what respects a man, in seeking after heavenly things, may be compared to an earthly merchant.

2. Show, that spiritual merchandizes are the most rare, or the most excellent merchandizes in the world.

3. Improve it.

1. A merchant is one that trades or deals for the good things of this world, and he makes it his chief business; so a man that seeks after heavenly things, he trades or deals in spiritual commodities, and he makes religion his chief business: hence saith Paul to Timothy, “meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all men,” 1 Tim. iv. 15.

II. A merchant sometimes trades and deals in things of great worth, as here in this parable is expressed, viz., goodly pearl; what is more valued than gold, silver, precious stones, and goodly pearl?

So a professor or a Christian, one that seeks those things that are above, trades in such things or commodities, which are of very great worth, as the favour of God, redemption, reconciliation with God, justification, pardon of sin, and eternal life; these are things of the highest value, yea, beyond all computation, what may be compared to them! earthly things are but mere dirt, toys, and trifles to these things; no *onyx*, *sapphir*, *chrystal*, *coral*, *topaz*, or *rubies*, may compare to heavenly things, or to the things which the spiritual merchant deals in, and for.

III. A merchant sets his heart, his mind, and chiefest thoughts upon his merchandize; I mean he prefers those things, and in good earnest pursues after them above all things upon the earth.

So a spiritual merchant, or a true Christian, sets his heart and chiefest thoughts upon heavenly things, he "sets his affections on things above, and not on things that are upon the earth: our conversation is in heaven," &c., Col. iii. 1, and Phil. iii. 20, and Rom. viii. 5. Other people mind the things of this world, or the things of the flesh, and labour after the meat that perisheth: but these mind the things of the Spirit, and chiefly "Labour after that meat which endureth unto eternal life," John vi. 27.

IV. A merchant sometimes ventures to sea, and runs many great dangers (in seeking goodly pearls, and after rich merchandizes) both by storms, rocks, and sands, and pirates also.

A merchant runs great dangers.

So a true Christian is exposed to great difficulties, and runs many dangers, who ventures out into a visible profession of religion; on the sea of this world; what storms of reproaches, temptations and persecutions is he oft-times exposed unto? Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of heaven.

V. A merchant at first hath not that skill in trading as he attains or gets afterwards: old dealers have more judgment and greater experience, than such who have newly begun to trade.

So a man when he first begins to seek after God, or to mind heavenly things, he hath not that understanding, that knowledge and judgment in the matters of religion, as an old Christian; he is but a babe in understanding, yet by degrees he attains to more light, knowledge, and experience, especially when he seeks after knowledge as after "silver, and searches for it as for hid treasure," Prov. ii. 4.

VI. A merchant ought to know the nature and value of those commodities he deals in and the whole mystery of merchandizing.

So a true Christian or spiritual merchant labours to know the transcendent worth, nature and value of all spiritual things, and the whole mystery of godliness; indeed this knowledge is not easy to attain unto.

The Christian religion is very mysterious; "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," &c. We read of the mystery of the faith; "we preach Christ in a mystery, even the hidden mystery," &c., 1 Tim. iii. 16. Some things are to be believed, and are articles of our faith, that are above our reason to comprehend, as the three Persons in the Godhead, and the mystery of the two natures in the Person of Christ: there is also a mystery in the doctrine of satisfaction, and in the doctrine of union with Christ, and in the doctrine of justification. Now every spiritual merchant should labour to know and understand as much as he is able, or God is pleased to reveal of these and other great gospel mysteries; the holy apostles, who were teachers of those mysteries, and stewards of the mysteries of God, confessed that they themselves "knew but in part, and saw things but darkly as through a glass," 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

VII. A merchant is very careful of his business, when he hath met with loss, lest he run out, and waste his substance, and so at last be undone.

A wise merchant is diligent and careful

So a spiritual merchant, or a professor of religion, is very thoughtful, and full of trouble, and takes the more care, when he sees, or doth perceive he goes backward rather than forward, or decays in zeal, faith, love, &c., lest he should prove an hypocrite, and so come to nothing.

VIII. A merchant, if he know what pearls be, may be soon, and easily cheated by false and counterfeit pearl. So many a spiritual merchant, if he know not what the person of Christ is, or what it doth consist of, he may easily be cheated of the true Christ, and trust in a false Christ, believe in a false Christ. Some think Christ is but a mere creature, or not God of the essence of the Father, and man of the substance of Mary; and so own and believe in a false Christ; others think the light which is in all men, is the true Christ. And this is from the ignorance of the person of the Son of God.

Spiritual merchants should take care they are not cheated of the true pearl.

So some that do not know what true faith in Christ is, are cheated with a false, or a counterfeit faith. Others know not what gospel repentance is, and by this means they take legal repentance for evangelical repentance: therefore it doth behove all Christians to learn wisdom, and to get a good understanding.

**Spiritual
merchants
trade to a far
country.**

IX. A merchant trades to foreign parts, they fetch their treasure from afar. So a spiritual merchant trades to heaven, which may be called a far country. The church is compared to a merchant-ship, she brings her food from afar; as a believer lays up treasure in heaven, so by faith and prayer they fetch their treasure from thence.

X. A merchant has his correspondent in those far countries to which he trades, who receives their merchandize, and makes returns of more gainful things and commodities.

**Hath also his
correspondent.**

So all true Christians have their blessed Correspondent in heaven, who manageth all their concerns, viz., the Lord Jesus Christ, who receives all their duties, and makes return of precious mercies. They have "beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," Isa. lxi. 3.

XI. A merchant is very careful to attend the exchange, or the place where the merchants meet together, and where they hear, and learn how their affairs go abroad, and there have opportunity oft-times either to sell or buy more goods. Moreover, if they neglect, or are remiss in their attendance upon the exchange, it gives just cause of suspicion they may soon break, and so cease to be merchants.

**Spiritual
merchants
should ob-
serve ex-
change of
times.**

So spiritual merchants are very careful to attend the solemn meetings of the saints, where they hear of and from Jesus Christ, and as they there receive from him, so they make returns of praise to him; but when any one member grows careless or remiss in their attendance on those days when the Church assembles together, it gives cause to fear such persons are in a decaying condition, and will soon give up that profession they have made of the truth of Christ: "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is," &c., Heb. x. 25.

XII. Merchants take great care to keep their books or their accounts well, they are often in their counting house.

**Spiritual
merchants
should keep
their ac-
counts well.**

1. That they may know whether they lose or gain, go forward or backward, which indeed they cannot well any otherwise understand.

2. That they may see a good end of their affairs, and that they are not wronged.

3. That they may have the more comfort in the management of their business.

And thus also do all the saints, they labour to cast up their accounts, i.e., examine their hearts, or try themselves: "I communed with my heart, and my spirit made diligent search." So

1. If professors do not know their hearts, they know not what state or condition they are in, whether they are renewed or not, born again or not, in a state of grace or not.

2. Unless they try and examine their hearts, they do not know whether they grow in grace, or decay therein; increase in faith, love, and zeal, or decay in those graces, and so are in a withering condition.

3. A man is what his heart is, not simply what his profession is, what his talk is, or what his seeming continuance is, but what his heart is.

4. A man cannot know his own heart unless he search and try it; nothing is so deceitful as the heart; it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9.

**Spiritual
merchandizing
the best.**

Secondly, I shall show you, these are the best and chiefest merchandize in the world, or no merchandizes like spiritual merchandizes.

(1.) This is the merchandize of wisdom, and the merchandize of it (saith Solomon) is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold," Prov. iii. 14.

**Spiritual
merchan-
dizes the
best.**

1. Because the nature of those things these merchants trade in, far exceed all the things of this world.

All other things are of little worth to the grace of God, the love of God, union and communion with God, to have God to be our God, and Christ to be our Christ, to trade in gold tried in the fire; Rev. ii. 3, 18; what gold is like that gold? and white raiment to be clothed, to trade with the riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ; nay, the pearl of great price, to make such an exchange of all which he have, as to obtain Jesus Christ, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

II. All the things of the world are but vanity. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity," Eccl. i. 2. But there is real substance in these things, in these merchandizes, "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures," Prov. viii. 20, 21.

III. These merchandizes are best, because they are incorruptible; all other things, even gold and precious stones, are but of little worth, because corruptible, moth and rust corrupteth them, fire may consume them, or thieves may steal the; but neither can moths, nor rust corrupt, fire consume, nor thieves steal these treasures, these goodly pearls.

Earthly things are corruptible, spiritual merchandize incorruptible

IV. The rareness or scarcity of these merchandizes, or these rich commodities, show their most excellent nature; diamonds, precious stones, especially such that are of a great bigness: things are not only esteemed as most excellent from their great worth, but because they are very scarce, and rare to come at; and such that have them are made exceeding rich by them, they need no greater riches: it is not to be imagined what some precious stones and pearls (they being very scarce) are worth.

Now the things that these spiritual merchants trade for, seek and do obtain, are exceeding rare, or very scarce; hardly one man in a thousand that trade in the world, find these goodly pearls; with the pearl of great price: O how few find the sparkling diamond of true and saving grace, and the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, justification, and assurance of eternal life. These merchandizes are the best merchandize, this trade is the best trade that any can follow; though they are such commodities that are very scarce, and very few do find them, yet they are to be had. "Surely there is a vein for silver, and a place for gold where they fine it," Job xxviii. 1. "As for the earth, out of it cometh bread, and under it is turned up as it were fire," ver. 5. "The stones of it are the place of sapphires, and it hath dust of gold," ver. 6. Even so there is a place where these pearls are found, a field where heavenly treasure lies hid, though but few have skill to find them, or seek where they are to be had. "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen; the lions whelps have not trod on it, nor the fierce lion passeth by it," ver. 7, 8.

Wicked men who dig in the earth, those vultures of the wilderness, and ravenous lions and other beasts of prey, seek not for, nor do they know where these pearls, and rich treasure is to be had: "The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes and sucklings," Matt. xi. 25.

V. These merchandizes were bought with a dear price, by the Son of God, he first laid down the full sum that divine justice demanded, and got them into his own hand for his elect; or else they could never have found them, though they have fought for them all the days of their lives: now the great price which was paid for these spiritual good things, tends to show the excellency and incomparable worth and value of them: true, the costliness of some commodities do not discover the worth of them; for some from their fancy may give more for that which they purchase, than it is worth. As such who in getting the world, lose their souls, give more for it than the whole world is worth. But certainly our Lord Jesus well knew (who is the wisdom of God) there is not only a great worth in the soul, which he bought out of the hands of wrath, and divine justice, but also in the blessings of grace and glory, which by the same purchase or price, he procured for his people. Brethren, all spiritual good things which believers trade for, were bought or purchased with the price of Christ's most precious blood; and let none think Christ paid too dear for them, since an interest in God himself whom we lost by sin, is included in this purchase.

Spiritual merchandize cost dear.

VI. They are soul treasures, such that suit with, and answer all the wants of the precious and immortal soul of man, and therefore are most excellent things in their own nature; nay, they do not only tend to supply, and answer all the wants and necessities of the soul, but also enrich, satisfy, and fatten the precious souls of men; "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," Isa. v. 2, 3. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord is upright, and there is no unrighteousness in him," Psal. cxii. 14, 15.

Spiritual things suit with the soul, answer soul wants.

VII. These merchandizes are the best, (and so they prove themselves the wisest of merchants) because of their duration, this shows the excellency of these things they trade in; all the things of this world are but momentary, they are sometimes gone in a moment, and cannot last long, the world passeth

Spiritual things are of an eternal duration.

away, and all things therein, "The things that are seen, are temporal," 2 Cor iv. 18, but spiritual things, which are not seen with fleshly eyes, they are eternal; they are riches, honours, and pleasures, that abide for evermore. The acts indeed of grace may fail, but the habit of grace can never be lost, a man that is a true Christian, can never be undone, he cannot run out of all and break, because Jesus Christ is his Surety, he hath undertaken for him, and hath obliged himself to supply him with all things he needs; he is a believer's great insurer, other merchants oft-times are undone, one storm at sea may ruin them and bring them to utter beggary.

Christ is a believer's Correspondent. VIII. This brings me to the next thing, which shows the excellency of these spiritual merchandizes, viz., their correspondent who these merchants trade with, or that manages all their concerns, and is engaged to make them sure and safe returns from afar; I mean from heaven, whither they trade, and from whence all their good things come: now as Jesus Christ is their correspondent, so he is such an undertaker, that they need not fear any thing can miscarry, which is in his hand.

1. From the consideration of that blessed covenant he entered into with the Father for them in eternity, or ever the earth was, which was not only to die for them, (whom the Father gave to him), and pay all their debts (not only that of perfect obedience to the law), but also fully to satisfy divine justice for their breach thereof.

2. And not only so, but to set them up with a sufficient stock of grace, knowledge, and spiritual wisdom, which this trade calls for, or doth require.

3. And if they at any time through weakness, negligence, or temptation, do decay, or waste any of that stock, which is in their own hands, he has engaged by virtue of his covenant, (as he is their Surety), to supply them afresh from that fulness which is in himself.

4. Moreover the promise and oath of God secures them from utter failing, or being undone, "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ," Phil. iv. 19.

5. They also for their further encouragement know the power, ability, wisdom, love, care, and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ, as he is able to help them, and knows how to do it; so his love to his saints, and his faithfulness every way secures them, as doth also that relation they stand in to him, they are his choicest friends, yea, the members of his mystical body; nay, more than all, his people are his spouse, his bride, his wife; and what will not the husband do for his beloved's comfort?

IX. These merchandizes are the best merchandizes, and these merchants the wisest merchants, doth appear in respect of the terms on which they trade.

The blessed terms on which believers trade. I. All the goods, in which, or for which they trade, are freely given to them, though they are said to buy these things, yet it is, as I said, a buying "without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1. no man can buy other merchandizes without money or money worth; but the great God imparts all his spiritual treasures freely; "Thinkest thou that the gift of God may be purchased with money," Acts viii. 20. Some think they must get some previous qualifications, before they trade with Christ, come to Christ or believe in Christ; and what is this but like bringing something like money with them, they dare not come in their sins and filthiness, but would fain get on some comely dress or garment spun out of their own bowels, I mean their own inherent righteousness, and this they think may render them acceptable to Jesus Christ; but let such fear lest their money perish with them; for all spiritual treasure, or heavenly merchandizes are given freely; "And whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17, the poorest and vilest sinner is invited to come to Christ, and such who are far from righteousness; though thou hast no money, thou mayest be received amongst the company of these merchants. O what good news is this for ungodly sinners, for publicans and great sinners! for such Christ loves still to deal or trade with.

Therefore they are the best merchandizes, because these commodities are freely given, it cannot indeed stand consistent with the design of redemption grace, which is to advance the glory of God in his abundant goodness, and to cut off all boasting, and cause of boasting, to admit of any thing of the creature, that looks like money, to procure a right to these things: nay, what we have of our own which we must part with, yea, even, our best is but like filthy rags; and what are filthy rags worth? what can they purchase? what are they good for?

Believers have the best returns. X. These are the best merchandizes, or this is the best trade, because of the returns, these merchants have from Jesus Christ.

1. They have quick returns; "And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer, and while they are speaking I will hear," Isa. lxx. 21. Here is no staying for

the wind, no delay of the ship's return, it is but asking and receiving; seek and you shall find, find what? even goodly pearl, nay, the pearl of great price.

2. It is the best trade, because the merchandizes are such rich commodities, the chiefest of all is a pearl of infinite value, as you will hear hereafter. These merchants do not trade for toys and rattles, no, but for the richest pearls and precious stones, things of an inestimable worth.

3. Because the returns are also certain, they are sure of succeeding and of growing rich, truly and eternally rich.

4. Not only rich, but great and noble also; All these merchants are advanced to mighty honour or dignity; they are all made hereby "Kings and princes, of whom the world is not worthy," Prov. xii. 26, Psal. xvi. 3; they in honour are the most excellent in all the earth, sons and daughters of God, born of God, they walk with God, and have union and communion "with Father and the Son," 1 John i. 2, 3; and have the attendance of the holy angels; they administer to them, wait on them, guard and defend them.

APPLICATION.

I. See who are people of the greatest wisdom; certainly all the wise men of this world are but fools, what do the merchants gain that trade to India? what are those merchandize to these? what is their gain to the gain of godliness?

II. Admire. Is it not strange, since these merchandizes are so precious, and the riches these merchants gain so great, that so few will follow this trade, I mean trade for heaven, or deal with Jesus Christ, or seek for these goodly pearls! O what folly possesseth the poor; you have no stock to be earthly merchants, and yet refuse to become spiritual merchants!

3. What reproof also is here to such who will venture their lives, their goods, nay, their souls, for the riches of this world; and yet will not venture the loss of earthly honour, to gain these merchandizes.

4. Exhort. Be persuaded sinners, to turn spiritual merchants; labour to recover your lost understanding, and seek after these goodly pearls, viz., an interest in God, pardon of sin, and peace of conscience. O seek after these pearls, and labour after the knowledge of the worth of things, and to know how you may find this God, pardon and peace, which is no otherways to be obtained, but by finding of Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price.

Enlightened persons whilst they seek after goodly pearls, find one pearl, and in finding that they meet with a vast number of other rich pearls also.

3. This is matter of greatest comfort and consolation that can be to all true believers: O how happy are you that are spiritual merchants, who seek goodly pearls, and have found the pearl of great price! O bless and magnify God! exalt free grace, who put you upon seeking heavenly treasure: let your lives be lives of praise, and thanksgiving unto God; and as you have entered upon this trade, never be weary, nor faint in your minds, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; your gain is great here, but it will be more admirable, and greater hereafter. Amen.

SERMON XXXI.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.—Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

I HAVE, my brethren, briefly opened the several parts of this parable, and have also noted one point of doctrine from the first part thereof; viz., that a man in seeking after heavenly things, may be fitly compared to an earthly merchant. I have prosecuted this, and shall now proceed to another proposition.

2. Doct. That the Lord Jesus Christ (the pearl of great price) is most precious, excellent, or of infinite worth and value.

In speaking unto this proposition.

1. I shall show you, why Christ is compared to a pearl.

The second doctrine.

2. Show you wherein the excellency, worth, and preciousness of Christ doth consist.
3. Show you, where he is to be sought, and also how.
4. Show you, what buying this pearl doth denote.
5. Apply it.

First, I shall show you, why Christ is compared to a pearl, to the richest pearl.

Why Christ
is compared
to pearl.

1. Pearls, naturalists tell us, have a strange birth and original. Pliny saith, Shell-fish is the wonderful creature of a pearl, congealed into a diaphanous stone, and the shell is called the mother of pearl. Now at a certain time of the year this shell-fish opens itself, and takes in a certain moist dew, after which they grow big, until they bring forth the pearl. By which it seems they have their birth from heaven in a marvellous manner.

I hope I may without offence mention this parallel-wise with the birth of the "pearl of great price."

Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth according to the flesh, or his conception, was marvellous; God manifested in the flesh. A woman shall compass a man, a virgin, the mother of this transcendent pearl, (as touching his human nature) was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, and when her time was come, she brought forth the pearl of pearls, viz. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

II. Some pearls are of a very great worth. Pliny tells us, that they are the most sovereign commodity throughout the whole world; moreover, he speaks of one pearl that Cleopatra had, which was of an admirable value.

Our Lord Jesus Christ no doubt is compared to a pearl of great price upon this account chiefly. He is of an inestimable worth and value. God hath many rich pearls; but Jesus Christ is the richest and most precious of them all; the holy angels are pearls, and very precious unto God; and also the saints are pearls in his sight; "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee," Isa. xliii. 4. Believers or godly persons are called his jewels or choice treasure; "They shall be mine in that day I make up my jewels," Mal. iii. 17: but what are these jewels, these pearls, to this pearl? All their glory, worth, and excellencies flow from Christ; he makes them precious. But he in himself, and of and from himself originally and eternally, is precious, and a most excellent pearl, there is none like unto him, neither in heaven, nor on earth; he is called "a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation," Isa. xxviii. 16. And in another place he is called "a living stone, disallowed of men, but chosen of God, and precious"—"yea, elect, precious," 1 Pet. ii. 4, 6. He is precious to God the Father, precious to the holy angels, and wonderfully precious to all believers, 1 Pet. ii. 7; he is to the Spouse "the chiefest among ten thousands," Cant. v. 10.

III. Pearls have a hidden virtue in them, though but small in bigness, yet great in efficacy, they are rich, and a most sovereign cordial, being (as naturalists observe) good against poison, also do preserve, strengthen, and revive the natural spirits.

Jesus Christ hath a hidden virtue in him, though he be little in the eyes of carnal persons, and vile impostors, yet such who receive him by faith, find wonderful virtue in him; "I perceive (saith he to the woman that touched him) that virtue is gone out of me," Luke viii. 46.

1. Such who receive this sacred pearl by faith, though they were dead, it immediately quickens them; and raiseth them from the dead to a state of spiritual life, Eph. ii. 1. There is such a spirit in this pearl of great price, that whosoever receiveth it, are immediately brought to life, though they have lain a long time dead in the first Adam, in the grave of sin.

2. The same Spirit also opens blind eyes; such who receive inwardly this pearl, have the "Eyes of their understandings enlightened," Eph. i. 18, though they were born blind; nor is there any besides Jesus Christ can give sight to the blind; he doth not only raise the dead, but also gives them sight; "his life is the light of men," John i. 4, 5. This life was originally in the eternal Word, and not only so, but he conveyeth life and light to mankind, both a rational and spiritual life and light; all men that come into the world receive the light of rational creatures; but none but such who have union with him, receive the light of grace. "Then spake Jesus again to them, I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," John viii. 12. The light of life, and the life of light is all one. Now as he is Creator he gave man light; man was created in a state of light by Jesus Christ, (*i. e.*) in a state of knowledge, of holiness and real joy and comfort; but this light, this knowledge, holiness, joy and comfort,

Wonderful
virtue in
Christ the
pearl of
great price.

mankind loss by the fall; but through Christ, or by this pearl it is restored again; all that receive him have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in their souls: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Great light of knowledge was in man at his first creation, and hence the light of God is said to consist in knowledge; "Having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10. And as it consisteth in the true knowledge of God; so also in holiness, because the image of God was not only in knowledge, but "in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24. No unholy unsanctified person can have fellowship with God: but what saith John: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another;" 1 John i. 1, 2, 3; not with God only, or with the Father and the Son, but also with one another; but this light of saving knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, joy and comfort, no man partakes of, but only he that receives this pearl, or partakes of his divine Spirit.

3. Moreover, this pearl inwardly received dissolves and infallibly cures the stone in the heart, I mean, it breaks the hard and stony heart. None ever truly received Jesus Christ, but found this blessed operation or virtue to be in him; they immediately see the evil of sin, that plague of all plagues, and cry out, O what shall we do; what a good, a holy, a just and gracious God have I offended, resisted, contemned, and rebelled against!

A cure for
the stone in
the heart.

4. Such is the virtue of this sacred pearl, that it expels and purges out the poison of sin, which is in the soul; as such who find this pearl are immediately justified, acquitted, and pronounced righteous before God, and for ever freed from condemnation, according to God's ordination and gracious design and purpose. So likewise by virtue of that faith, by which a poor sinner does receive the Lord Jesus, he comes to be sanctified, and the soul purged from the contagion of sin, and cured of that plague, though some of the old relics of it may remain, Rom. vi. 14; yet sin as to its power and dominion is broken, it reigns no more in any person that receives this precious pearl.

5. Such is the hidden virtue that is in Jesus Christ, or in this pearl, that when a man finds it, and partakes thereof inwardly, it fills him with joy and earthly comfort. Therefore it is said, "We rejoice in all our tribulation." The people of Samaria had no sooner found this pearl, Jesus Christ, but it is said, "There was great joy in that city," Acts viii. 8. The soul hath cause of joy, unspeakable joy, considering how happy for ever he is made thereby; for this pearl is made all in all things unto him who receiveth it.

6. Such is the virtue of this pearl, that such who receive it, are presently wonderfully revived, though their spirits were ready to faint, and die away just before; it strangely revives a drooping spirit, Christ "revives the spirits of the humble, and the hearts of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. There is no cordial can revive a faint and desponding spirit, but Jesus Christ; other cordials may revive the natural spirits, but this revives the precious and immortal soul; it doth not only raise it from the dead and give light, but it enlivens it, and makes it full of activity, and fills it full of sweet consolation.

7. It hath also a wonderful virtue in it to strengthen the heart, and make such strong that receive it, and very fearless, in the midst of all dangers whatsoever, so that they are not afraid what man can do unto them; they are hereby enabled and made strong to perform holy duties, strong to bear heavy burdens, and strong to mortify their inward corruptions, and also strong to resist and overcome all Satan's temptations. Such are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," they are "strengthened according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long-suffering with joyfulness." Such that have experienced the virtue of this pearl, have been enabled to go through the worst of torments; nay, they have rejoiced in the midst of the flames; "We glory (saith the apostle) in tribulations," Rom. v. 3; not only in their future happiness, but in their present sufferings.

8. Such is the virtue of this pearl, that such that receive it, cannot die; as Christ is compared to a pearl, so to bread, yea to the Bread of life: "This is the Bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die," John vi. 50. "He that eateth of this Bread, shall live for ever," ver. 58. It is meant of receiving or believing in Jesus Christ; to eat, to feed upon, to receive, or to believe in Christ, is all one and the same thing.

He who finds this pearl (i. e.) that comes to Christ, feeds on Christ, or applies the Lord Jesus, or the virtue of his obedience, his blood and merits, to his own soul, shall live for ever; that is, he shall not die the second death, Rev. xx. 14, or not die eternally.

9. It hath such virtue in it, that such who receive it, it cures of the burning fever, of

passion, envy, and malice; making the soul mild, peaceable, gentle, and full of pity, mercy, and good fruits, "without partiality, and without hypocrisy," Jam. iii. 17; nay, when once Christ is found and received by a poor sinner, his inordinate love and passion to the things of this world is immediately abated, he becomes dead to the world, and to the lusts of the eyes, and to the lusts of the flesh.

10. Moreover, this pearl is a most sovereign remedy to cure the tympany of pride; it makes the proud humble, laying the soul at the foot of God, even to loathe and abhor himself, and to repent in dust and ashes; and to be ashamed of sin, and of his own righteousness, yea, "confounded, and never to open his mouth more," Job. xlii. 6, Isa. vi. 5, 6, Ezek. xvi. 63,

Thus hath this pearl many most excellent hidden virtues in it, which few ever come to understand, or have the experience of.

IV. Pearls are of a splendid and oriental brightness, both without and within.

Jesus Christ may well be compared to a pearl upon this account; he being the "Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. He outshines in glory and brightness all the angels of heaven; the beauteous and glorious excellencies of this pearl, *i. e.*, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the same in shining with the Father; being the brightness of his glory, the light of light, the glory of all glory; he is the Father's essential glory. The glory or brightness in any creature, is but a faint resemblance of the being and glory of God. But more of this hereafter.

V. Pearls, nay, one pearl of great price enriches him that finds it. He that meets with such a pearl needs no other riches, but is made for ever, as touching this world.

So they that find the pearl of great price, Jesus Christ, or lay hold on him, are greatly enriched; they are spiritually rich, truly rich, yea, and eternally rich. We read of the "Unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph. iii. 8. And whatsoever riches are in Christ, they are his riches that find him, like as a man that finds a pearl: whatsoever that pearl is worth, so far is that man enriched by it, because the pearl is his, he hath the whole interest in it, and right to it; he may say, it is my pearl.

So a believer that finds Jesus Christ may say, Christ is mine, the riches of Christ are mine, they are my riches, I have interest in him. Thomas cries, "My Lord and my God," and Paul appropriates Christ to himself. "Yea, doubtless, and I account all things but loss for the excellency of Jesus Christ my Lord," &c., Phil. iii. 8. It is propriety that makes a thing valuable to a person, and according to the worth of that thing is the person enriched; but though Christ be a pearl, a rich pearl, yet was he a pearl that could not be found (like a pearl that lies at the bottom of the sea) no man could be enriched by him; or if a pearl be found, yet if the man cannot lay any just claim to it, but it is presently seized by the prince or lord of the manor, he would not be enriched by it, nor indeed any ways the better for it. But he that finds this precious pearl, Jesus Christ, it is his own, this God is his God, and this Christ is his Christ, and his God and Christ for ever.

VI. Some men when they have found a rich pearl, a pearl of great price, they know not the worth of it; they perhaps think some other pearls are of equal value, or as rich as that, which they have found.

So some, when they have found Jesus Christ, they know not the worth, the riches and excellency of him, but are ready to esteem other goodly pearls equally with Christ, as the

Christ excels
all spiritual
pearls.

pearl of grace, of pardon, and peace. But certainly this argues great weakness, great ignorance, and that they are strangely beclouded. For what is grace, the pearl of faith, the pearl of pardon, the pearl of peace, and the pearl of inherent holiness, to the Person of Jesus Christ? Is there not a vast difference between the person that thou lovest and hast set thy heart upon, and the portion? Dost thou esteem the portion equal with the person? This shows thy love may justly be suspected. So it is here, if thou valuest anything above or equal with Christ, nay, though it be grace itself, it will show that thou art not sincere, but hypocritical. Though grace is a goodly pearl, *i. e.*, the grace of faith, love, humility, temperance, patience, &c., and also though disobedience and inherent holiness are goodly pearls, which all spiritual merchants seek, in seeking of Jesus Christ. But alas! alas! a Christian who is thoroughly enlightened, doth with Paul, account all these things (though pearls in themselves) but as dung in comparison of the Lord Jesus Christ, I mean the Person of Christ.

Such therefore, that prefer grace, or their own obedience and inherent righteousness, with the Person of Christ, or magnify their righteousness above the righteousness of Christ, or mix it with Christ's righteousness in point of justification, may justly be suspected not to be true Christians, (or at least) but erroneous, if not hypocritical persons.

VII. This being so, it followeth from hence, that it becometh him that finds a pearl of great price to know it well what it is, and also its just value, or the true worth and richness thereof; lest he be cheated and part with it for pearls of little value, in comparison of that.

So and in like manner ought a believer to know Jesus Christ, the Person of Christ, the worth of Christ, the excellencies of Christ, lest he be deceived; alas! he may boast of a false Christ, and think he hath found the true pearl, when it is a false, a counterfeit, or a bastard pearl. Many in these days glory in a Christ within, affirming the light that is in all men, is the true Christ, and deny that the true Christ was ever seen with carnal eyes; or heard with fleshly or carnal ears; nay, affirm that the body of Jesus of Nazareth was but a garment, which the true Christ did wear, or a house in which the true Christ did dwell; and also utterly deny, that Christ is now in heaven above, or that that very body that rose from the dead is now glorified in heaven. But certainly these men are fools; they pretend to seek for goodly pearls, but know not who, or what the pearl of great price is. They know not the Person of Christ, their Christ never died, the light within cannot die, nor hath that any blood to shed; being only an inward quality, it hath no bodily substance. But Paul saith, "He preached how Christ died according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures," 1 Cor. xv. 3—8, and that he was seen after he rose from the dead, "first by Cephas, then by the twelve, and after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." Moreover, there are some who deny Christ is God of the essence of the Father, or the most high God. Now these men do not know this pearl; that Christ is but of little worth who is not very God, the true God; or can such a Christ save us, for we have no Saviour but God only. Christ must be God, or he is no Saviour. It therefore greatly becometh all Christians to have wisdom and skill, to discern between a pretended Christ, or a false Christ, and the true Christ; as it doth behove a merchant that trades for pearls, to know true pearls, precious pearls from false pearls, or else they may be soon cheated, and utterly be undone. Also they ought to know the excellencies of Christ, and wherein he is rich, and why he is so wonderfully rich.

The Quakers know not the true Christ.

A little to open this.

1. Christ is rich as he is God, the riches of the eternal Godhead are in him. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," &c., 2 Cor. viii. 9. Is God rich? Is not the whole world, the whole earth, and all things in it, the Lord's? Even the cattle upon a thousand hills, so rich is our Lord Jesus Christ; for he is God, therefore all things are his.

Wherein the riches of Christ consist.

2. Christ is rich in goodness. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness," Rom. ii. 4. His rich love and favour is infinite.

3. Christ is rich in wisdom and knowledge. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3.

4. Christ is rich in the grace of redemption. "By whom have we redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. i. 7.

5. Christ is rich in glory. "And what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in his saints," Eph. i. 18. And again he saith, "That he would grant unto you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might in the inward man," Eph. iii. 16.

Now that this pearl is a rich pearl, or that Christ is rich, exceedingly rich, as Mediator, appears further.

Christ is rich as Mediator.

(1.) By what God hath bestowed on him as so considered, for as Mediator he "is heir of all things, he hath the Heavens for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," Heb. i. 2, Psal. ii. 8.

(2.) We may know Christ is rich, by considering of the multitudes he hath enriched, even many millions; and yet is not he one farthing the poorer than he was before.

(3.) It appears Christ is rich, "because it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. There is in him not only abundance, but also a fulness of redundancy; he is not only a fountain that is full, but also overflows.

But because I have spoken fully concerning the riches of Christ in the parable of the marriage-supper, I shall add no more as to this here, but direct my reader to that.

See the parable of the marriage-supper opened, Book III.

VIII. Pearls, rich pearls, or pearls of great price, are commonly kept in the possession of noble persons, who are adorned with them, and are known to be honourable and noble persons, by being decked and adorned with precious stones, and rich pearls. No high-born prince but is enriched, beautified, and adorned with the richest pearls.

Christ is the honour and ornament of believers.

So the saints who are noble born, born from above, born of God, are the most excellent in all the earth, and these only are adorned with rich pearls, goodly pearls; grace is as chains of gold, or a necklace of pearl about their neck," Psal. xvi. 3. Wisdom and knowledge, and the fear of the Lord are to be sought for above all things. "For they (as Solomon declares) shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck," Prov. i. 19. "I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain about thy neck," Ezek. xvi. 11. "And I put jewels on thy forehead, and ear-rings on thy ears." Thus all the king's children, or the most excellent in all the earth, are adorned with pearls and diamonds. But though all the graces of the Spirit are as pearls, jewels, and glorious ornaments to believers, yet this one rich pearl, Jesus Christ, renders them more noble and honourable than do all other pearls, whatsoever, with which they are adorned.

Moreover, no person hath, nor ever had one goodly pearl, until they parted with all they had, and received Jesus Christ. Christ first gives himself, and with himself he bestows all other goodly pearls; nor hath any man or woman this pearl, but he is adorned and beautified with all other choice and precious pearls; also the Spirit is first received, which unites the soul to Christ, and then all grace immediately adorn that person, by which he is known to have Christ, and to be an honourable person. "To you that believe he is precious," 1 Pet. ii. 7, or is an honour; and by this believers are known to be the children of God, or the sons and daughters of the King of kings; for none of the base born of this have this pearl, this Christ, nor are beautified with these spiritual pearls; no, they are but beggars, mere slaves, and vassels of sin, and the devil, who are not born of God, though they have never so high an earthly birth, or earthly honour, or earthly riches, yet they are not excellent ones in God's esteem.

APPLICATION.

The application.

You young maidens, would you gladly deck yourselves with rich ornaments, or have a necklace of pearls? Here is one, but are you willing to part with all for this pearl, for this Christ? This is that you must do. O labour for Christ, seek and search to find this pearl, to believe in the Lord Jesus, or receive him, so you shall be richly adorned, and become glorious and amiable in the sight of God and all good men.

1 Inference. 2. See what ignorance is in the merchants of this world; they see a worth and value in earthly pearls, but see no worth in this heavenly pearl; they know not the preciousness of Jesus Christ; they cry, "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him," Isa. liii. 2.

2 Inference. 3. What fools are sinners, who will venture any danger, and go through all difficulties to get earthly treasure; earthly pearls they will go to sea for them, and be tossed upon the swelling waves, the proud waves, and run a thousand hazards, to obtain gold, silver, precious stones, and rich pearls, yea, and part with all they have for an earthly pearl of great price; and yet they will venture upon no danger, run no difficulties to get this spiritual pearl, though it be of infinite worth, and will make them truly happy, in body and soul both, yea, happy here whilst they live, and happy when they die, and happy to eternity.

3 Inference. 4. Furthermore, what folly and madness is in those sinners, who when they hear that there is such a pearl to be had, and also are told how it may be bought, and they have it for their own, yet slight it, and value it not worth parting with their own righteousness for it, or to account all they have as dung in comparison of it. Poor wretches, they esteem filthy rags above this pearl; nay, and others value their earthly riches, and great possessions, like the young man, in the gospel, before Jesus Christ this precious pearl; and others prize their lusts and abominable sins above this pearl; will not part with one filthy lust, if in so doing they were assured to have Jesus Christ.

Exhort. 5. Sinners, let me exhort you to search for the pearl of great price, "Seek after it as silver, and search for it as for hid treasures," Prov. ii. 4, for then you have a promise of finding it. Read the next verse, "Then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God," v. 5. The true knowledge of God lies in our knowing of Jesus Christ; for all knowledge of God as a Creator or a Benefactor, will profit no man to salvation, unless they know him and Jesus Christ, and know the worth of Christ, the excellencies of Christ, in his person, in his offices, and in his work, which they must do, or else they cannot be saved. "For this is life eternal, that they may know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3.

Inform. 6. This may inform us, that it is no small blessing to have the gospel, and to be under a gracious ministration thereof, since there lies hid in it such a rich and pre-

cious pearl. Sirs, what come ye hither for this day? are you not some of those merchants that seek goodly pearls? and is it not the pearl of great price you desire, and long after, and are willing to have upon any terms whatsoever? Well, if it be thus, you will prize the word of God, the gospel of Christ, and the ministry thereof, for here, here he is to be found, as you may further hear hereafter. Some, alas! seek where Christ is not, they seek the living amongst the dead; they seek Christ in the broad way, others think to find him on their beds, by their cold and formal prayers. O know the vein where this gold is dug, the place where this pearl lies hid, and if you find it not presently, yet be not discouraged, if ye follow on to know the Lord, then shall ye know him; remember Christ's gracious promise, seek and you shall find; say within yourselves, we must have this Christ, this pearl, or we shall be undone for ever. "If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins," John viii. 24.

And now, my brethren,

7. You that have found this pearl, rejoice; O blessed are ye for ever, what hath God done for you! how rich are you! you have Christ, and cannot lose him, "He that findeth me findeth life," Prov. viii. 35. You have life because you have Christ.

8. But take heed that none of you are deceived, and place your hope on a false Christ; you heard some know not a true pearl from a bastard pearl, and so by ignorance are undone. O how do many trust in a false Christ, have their faith fixed on a mere creature, their Christ they say is not God most high, but the first creature that God made, and only a God by office. For the Lord's sake, take heed, for there are many false Christs, in our days; and false prophets are also risen up, and have deceived many, yea, a multitude of poor miserable creatures. Some cry up a Christ within, and deny that Christ who is in heaven, i. e., the man Christ Jesus, (as you have newly heard); therefore beware of the error of the wicked, do not let their seeming holiness and outward conversations deceive you. Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and cause his ministers to seem ministers of righteousness. Therefore know, we are fallen into perilous times, no days have been more evil than these are, therefore watch, and sleep not as others do, lest being led away with the error of the wicked, you fall from your own steadfastness.

But to proceed,

Secondly, I shall now endeavour to show you wherein the excellencies, worth, and preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ doth consist.

First, the great worth, excellency, preciousness, and infinite transcendency of Jesus Christ, consisteth in the excellencies of his glorious person. My brethren, I told ye that unless a man know a pearl, I mean knoweth what it is, he knoweth not the great worth of it. So, and in like manner, unless a person know the Lord Jesus Christ, he knows not the worth, the value, the excellencies, and the preciousness of Jesus Christ. We must know who, or what the person of Christ is, if we would his personal excellencies. "What think ye of Christ?" Matt. xxii. 42. And again our Lord said unto his disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Matt. xvi. 13. Certainly this is a most weighty and great point, that our Lord should take such great care to instruct his disciples into this matter, that they might know how or whom he was.

Secondly, The worth and excellencies of the pearl of great price, i. e., the Lord Jesus Christ, consisteth in his personal excellencies.

Thirdly, Christ's worth and excellencies consist in his offices and work as Mediator.

I. To begin with the first of these, it is acknowledged by all that profess the true Christian religion, that Jesus Christ is the only foundation of our faith, of our hope, and salvation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.

And it is as necessary to know who, or what Christ is, or what his person consisteth of, that is to say, who is the true pearl, the true Christ, or he that is the true Saviour: for if any man is at a loss, or doubtful in his mind in this case, or that he cannot arrive to a certain knowledge who, or what the person of Christ

is, or doth consist of, or mistakes about it, how can he be said to know the pearl of great price, or the worth and transcendency of it?

Moreover, there is an absolute necessity of our knowledge of Christ, and that we should also acknowledge, own, and believe in that individual Person, as he made known himself to himself to his disciples, does appear by those two questions put forth by himself, the one to the Jews, the other unto his own disciples, as I just now hinted.

Inference.

What think you of Christ, whose Son is he?

Wherein the preciousness of Christ's person doth consist.

The chief excellency of Christ consisteth in the dignity of his person.

Needful to know whom Christ is.

And unto his disciples, "Whom do men say I the Son of man am?" Peter replied, (imputing some said one thing, and others another. But he, whom do you say I am? Peter then in the name of the rest said.) "thou art Christ." That is, that very person whom he saw with his natural eyes, and who spake unto him, even he was the Christ of God, and Pearl of great price.

Inference. Christ (my brethren) signifies anointed, and so may refer to his human nature, which the second Person of the Trinity took into union with himself, not that he took any man's person into that union with his own divine person. No, the human nature consisteth in the person of the Son of God, not of itself, but by virtue of the hypostatical union, it consisteth in this person.

Mind well, and observe Peter's further answer, i. e., the Son of the living God, that refers to his Godhead. Moreover, consider what our Lord said, and pronounced upon Peter's answer, i. e., "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church," &c. That is, upon myself, or upon this very faith of thine, or belief of my person, thus owned, and confessed by thee, viz., I being God and man in one person, God of the essence of my Father, and truly man, of the seed of David, or of the substance of the blessed virgin. Now upon Christ, God and Man in one person, as thus owned, believed in, and confessed by St. Peter, is the Gospel Church built.

Argu. 1. Arg. 1. And from hence I therefore thus argue, if the gospel church, and every believer, is built upon this Christ, this Rock, or Christ thus acknowledged, owned, and believed in; then it is of absolute necessity that we know his person, i. e., who, or whom the true Christ is; and thus believe concerning him. But the gospel church, and every believer, is thus built, &c., and therefore there is an absolute necessity to know who or whom Christ is, and thus to believe concerning him.

5. If men do not believe, or know, that this individual person is the true Christ, the true Messiah and only Saviour, they must die in their sins; then it is of absolute necessity thus to believe, own, and acknowledge him. But it evidently appeareth, that all such that do not thus believe, own, and acknowledge him, shall die in their sins. Therefore all must thus believe, &c. Pray observe what he saith unto the Jews: "For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. Our Lord doth not here so much refer to faith, by which we believe or apprehend him, but the person who is apprehended: as if he should have said: If you do not believe that I am he, i. e., this my individual Person, God and man, or the "Immanuel. God with us," Matt. i. 23, or God in our nature; God manifested in the flesh." 1 Tim. iii. 16, (i. e.) in that particular body of flesh, the divine and human nature making but one person, ye "shall die in your sins."

6. It is of absolute necessity thus to believe concerning Christ; for if the Lord Christ, who died for our sins, be truly God of the essence of the Father, and verily and truly man of the same substance of the blessed virgin; then such who deny him so to be, do "deny the Lord that bought them, and so bring upon themselves swift destruction." But the former cannot be denied; therefore all such who do deny the Lord, (i. e.,) that individual person to be God Man, deny the Lord that bought them, &c.

Furthermore, my brethren, if the denial of the Person of Christ, or who or whom he is, "be a damnable heresy;" See 2 Pet. ii. 1, then it is of absolute necessity thus to believe concerning him; but the denial of the Person of Christ, or who or whom he is, is a damnable heresy. They no doubt concluded, they were bought by that Christ they preached, but denied his Person, who or whom he was. All men were in some sense bought by Jesus

Christ in some sense bought all men.

Christ, viz., they have the continuance of their lives by his death, or a reprieve for a time thereby from the execution of that sentence they are under.

7. If all our hope of eternal life, or of being saved from hell depends upon our steadfast belief, that the Son of God, or the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, took our nature into union with himself, so as to be God and man in one Person: then it is of absolute necessity thus to believe concerning him. But this is all our hope of eternal life, and of being saved from hell; for if he be not man of that very nature that sinned, (though he was without sin) what ground have we to believe we can be saved by him? God required man to keep the law of his creation, or the first covenant, and man, or is Surety (one in the same nature) must do it, if we are ever justified. For the law being broken by us, it was "weak through the flesh, and what it could not do, God sending his own Son in the likeness of

siful flesh.—And for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," &c., Rom. viii. 3, 4. Moreover, we, or our Surety in our nature must satisfy for our breach of the said law; therefore, as he must be man to keep the law, and die in our stead, so he must be God to satisfy Divine Justice, which none, but one that could give an infinite satisfaction, could do; for the satisfaction and atonement made by Jesus Christ, rises from the dignity and worth of his Person, he being God as well as man.

I shall now endeavour to prove that Jesus Christ, or Jesus of Nazareth, was, and is God of the same essence with the Father, or God by nature, and did in his Divine Person exist from everlasting.

1. By plain texts of Scripture.

2. By arguments taken therefrom.

1. The first Scripture shall be that in John ch. i. ver. 1.

"In the beginning was the Word." That is, (as one well observes) the first step, and that "Word was with God;" that is a second. "And the Word was in the beginning with God," that is a third; "And the Word was God," that is a fourth. He might have shut them all up in this sentence, "The word was God, with God in the beginning." But he puts it into several positive assertions; yea, and begins with the lowest, namely his having existed, "the Word was," and that in the beginning; and then that he tells us what he is, i. e. a person distinct from God, (that is, from the Father) "he was with God," and yet was God, that is, of the same essence.

1. A little briefly of his existence, when, and how long. And then,

2. Of his Person and personal existence, and personal worth and excellencies.

1. He is a Person who did actually exist before he came into the world, and tabernacled in flesh, or assumed our nature: and that he existed all along the whole time of this world, both in the beginning of it, and before the world was, even from eternity. "It is strange (saith this worthy author) that the Socinians should so impudently (in the light of the gospel and scripture) say that Christ began then to exist actually, when he was first conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin, and that before he had only existed but in promise, as the day of judgment doth now. And also such who hold Christ to be but a manifestation of God in man's flesh. God indeed, say they, was afore, but Christ being but the manifestation of the Godhead in man's nature, existed not until Christ the manifestation of him." Whereby they not only deny him to be a person who did manifest God; but also necessarily declare the Christ they own, had no existence until that manifestation of God in man's nature. Therefore he further adds, "For the existence of that which is only and barely a manifestation, lies only being a manifestation of something that existed afore, but itself not till then. And this is even as if a man should say and affirm that what other men call the sun, is all one with what we call the day; and nothing else, which you know, begins in the morning, and ceaseth at night. And is but the shine and manifestation of the sun when it riseth, and appears above our hemisphere, or this part of the world; but look as the sun is a body of light that existeth afore it is day with us, and the appearance of it is that which maketh day, so Christ the Sun of righteousness is not the bare manifestation of God, but a person that existed with God, yea, and was God; afore that manifestation of God made by him in this world. And he is not only the bringing in, or manifestation of life and immortality which was in God; but he himself was that eternal life which was with the Father, as distinct from him, and was manifested to us, 1 John i. 2. So that life and immortality is made manifest by his appearance, as of a person that brings it, and manifests it with the manifestation of himself. 2 Tim. i. 13, and who is said to manifest himself unto us as well as the Father," Job xiv. 21. Thus Reverend Pr. Goodwin.

Dr. Tho. Goodwin.

Concerning the eternal existence of the deity of Christ.

Dr. Goodwin on the knowledge of God, p. 32.

2. We find in another Scripture, that he existed (or was a distinct person from the Father) before he came into the world. "Wherefore, when he came into the world, he saith, a body hast thou prepared me," Heb. x. 5.—And again he saith, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God," ver. 7. Here is a person distinct from God the Father, a [me] and an [I], and distinct also from his human nature he was to assume, which he calls a body prepared for him. A person he is that speaks to God, as one knowing and understanding what he was about to do.

3. We find him to exist before John Baptist; though John was conceived and born some months afore him, John bare witness of him, "and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, he that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me, John i. 15. As God he was before John, and as man he came after John.

4. He existed before the prophets. Job saith, "he knew that his Redeemer lived," Job xix. 25; not that he should live, but that he did then live or exist when he spake those words; he saith not he shall live, he speaks of the Redeemer's life without any distinction of time, past or to come; he liveth, he being God is for ever, or lived from eternity; he is the "Prince of life," Acts ii.; and therefore existed then, and from everlasting. Isaiah saw him; "Woe is me, I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts," Isa. vi. 5. That this was Christ, is evident, saith the Holy Ghost, speaking of Christ; "These things said Isaias when he saw his glory, and spake of him," John xii. 41.

5. He existed in the times of Moses: "Neither tempt Christ as some of them did," 1 Cor. x. 10.

6. He existed before Abraham, as he himself testified; "Before Abraham was I am," John viii. 58. Much the same with what God spake to Moses; "I am that I am, before the day was, I am;" so Isa. xliii. 13; I am, signifying the eternity, and uninterrupted being of Christ's divine Person and existence.

7. He was before Noah. For this is he who preached by Noah to the old world, or to those who were disobedient then, whose spirits are now in prison.

8. He existed before the world was made. "Thou Lord hast laid the foundation of the earth (speaking of Christ) and the heavens are the works of thy hands," Heb. i. 10; how could he make all things at the beginning, if he himself was not before all things, did not exist. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old: I was set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was; when there was no depths, I was brought forth, when there was no fountains abounding with water, before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth," Prov. viii. 22, 23, 24, 25, 30. "Then was I by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight," &c. See Mich. v. 2. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel. Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Furthermore, how fully doth the prophet Isaiah show, that there was a blessed council held, and a compact or covenant between the Father and the Son, about the redemption of God's elect. And Paul shows that this council was held before the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9, and that we had in Christ a promise of eternal life before the world was made, Tit. i. 1, 2. Indeed, can any person think that the whole contrivance or platform of our salvation was not laid in eternity between the Father and the Son, &c.

But this could not be if Christ, or the second Person of the Trinity did not exist from everlasting. If there was a promise made to him, and to us in him before the world began, then it follows undeniably, that he did exist before the world began, but such a promise was then made. *Ergo*.

Another text that proves Christ is God by nature, is that of Paul, Rom. ix. 5. "Whose are the Father's, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever, Amen." Compared with Phil. ii. 6. "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God," &c. So Col. i. 17. "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist, and he is the Head of the body, the church. God manifested in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," Heb. i. 2, 3.

Arguments to prove the Godhead of Christ. Secondly, Take a few arguments to prove that Christ is the Most High God, which shows the infinite worth, dignity, and excellency of the pearl of great price.

1. **Argu.** He that hath all the incommunicable names of God most high given to him, is God most high, or the same essence with the Father. But Jesus Christ hath all the incommunicable names of God most high given to him, therefore he is God most high, or of the same essence with the Father.

1. He is called Most Mighty. "Gird on thy sword, O Most Mighty," Psal. xlv. 3.

2. He is called the First and the Last.

3. He is called the only wise God. "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever, Amen," Jude 25.

The title Saviour in the New Testament, is peculiarly given to our Lord Jesus Christ, not excluding God the Father, nor the Holy Ghost.

4. He is called the Mighty God, Isa. ix. 6.

5. He is called the Holy One. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption," Psal. xvi. 10.

6. He is called the Saviour, nay, our only Saviour.
7. He is called Jehovah. "Jehovah our righteousness."
8. He is called the Everlasting Father, Isa. ix. 6.
9. He is called I Am, John viii. 58. "Before Abraham was I Am," that is, what I am, I will be; and was from everlasting, or a self existence as to his Deity.
10. He is called "God over all blessed for evermore," Rom. ix. 5.
11. He is called the true God. "And ye are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ, this is the true God, and eternal life," 1 John v. 20.

Now what mere creature or created being, did God ever give such titles unto, or call by such names, which are peculiar to himself alone?

11. Argu. He that hath all the incommunicable attributes of God given, or ascribed unto him, together with God's peculiar works and operations, is the Most High God; but all the incommunicable attributes of God are given, or ascribed unto Christ, together with God's peculiar works and operations, therefore Christ is the Most High God.

All the incommunicable attributes of God are in Jesus Christ.

1. Argu. Jesus Christ is eternal; he that was before all things were, is eternal. But Christ was before all things were; therefore Christ is eternal, and therefore the Most High God. Prov. viii. 26, Col. xvii., John i. 1, 2, Heb. i. 3.

2. Argu. He that made all things, and laid the foundation of the earth, is the Most High God; but Jesus Christ made all things, and laid the foundation of the earth, Ergo, Jesus Christ is the Most High God. John i. 1—3, Heb. i. 8, 10, Rev. iv. 11.

3. Argu. He that upholds all things by the word of his power, "and by whom all things consist," Col. i. 17, Heb. i. 3. He is the Most High God, but Jesus Christ upholds all things by the word of his power, and by him all things consist, therefore he is the Most High God.

4. Argu. Omniscieny is ascribed to Jesus Christ. He that knows all things, and searcheth the heart and the reins, is the Most High God; but Jesus Christ knows all things, and searcheth the heart and the reins; therefore he is the Most High God. "Jesus knowing their thoughts said," &c. Matt. ix. 4. "And Jesus knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth," John xviii. 4. "And Peter said, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the heart and reins, and will give to every one according to his works," John xxi. 17, Rev. ii. 23. He knows not only our external acts, and deeds, but our thoughts, intentions, purposes, designs, ends, and aims, and inclinations of all our hearts.

5. Argu. He that is omnipotent, is the Most High God. But Jesus Christ is omnipotent or almighty in power, and therefore he is the Most High God. Christ is not only called Almighty, but the Almighty. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, the Almighty," Rev. i. 8.

6. Argu. He that is omniscient, is the Most High God; but Jesus Christ is omnipresent, Ergo, therefore the Most High God. "Lo I am with you always to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20. "And where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Jesus Christ is said to be equal with God, as well as co-eternal and co-essential.

Arg. 7. He that is co-eternal, co-essential, and co-equal with the Father, is the Most High God; but Jesus Christ is co-eternal, co-essential, and co-equal with the Father, therefore he is the Most High God. "Who being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6, 6. He did not judge it to be any wrong or usurpation to be acknowledged to be equal with God the Father, being a subsistent in the same nature and essence with him. It is not said, he thought not to do this robbery as to make himself equal with God, as the Socinians would read it, no, but he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; he had not this equality by usurpation, nor by gift, but he was so essentially, and eternally. O what a pearl of infinite price is this pearl!

Christ is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father.

The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ bodily. From whence I argue.

Arg. 8. He in whom the whole Godhead, or the Godhead bodily doth abide or dwell, is the Most High God, but the whole Godhead, or the Godhead bodily, abides or dwells in Jesus Christ, therefore Jesus Christ is the Most High God. "For in him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. Christ was not only a partaker of the divine nature, as the saints are said to do; no, but the fulness of the Godhead, or whole Godhead, or Deity is in him, or the whole essence of God. "There are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one," John v. 7. This

text hath so baffled many blasphemous heretics, that some of them would not have it to be canonical, alleging it is not in some Greek copies. Yet as a late author notes, St. Cyprian when he argued for the unity of the Godhead in the three Persons, cites this text. And Tertullian (saith he) asserting this to be the Christian doctrine, *i. e.*, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were each of them God, and yet the Godhead not divided, proved it from this text, *Hi tres unum sunt*; and then he remarks from the gender, that they were not *unus* but *unum*, *i. e.*, not one in person, but one in essence.

Infinite wisdom and knowledge is attributed or inscribed to Jesus Christ, he is wisdom itself, yea, the only wise God, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom," &c.

Argu. 9. He that is all-wise, or infinite in wisdom, or in whom all wisdom is hid, is the Most High God, but Christ Jesus is all-wise, or infinite in wisdom, *Ergo*. Jesus Christ is the Most High God.

The like I might speak of his holiness, he being called the Holy One, and Isaiah heard the angels cry to him, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts," Isa. vi. 15.

Argu. 10. He that is the Holy One of God, the Holy One of Israel, or infinitely holy, is God most high; but Christ is the Holy One of God, the Holy One of Israel, infinitely holy. *Ergo*, Christ is God most high.

III. Argu. He to whom spiritual or divine worship, honour and adoration doth belong, even the same divine worship, honour, and adoration that is due to God the Father, is the Most High God; but spiritual worship, honour, and adoration, even the same divine worship, honour, and adoration that belongs unto God the Father, belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, *Ergo*, he is the Most High God. It is the will of the Father "That all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father," &c., John v. 23.

God the Father doth not command this honour to be given to Christ absolutely as God, but distinctly as the Son in our nature, or as Mediator, *i. e.*, this worship and honour is to be given to Jesus of Nazareth. It is also to show that no less honour is due to the Second Person of the Trinity, because he took our nature into union with his Divine Person; and so as Mediator, became God's servant. "And when he brought the first begotten into the world, he said, let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6. Adore him, bow down before him. "Worship him, all ye gods," Psal. cxvii. 7. And as all the angels of heaven and potentates of the earth, as kings, who are called gods, are to worship him; so the like command is given to the church. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him," Psal. xlv. 11, speaking of Jesus Christ; And thus we find all do that are in heaven and earth.

"The four beasts, and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb. And they sung a new song, saying, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such that are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying, Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever," Rev. v. 8—13. O what wretch upon the earth dares to deny Jesus Christ to be God Most High, or assert he is but a mere creature? Will God give his honour to another, to a mere creature, or to one who is not of the same essence with himself?

This worship is given to Christ as Mediator, the formal reason of which worship is his divine nature, and his having redeemed us is one special motive of it. "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us." Acts. xx. 28. This is the great motive of this amazing adoration. And as adoration belongs to Jesus Christ, so also doth invocation, which is another branch of divine honour.

Argu. 12. He to whom we ought to pray or make our supplication, is the Most High God; but we ought to pray, and make our supplication to Jesus Christ, *Ergo*, he is the Most High God. All believers come to the Father by him, they address themselves to their blessed Advocate and Intercessor; the first martyr committed his soul to Jesus Christ, "He called upon God, saying, Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit;" again he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," Acts vii. 59, 60. Thus also the saints and gospel church were distinguished from all others. "With all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours," 1 Cor. i. 2.

Arg. 13. He that can hear distinctly, and answer a thousand thousand persons prayers, all put up the same moment of time, is no mere creature, but the most High God; but Jesus Christ can do this, *Ergo*, he is the Most High God. If this be denied, *i. e.*, that Christ can distinctly hear, and answer, so

Jesus Christ
hears the
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thousand sat
one time.

many prayers, put up at one and the same moment of time, what kind of an Advocate do they make him to be? or do they address themselves to him as their Advocate at all?

Arg. 14. He that hath power to forgive all iniquity, or can acquit sinners from vindictive justice, is the Most High God; but Jesus Christ thus forgiveth sins, Ergo, he is the Most High God. The Jews no doubt were right in that they said, who can forgive sins but God? That is, that hath power to forgive the offence, as it is against God and his infinite justice. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins—take up thy bed and walk," Matt. ix. 6.

The Son of man, that is Christ as Mediator, he is God as well as Man, yea, the same Most High God, he hath power to forgive sins.

Arg. 15. He that could raise the dead by his own power, and did raise up the temple of his own body when it was in the grave, and shall also raise up all the dead at the last day, is the Most High God; but all this Christ hath done, or will do, Ergo, Christ is the Most God. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth," John v. 28, 29. He it is also that raiseth them, quickens them that are spiritually dead, "You hath he quickened," &c. Eph. ii. 1, 2.

Now from the whole I argue thus, if Jesus Christ be the Most High God, then he is a pearl of infinite worth; nothing sets forth the excellencies and preciousness of Christ, more than the dignity, glory, and excellencies of his person.

But to proceed, he is not God only of the essence of the Father, but truly man, of the substance and very nature of "Mary, and so flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone," Eph. v. 30; indeed if he was not, our finding him could no more enrich us than it might the fallen angels, as I have hinted.

1. He is called Immanuel, God with us, or God in our flesh, i. e., in that particular body of flesh he took in the womb of the Virgin. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Not in every man's flesh, no but in that body of flesh only, he taking that very flesh or human nature into an hypostatical union with his own divine person, and so is both God and man in one person. God was manifested in the flesh, I say, in that individual body prepared for him, or in that very flesh that he assumed, or took into union with himself.

"A woman shall compass a man," Jer. xxx. 22, that is, by a wonderful conception, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, and hence it is said he was made of a woman, and therefore called the seed of the woman, and the seed of Abraham; "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

2. He was conceived of the Virgin, and born of her, and sucked her paps.

3. It is said, "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he took part of the same," Heb. ii. 14, 16.

4. God swore to David, that "of the fruit of his loins he would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne," Acts ii. 30. Therefore such that deny he took the same flesh, or that his human nature was indeed the seed of David, do render the Holy God to be forsworn; which is the highest blasphemy to assert.

5. He is the root and offspring of David, David's Lord, and David's Son; Inference. he is the root of David in respect to his Godhead, and the offspring of David in respect to his humanhood; as he is God he is David's Lord, and as man he is David's Son; which shows he consists of two distinct natures in one person.

6. It was only a kinsman under the law that had the right to redeem, &c., therefore Christ must be of our very nature, or else he is not one of our brethren, nor our kinsman.

7. Nor could he be our Surety, if not of our very nature; because it was man made of earth that sinned, and the nature, the justice, holiness, and truth of God, requires to atone for sin, and satisfy divine justice. And, indeed, if this was not absolutely necessary, there had been no need for him to assume our nature, or to be made of a woman, made under the law, even that law that we had broken.

Therefore from hence it followeth, that it is a most dangerous thing, nay, a damnable heresy to deny Jesus Christ to be the Most High God, and man of our very nature.

Consider (as I have showed) that the chief part of Christ's personal excellency consists in the dignity of his person, or in consideration of who he is.

2. Moreover, that such that deny Christ is the Most High God, or the Son of God by an eternal generation, co-essential and co-equal with the Fa-

The dangerous absurdities that follow the denying the deity of Christ.

Such that deny the deity of Christ render him to be a deceiver.

ther, render our blessed Lord to be a deceiver, or an imposter, and so justify the wicked Jews, in calling him a blasphemer, in saying he being a man made himself equal with God; he telling them that he and his Father were one.

3. If you know not his worth, his great price, or the dignity of his person, i. e., that he is truly God, how dare you give that worship to him that is due to God only?

5. To deny Jesus Christ to be the Most High God, renders all that worship him, or give divine adoration to him, to be guilty of gross idolatry, and it is according to their hellish notion, as bad to adore and worship Jesus Christ, as it was in the Israelites to worship the golden calf, or in the heathen who worshipped them who by nature were no gods; for this must be so if he be not God by nature, but a mere creature.

5. It also reflects on the care, faithfulness, and holiness of God the Father towards poor mankind, and that he in his word leads us into the sin of idolatry (which his holy nature so much abhors) in requiring all to honour the Son as they honour the Father; and in saying he was God, and in the beginning with God, and equal with God, nay, the true God, the only wise God, and God over all; and telling us also that he made all things, and by him all things consist, and commanding all the holy angels to worship him, and that he searcheth the hearts, and tries the reins, and knows all men; what man can from hence but conclude he is bound to give divine worship and adoration unto Jesus Christ? For would God the Father in his wisdom have left all these things on record in his word, had not Christ been God by nature, or of the same essence with himself? I desire this may be well considered.

If Christ be not God most high, he cannot be our Saviour.

6. Moreover, if Jesus of Nazareth is not the Most High God, he cannot be our Saviour, nor ought we to put our trust in him; for none is our Saviour but God alone. "I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour," Isa. xliii.

11, also he saith, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Jer. xvii. 5. If, therefore, Christ be no more than a mere creature, or not God by nature, we are cursed of God if we trust in him, or believe in him, and rely upon him for righteousness and eternal life.

7. Furthermore, then also Jesus Christ could not satisfy divine justice for our sins, which were imputed to him as he stood in our law-place; because a finite being, or a mere creature could not satisfy infinite justice, it being from the dignity of his holy person (he being God) that his obedience and death were satisfactory unto God; and then also it will follow that we are still in our sins, and cannot be justified by his righteousness.

If Christ be not God, he cannot bear our prayers.

8. Besides it must also (if Christ be not the Most High God) be a vain thing to pray to, or call upon the Lord Jesus Christ, because he neither knows our wants, nor can he hear our cries; and yet we find that the saints did call upon him, and we also daily do it in all our prayers and approaches to the Father in his name, nor ought we any other way come unto God. "No man cometh to the Father but by me," John xiv. 6.

9. Again, if Christ is not God most high, he cannot judge the world at the last day, because he knoweth not the secrets of all hearts; "For none knoweth and searcheth the heart but God alone," Jer. xvii. 10. Besides, it is positively said, that "he shall not judge after the sight of the eyes, nor after the hearing of his ears," Isa. xi. 3. That is, he shall not need any to come into witness against any person, or give in evidences against a prisoner, after which all other judges try and condemn guilty criminals.

They that deny Christ to be God over all cast contempt on the word of God, for it asserts he is God.

10. Such that deny the Lord Jesus Christ to be Most High God, and man of the seed of Abraham, deny the written Word of God, and cast contempt upon it, and charge the Holy Ghost with a lie, who testifieth in many places that he is really God and truly man in one person.

11. To deny the Godhead of Christ, is to deny him the glory of our salvation. Shall a mere creature share or equally partake with God the Father, in the honour of such a glorious and so great a salvation as the salvation of the gospel is?

Causus, obj.

Obj. Christ is blessed of God, and hath a God, therefore he is not the Most High God.

Ans. If Christ was not man as well as God, this objection hath something in it; now as he is Man, God-Man, or Mediator, he is called God's Servant, and was sent of God, blessed of God, anointed of God, and hath God to be his God. Sometimes the scripture speaks of him considered as God, or alluding only to his deity; and sometimes it speaks of him as Man, or Mediator, Luke i. 35, and Gal. iv. 4, and so in those places, God the Father is his God, I say, in respect of his human nature, and as Mediator be-

tween God and man; but in respect of his divine nature he is the same one God, though a distinct person from the Father.

Obj. If the Father be the only true God, then Christ is not the true God, but this he himself saith. "That they may know thee the only true God," John xvii. 3.

Ans. The term, only, or alone, the true God, is not to be applied to thee, i.e., the Father, but to God, and then the sense is this, to know thee to be that God, which is the only true God; and as our divines show, this appears from 1 John v. 20, where Christ is said to be the true God, which could not be, if the Father was the only true God, considered distinct from the Son.

How we are to understand God to be the only true God.

(2.) Therefore the term only is not exclusive of the other two Persons in the blessed Trinity, but only of idol gods, which are false gods.

Thus I have showed you, that the transcendent worth and excellencies of Christ the pearl of great price, consisteth in the excellency and dignity of his sacred Person: he being the Most High God co-essential with the Father, I should now proceed to speak to the second thing, viz., further to open more particularly his personal excellencies as God-Man, but that I will leave to the next time.

APPLICATION.

I. I infer from hence, that such who deny Christ to be the Most High God, are grand heretics, and so in a fearful state and condition.

II. And as bad heretics they are, and in the like gall of bitterness, who deny him to be man of the seed of David. Both these sorts of deceivers deny the Lord that bought them. Beware therefore of their pernicious principles, and deceitful arguing, who tell you, because the whole lump of the first Adam was corrupted, if Christ took of the nature of the first Adam, he could not be without sin, and so needed to offer up a sacrifice for himself, as the priest under the law did. Thus they argue.

1. Ans. Could not God by the overshadowing the blessed virgin in that hypostatical union, sanctify that part of her nature, which he so took into union with himself.

2. He did not take the person of any man unto union with his divine person, but only the nature of man; for we see not how any one man begotten in the common manner of generation, could be freed from the imputation of Adam's sin and natural defilement thereof; but Christ in respect of his human nature, being no one person proceeding from the first Adam by the common way of natural generation, but being begotten in the womb of the virgin by the Holy Ghost, and the human nature, body and soul, subsisting only in the Person of the Son of God, hence he could not come under the first Adam's sin, as being naturally guilty thereof, but was holy and pure from original defilement.

3. And since the Holy Ghost bears witness that he was of David's seed according to the flesh, and yet born without sin, we ought steadfastly to believe this testimony, and make it an article of our faith, though our weak capacities cannot fully comprehend how this could be, and it argues great pride in any otherwise to think or affirm, because their narrow and dark reason cannot take it in, or their judgments conceive of it, or give a demonstration thereof: yet what reason can any give, that he that proceeded not by propagation or in a natural way by common generation, or as being no individual person from Adam's loins (subsisting of himself before the hypostatical union) should be guilty of his sin: either as Adam was a federal head, or otherwise, I see not.

4. Take heed who you hear, you know not how some very near you favour one Calvin's abominable heresies.

5. Let believers comfort themselves with the thoughts of the pre-existence of their Head: "Ye know him that was from the beginning, which ye have heard," &c, 1 John i. 1, 2.

6. O trust in him, and cleave to him, as your joy, chiefest delight, and choicest treasure; "All things being made by him and for him; who was the same yesterday, is today, and will be for ever," Heb. xiii. 8.

7. Adore him, say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12.

8. Also admire his love and great condescension in taking our nature into union with his divine person, and live to him all your days.

SERMON XXXII.

Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, &c.—Matt. xiii. 45, 26.

THE doctrine, my brethren, that I am upon is this, viz., that Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price, is most precious, excellent, or of infinite worth and value.

I have gone through the first thing, proposed under the second general head of discourse, viz., to show you wherein the infinite worth and excellencies of our Lord Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price, doth consist, viz., in respect unto his person; he being the Most High God, or the only begotten of the Father, very God, and yet truly man, in one glorious Person.

Secondly, I shall now proceed to show you, it doth consist also in other of his personal excellencies, as also in respect of that honour God hath conferred on him, and in what he hath made him to be unto his church.

But first let me sum up that which I said the last day, in respect of his person, in one or two arguments.

The former demonstration of Christ's glory summed up.

I. Argu. That person who is truly and really God, God by nature, or the Most High God, co-eternal, co-essential, and co-equal with the Father, is a most excellent person, and infinitely or inconceivably glorious: but this I have proved Jesus Christ is, Ergo. And therefore I said the excellencies of his Person is the chiefest part of his personal excellencies.

Let this always be well considered, viz., that all the perfections of the adorable Deity, or Godhead of the second Person, are ascribed to Jesus Christ, or to Jesus of Nazareth, or to Christ, considered as Mediator; and that as he is not Jesus Christ without his humanity: for as the body is not the whole person of a complete man, without the soul, so the human nature of Christ is not the complete and individual person of Jesus of Nazareth, or the Man Christ Jesus, without his Godhead or divine nature, so that all the perfections of the eternal God, I say, meet in, and belong to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I do not mean that God only is in that Person, but that that very Person is God: for that which constitutes a thing, or is an essential of it, or that of which that thing doth consist, if that essential part be wanting, that thing cannot be said to be there; we do not say the body or external part of a man is the man without his soul, but we call it the body of a man: so Christ is no real person, no Christ without his Deity, because the human nature which the Son of God took into union with his Divine Person, doth not subsist of or in itself, (though a human body and soul) but in the Divine Person of the Son of God.

All the perfections of God the Father meet in Christ.

So that both natures constitute the Lord Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

2. Argu. He that is eternal, or from everlasting, omnipotent, omniscient, infinitely holy, infinitely wise, that is, infinitely just and true, infinitely good and patient, or in whose person all other glorious perfections of the blessed God shines forth, so that "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," Heb. i. 2, 3, is a most excellent, and a most glorious Person; but all these perfections I have proved are in Jesus Christ our Redeemer, therefore he is a most excellent and a most glorious Person.

Indeed were not Jesus Christ infinitely good, and so the Most High God, we ought not to make him our chiefest good, nor place our chiefest happiness in him, nor make him to be the only object of our affections, so as to love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength. For it would be horrid wickedness thus to do, in giving that glory of God unto another, which is peculiar to himself. Moreover, was not Jesus Christ infinitely patient, he could not bear all those horrid reproaches, contempt, and indignities, that are cast upon him in these (as well as in former) days; how is he degraded in his Person? In his love, mercy, and patience and goodness? How is his name blasphemed, his authority, power, and dignity contemned, his ordinances slighted, and his members torn in pieces and trodden under foot? O what is the patience, long-suffering, and forbearance of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Heretics, such as are the Arians, Socinians, Eutichians, and Cassinians, blaspheme him, ungod him, and take the crown off his head, rendering him no more than a mere creature. The Quakers utterly deny he hath any personal existence, or that he is an individual Person or God-Man, now in heaven above, but strive to make people believe he is nothing

but a mere inward or divine quality of light or power in all men. And profane and ungodly sinners swear and blaspheme his name, and swear by his blood and wounds every day. and O how doth he bear and forbear with all these grand abuses and indignities! Was he no more than a man, and could be revenged upon these blasphemers and contemners of his person, his glory, and his authority, would he not soon do it? nay, had long ago utterly consumed and destroyed them in his anger, certainly he is the Most High God, one endowed with infinite patience, evidently appears from hence.

Secondly, to proceed, the Lord Jesus Christ hath other personal excellencies, considered God-man, now glorified in heaven.

1. His person is the most glorious and ineffable effect of divine wisdom. God's acts or works of creation in making this world, with men and angels, and in indowing mankind with excellent principles of a rational intelligent nature, and a conscience attesting his subjection and subordination, to God and also his works of divine providence, are all glorious effects of his great wisdom and power. But the divine excellencies of the person of Jesus Christ, as the foundation of the new creation, and as the mystery of godliness, were the chief and most ineffable effects of God's glorious wisdom, as reverend Owen showeth—not of his divine person absolutely considered as a distinct person from the Father, or as simply God; for as so considered he is not the effect of divine wisdom and power, but the essential wisdom and power of God; but we speak of him as incarnate, as he assumed our nature into personal union and subsistence with himself.

See Dr. Owen on the person of Christ.

His conception in the womb of the virgin, as to the integrity of human nature (saith he) was a miraculous operation of divine power, but the prevention of that nature from any subsistence of its own, by its assumption into personal union with the Son of God, in the first instance of its conception, is that which is above all miracles; a mystery it is, and of those dimensions as no creature can comprehend, &c., so far above the order of all creating or providential operations, that it wholly transcends the sphere of them that are most miraculous. Herein God did glorify all the properties of the divine nature, acting in a way of infinite wisdom, grace, and condescension. The depths of the mystery hereof, are open only unto him whose understanding is infinite, and which no created understanding can comprehend. All things were produced and effected by an outward emanation of power from God in creation, "He said, let there be light, and there was light." But this assumption of our nature into hypostatical union with the Son of God, this constitution of one and the same individual person, in two natures so infinitely distinct as those of God and man; whereby the eternal was made in time, the infinite became finite, the immortal mortal, yet continuing eternal, infinite, immortal, is that singular expression of divine wisdom, goodness, and power, wherein God will be admired and glorified unto all eternity. Herein was that change introduced into the whole first creation, whereby the blessed angels were exalted, and Satan and his works ruined, mankind recovered from all dismal apostacy, all things made new, all things in heaven and earth reconciled and gathered into one head, and a revenue of eternal glory raised unto God, incomparably above what the first constitution of all things, in order of nature, could yield unto him.

The human nature of Christ subsisted not of itself, but in the divine nature.

The mysteriousness of the assumption of the human nature, into union with the divine wisdom purpose, and design of God therein, wonderfully tends to set forth the personal excellencies of Jesus Christ. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," John i. 14, but what word was this? even that which was in the beginning, and which was God; and yet a person distinct from God, and from hence said to be with God, and he also who made all things. "The word was made flesh," not by any change of his own nature or essence (as some heretics assert) nor by any transubstantiation of the divine nature into the human, nor by ceasing to be what it was; but by becoming what he was not, in taking our nature to his own, to be his own, whereby he dwelt among us.

How the Word was said to be made flesh.

Dr. Owen.

Herein shines forth the personal excellencies of Jesus Christ, and this is the glory of the Christian religion, the basis and foundation that bears the whole superstructure, and the root whereon it grows, as the Dr. well observed, natural religion in its first constitution, in the state of pure incorrupted nature, was orderly, beautiful, and glorious; man being made in the image of God, was fit and able to glorify him as God. But whereas what perfection God had communicated unto our nature, he having not united it unto himself in a personal union, the fabric of it quickly fell to the ground, the want of this foundation made it obnoxious unto ruin; God manifested herein that no gracious relation between him and our nature, could be so near and intimate, nor stable and permanent, unless our nature was as-

sumed into personal union and subsistence with himself, on this consideration let us by faith behold Christ, and apprehend him to be, as indeed he is, the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation; and thus looking upon him let us admire him, as the pearl of great price, who puts a glory upon the whole of our religion, and on all his whole church, and on all who are united to him, "in whom all things consist," Col. i. 17, and who is the "chiefest among ten thousand," Cant. v. 10.

Christ the
great re-
pository of
all divine
truth.

Dr. Owen.

Thirdly, the glory and personal excellencies of Christ appear further, in that he is the great storehouse, or repository of all sacred truth, whether truth be considered essentially, or declaratively, the first is God himself, the other is the councils of his will; as Christ is the same God and essence with the Father, he is essentially the truth, and as God-man or Mediator, he declareth or maketh known all truth, or the whole council and will of God, "For no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John i. 18. Christ therefore is the truth (1.) Essential as God, and (2.) Substantially in opposition to types and shadows; and (3.) he is the truth efficiently, as all truth is by him fully and effectually declared; and also (4.) subjectively, as all divine truth relating to the saving knowledge of God, is treasured up in him; he may therefore well say, I am the truth. And therefore we, if we would know the truth, we must look for it as it is in Jesus.—For

1. Christ is the light of truth, whatever light of grace, love, and truth shines into our hearts, it is as it proceeds from him; it is made known and revealed by him, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3; that is, whatsoever is needful for us to know, concerning God, or our justification, vocation, sanctification, and eternal life; or of his will, councils, and what we are to believe and practice.

2. In respect of efficacy or power Christ is the truth, it is from the person of Christ, that all divine and efficacious influences and operations of grace proceed: as light, heat, and fruitfulness, flow from the sun, therefore they who reject the person of Christ, or are not united to him; or upon whom he hath not yet ever shone, or sent forth his special and most powerful influences, are dead, barren, dark, and undone creatures.

Fourthly, the personal excellencies of Christ shine forth in respect had to his offices as king, priest, and prophet, and in his exercise of each of them. But pray note, that the exercise of all his offices do depend upon the excellency of his person, as being God, and not man only, for his being God gave efficacy to his blessed sacrifice, which he once offered up for sin.

The glory
of Christ's
kingly of-
fice.

1. As being God, he hath all power as a king, to subdue us to himself, and to vanquish all our enemies, whether without or within, as sin, Satan, the world, death, and the grave.

2. And as being God, he only is able to execute his prophetical office.

The glory
of Christ's
prophetical
office.

(1.) For how else could he have took the charge of the church, and every believer from the beginning of the world, and before his incarnation?

(2.) How else could he now teach, guide, and influence the whole universal church, and every member thereof.

(3.) How else could he have inspired the prophets, the apostles, and all his ministers from the beginning to the end of the world?

(4.) How else could he give us hearts to understand, as well as understanding to know and do his will?

(5.) How else could he be with his saints, to teach, guide, and lead them to the end of the world?

(6.) Else how could he make his own word efficacious and effectual to the souls of sinners, or by his speaking make the dead hear, and open blind eyes?

(7.) How else could he teach the simple, the ignorant, nay fools, so that they shall not err, and make them wiser than the prudent and all the wise men of this world?

(8.) How else could he teach men, and seal up instruction to them in the night, when deep sleep has seized upon them? who but God can do these things?

Put all now together, and then consider what a glorious person Jesus Christ is, as he is a priest, a king, and a prophet.

The glory
of Christ's
priestly
office.

1. What a priest is he that is both the altar, the sacrifice, and the priest also that offers up that sacrifice?

2. What a priest is he that did sacrifice himself, or offers up himself a sacrifice unto God!

3. What a priest is he, who by the worth of his sacrifice hath by one offering for ever

fully atoned, and satisfied infinite justice for all the sins of God's people, both past, present, and to come, and has left no room for any other atoning and wrath-appeasing sacrifice, to be offered up to God for ever, and also himself sprinkles his own blood, and pleads its virtue now in heaven for us.

Secondly, What a King is he, that is King of kings, yea the Prince of all the kings of the earth, and that gives kings their authority, their power, their wisdom (if they rule well) and their kingdoms also unto them, that can set up one, pull down another at his pleasure.

2. What a King he is that is king of heaven and of earth, and of hell, that has power and authority over men, angels, and devils, that can subdue in one moment tyrant sin, tyrant world, tyrant Satan, tyrant flesh, tyrant death, and tyrant grave; that can by one word of his mouth change the heart, enlighten the mind, bow the rebellious will, regulate disorderly affections, deliver from all dangers, scatter all fears, strengthen under all weaknesses, and give courage and undauntedness of spirit to the faint and weak-hearted ones.

3. What a Prophet is he. (1). That knows all the whole will and councils of God (2). That is equal with God in knowledge.

4. What a prophet is he that can give an hearing ear, a seeing eye, and an understanding heart.

5. What a Prophet is he, that teacheth powerfully, effectually, and efficaciously, nay, infallibly; who in his council, teachings, and instruction cannot err.

Fifthly, the glory, life, and power of the Christian religion, with all the acts and duties which properly belong thereunto, with all the benefits and privileges we receive by it, or by virtue of it, with the whole glory and honour that riseth thereby unto God, have all of them their formal nature and reason (as one well notes) from their respect and relation unto the person of Jesus Christ, nor is he a Christian who is otherwise minded.

The person of Christ is the object of divine honour and worship; I bring not this in now to prove he is God, as before I did) but to discover what excellencies belong and cleave to his person. True, the formal object and reason of divine adoration due to Christ, is his divine nature and its essential infinite excellencies. For the person of Christ having in it the fulness of the Godhead, there is not the less honour due unto him because he assumed our nature, and united it unto himself, than was due to him before, or is due unto the person of the Father, or the Holy Ghost. Wherefore the person of Christ is primarily the object of divine honour, upon the account of his divine nature; nor was there any divine adoration due to him, were he not truly God, or God over all blessed for evermore.

Brethren, I am speaking of Christ in his whole entire person, i. e., the Son of God incarnate, God manifest in the flesh, and I say that his infinite condescension in the assumption of our nature, did no ways divest him of his divine excellencies, though for a time they were veiled from the eyes of men, when "He made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 6, 7. And let none think they please God the Father, who ascribe all honour to him, and debase the Son. For what saith our Lord? "He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father." We say the same honour is due to the Son as is due to the Father; nay, and "this is the will of the Father, that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father," John v. 23; even the same adoration, the same divine worship, the same trust or faith we have in God, we must have in Christ, and the same invocation, and the same love and obedience. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," John xiv. 1, as God equal with my Father. To ascribe unto any creature anything that is proper and peculiar unto God, or any divine excellency, is idolatry; therefore we do not honour God the Father with one kind of honour, and the Son, with another; for that were not to honour the Son even as we honour the Father. And though this honour is to be given to Christ by the Father's command, considered as Mediator, yet originally, upon the account of his oneness in nature with the Father, it is our duty thus to adore, honour, love, and reverence him.

If we are to pray unto Christ, if we are to believe in Christ, trust in him, as on our only Saviour, if we are to love with the same love wherewith we ought to love the Father, if we are to fall down before him, and worship even as we are to fall down before God the Father and worship him, then Jesus Christ is a most excellent and glorious person; nay, his personal excellencies are infinite and inconceivable. But all these things we are to do, Ergo.

Sixthly, Such are the personal excellencies of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he in his person God-man, is that glorious sluice, conduit-pipe, or conveyance of all those blessings, and that communicable good unto us, which is in God;

The personal excellencies of Christ consists in that great honour that is due to him.

Dr. Owen on Christ's person, page 112.

Christ's person the sluice or conduit-pipe, of all blessings.

not one dram of any good thing, any favours, grace, and comfort, either to body or soul, flows from God to us, but it all comes to us through Jesus Christ. So that as the person of Christ considered as God is the fountain of all good, and as he is Mediator, he is the great repository of all good; even so also he is the sluice or outlet through whom all good is conveyed, or flows from God into our empty vessels, (like as Joseph had all the corn of Egypt in his own possession, so he gave it forth to all that came to him). My brethren, we have no life, no light, no grace, no pardon, no strength, no blessing; but what we receive immediately from the hands of Jesus Christ; it is all from God the Father through Christ by the Holy Ghost, even through Christ's merits and his gracious intercession; and, as we receive all things from God through Christ, so all our returns of praises unto the Father must be in and through Christ; so that we must always not only give glory unto God the Father and to Jesus Christ, &c., but also give "glory unto God, through Christ for ever, Amen," Rom. xvi. 27.

Seventhly, another personal excellency of Christ is his wonderful beauty and transcendent loveliness, by which means he is represented as the most amiable and lovely object in heaven and earth, attracting and drawing forth our hearts' love and affections to him.

Divine excellencies in God, are a proper adequate object of our love, but especially divine goodness, that endearing attribute of the Holy God. "God is love—O how great is his goodness," Psal. iii. 19. Now that which causeth his goodness to be admired and prized so much the more by us, is because it comprehends the riches, mercy, grace, and bounty, which answers all our wants and necessities, and tends to make us happy, truly happy here, and eternally happy hereafter.

But wherein doth this beauty, love, goodness, mercy and bounty appear, but in the person of Christ? It is in Christ that we see God's glorious amiableness, love, goodness, and mercy, so as to desire him, and to set our hearts upon him, above all other things in heaven and earth. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John iv. 9, 10. But though God is love, or of a nature infinitely good and gracious, and so the object of all divine love and delight, yet if there be no way for us to attain unto the knowledge of this good God, or as to participate of his goodness, how should we let forth our hearts towards him? Now it is only in the person of Christ, God's infinite bounty and love to us is manifested, and by whom we come to taste how sweet and consolatory it is; the love of God can no other way be known to us but by his love in Christ; this is the cause, the fountain and spring of all our love unto him; in Christ we know this God may be enjoyed, and that we come to be united to him; I say it is manifested in and by the person of Christ.

How it appears that we are united to and enjoy God in and through Jesus Christ.

1. Because in him both natures are united, even he is God and man in one person. And so,
2. A door is hereby opened for our union with God; it is hereby we see ground to hope that we shall taste of the sweetness of his love, and enjoy God for ever.

Furthermore, when the soul takes a view by faith of the goodness of God, as it is manifested in Christ (that is, the essential excellencies of his nature) as exerting themselves in him, the soul reacheth after him with its uttermost desires, longing for his embraces, and it is restless until it attain to a perfect fruition of him.

4. Moreover, in Christ the soul sees God's love is a conjugal or an espousal love, which is the sweetest of all love, it is not only the love of friendship, or of a master to a servant, or of a father to a son, but the love of a bridegroom to his bride, or beloved spouse.

5. Nay, the person of Christ, as it is clothed with all the essential properties of divine nature, all the glory and beauty of heaven shines forth in him. And as we see him clothed with our nature, he appears more clearly to our understanding as a fit and proper object of our love and affections; as being in our nature "he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," for we cannot attain to such an idea of God, considered as in himself, as we

The Beauty and glory of Christ God-man.

can as he is manifested in the flesh, therefore God hath condescended to bring forth in Christ an express image of his own person. And as he is thus in respect of his divine nature, so as man now glorified in heaven, what beauty shines forth in him! God designed to let out, or manifest his infinite and inconceivable glory in the man Christ Jesus. A man, and yet God, a spotless man, a man without blemish, who never knew sin; in whom all perfections of God and man meet; that so he might become the proper object of our highest, best, and choicest affections. My brethren, can heaven

and earth make or constitute a glorious and most excellent person, why then here he is; Jesus Christ is the glory of heaven, and the beauty of the earth; the glory of the upper and of the nether world shine forth in the person of Jesus Christ.

If created light be glorious in the sun, if glory be great in holy angels, much more God's essential glory; purity, beauty, wisdom, holiness, power, justice, truth, mercy, and goodness, are glorious. No being is glory in the abstract, but God; and this fundamental excellency shines forth in the person of Christ. "We beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14.

1. We have here an object beheld, [Christ] the Son of God; not Christ only, but the glory of Christ.

2. A specification of that glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, not the glory of a mere man, not the glory of the created sun, not the glory of an angel, but the glory of one out-shining all things, and creatures, i. e., the glory of the only-begotten of the Father.

We beheld, others did not; we by faith saw his glory, we with our external eyes beheld the person in whom this glory shone forth, though veiled to others. We beheld his glory in his words, doctrine, miracles, and in his transfiguration, resurrection, and in his ascension. My brethren, the excellencies of Christ's person, as the effects of the divine counsel, wisdom, and goodness, beauty and glory, renders Christ's person altogether lovely, Cant. v. 16. The whole book of Solomon's Song is little else save a mystical declaration of the mutual love between Christ and believers, and a great part of it consists in such a description of his Person and personal excellencies, as may render him most amiable and desirable to our souls. "He is fairer than the children of men." Psal. xlv. ii. But do not mistake, his beauty is a hidden beauty, a spiritual beauty, which is only discerned by the eye of our souls, such who can contemplate upon the uncreated glories of the divine nature, cannot but admire him with the psalmist, and say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee," &c., Psal. lxxiii. 25.

Eighthly, Furthermore, that fulness which is in the person of Christ sets forth wonderfully his personal excellencies; "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

The fulness in Christ sets forth his personal excellencies.

What a fulness is in Christ.

But for the better opening of this, let us consider what Christ is full of.

1. There is in the person of Christ a fulness of divinity. "In him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. Not of gifts or operations of the Deity only, which flow from the Godhead (which saints and angels receive in measure) but the Godhead itself, wholly or in the fulness of it; this fulness is in none but in Christ, in the Father, and the Holy Ghost.

2. There is in the person of Christ a fulness of the Spirit. (1.) The unction of the Spirit by which the two natures were united in that glorious hypostatical union. (2.) A fulness of the Spirit of unction, he being anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

III. A fulness of merit and satisfaction is in Jesus Christ, he being a complete and perfect Mediator. This appears,

1. He hath paid a full price, or satisfied for all our sins.

2. He hath made a full atonement.

3. He hath obtained our full discharge from the law and justice of God, from sin, wrath, death, and hell.

4. He hath procured a full and complete justification for all the elect.

5. He hath obtained a full remission of sins, or pardon of all our sins, and has it in his possession to give forth to his elect.

6. There is in Christ a fulness of power or authority to give eternal life to all that believe in him, or which the Father hath given unto him.

III. There is in him a fulness of life, he is the fountain of life; and hence he is called a quickening Spirit. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," John xiv. 5, 16; as he is the original of life, the Prince of life. So that spiritual life we have, is derived from him, no dead sinner can quicken himself. Brethren, both the life of nature, grace and glory, is in and from Christ. And how many thousands hath he quickened, or given a principle of divine life unto,

IV. There is in the person of Christ a fulness of grace, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16.

1. Grace, favour, or rich bounty; this he is full of. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor."

2. Grace, (i. e.) that which makes believers gracious, viz., the fruits of the Spirit, the person of Christ is the fountain of all grace which is in the saints. Grace is poured into thy lips," Psal. xlv. 3. His gracious words and gracious deeds proceeded from his gracious heart.

V. The person of Christ is full of righteousness, as the sea is full of water, or the sun is full of light; he is therefore called the "Sun of righteousness," Mal. iv. 2. His glorious robe of righteousness cover thousands of naked sinners.

VI. The person of Christ is full of wisdom and knowledge. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. i. 3.

VII. Lastly, In Christ is a fulness of salvation, and not of salvation only, but of all things which do accompany salvation. All these things flow from the person of Christ, and appertain to his personal excellencies as he is Mediator.

In him is a soul-fulness, a seasonable fulness, a suitable fulness, a satisfying, and a soul-enriching, and a soul-fattening fulness.

Ninthly, Another personal excellency that is in Christ, is his most excellent spirit. It is said of Daniel, there was a most excellent spirit in him, but what an excellent spirit there is in Jesus Christ, in whose spirit was no stain, no pollution, nothing of natural detilement.

I do not allude to the Holy Ghost that was in Him without measure, but that spirit which appertains to His human nature, or His spirit considered as man; he in this respect was endued "with a spirit of wisdom, of the spirit of counsel, and of might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord," Isa. xi. 2. His spirit far exceeds the spirits of all men:—For

I. He is of a sublime spirit, a raised spirit, contemning this world, and all the glory thereof: seeking the glory of his Father alone.

II. He is of a free spirit; free from earthly entanglements, free from the bondage of sin and fervile fear; though he became a Servant, yet he had the spirit of a Son; free from the slavish fear of God, men, or devils; free in all acts of love and bounty, not seeking or asking any thing but the tribute of thankfulness from such he gives his great and glorious gifts and graces unto.

III. He is of a most generous spirit, gave like himself, yet sought not himself, but the honour of his Father, and our good; he takes no advantages against such that slight and despise his bounty, and gracious offers of peace and pardon, but waits still upon them, yea, and gives gifts to the rebellions also, and to stont-hearted sinners, who are far from righteousness; nor doth he seek present revenge on them that hate him, though he could in a moment destroy them all with the breath of his mouth. Also so generous was he, as to give all he had, part with all he had, even with his own life, for our sakes: nay, as to do all that work which was our business, or our work, and to pay all our debts, and suffer all our hell pangs, and bear all our sicknesses and sorrows, all our burdens, nay, and gives his own robe to clothe us, and his own flesh to feed our hungry souls, and his own blood to satisfy our thirsty souls.

IV. Christ is of a strong and courageous spirit; strong to resist temptations, strong to bear afflictions, strong to overcome all difficulties that stood in his way; yea, so courageous, as nothing could discourage him in his work, though earth and hell combine together against him, and his own disciples leave him, and his Father hides his face from him in the hour of his greatest sorrows, straits, and sufferings, as it was foretold of him; "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth," Isa. xlii. 4.

V. Christ is of a holy and heavenly spirit; as in his lips, so in his heart and spirit, there was no guile: "He is holy, and harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners:" he never had one evil thought, as he never spoke one evil word.

VI. Christ is of an humble, of a meek, and of a condescending spirit: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly," Matt. xi. 29. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7. O that the same mind and the same spirit was in us; shall the prince be meek and lowly in heart, and be content to ride on an ass, and on a colt the foal of an ass, and shall his servant be proud and haughty?

VII. Christ is of a public spirit; not a narrow, base, straightened spirit. Sirs, he was contented to be made a common, or a public head to all his people, and to stand charged with all our sins, and to suffer in our stead, yea, bear that curse and wrath that was due to us for our iniquities; his heart was enlarged toward God, to exalt God, magnify God in all his attributes, and to magnify the law of God, and also to save lost man. "He was cut off, but not for his own sins," Dan. ix. 26. He had no sins of his own, "But for the

transgressions of his people was he smitten," Isa. liii. 8. He did not only seek the public good, but did it also with the greatest freeness imaginable, and with the greatest loss and sorrow to himself, both in his name, riches, and life also.

VIII. Christ is of an active and lively spirit. The zeal of God's house even eat him up. He was not only quick in understanding, but quick and lively in all acts of obedience. O the greatness of that work, which he did in a short time, even in the space of three years and a half.

IX. Christ is of a compassionate spirit, full of bowels, love, and pity. "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," Heb. v. 2. How ready is he to forgive the greatest of his enemies? Even the vilest sinners that fly to him for mercy! He sometimes aggravates the sins of his own people, when it is but to show his abundant grace, love, pity, and pardoning mercy to them, see Isa. xliii. 22, 26, compared with Isa. lvii. 17, 19.

X. Christ is of an obedient spirit. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," Heb. x. 7. "It was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father that sent Him," John iv. 34. He was ready to stoop to the hardest thing his Father sent him to do. "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered," Heb. v. 8.

XI. Christ is of a patient and submissive spirit, he bore all things the Father laid upon him patiently, without complaining and murmuring. "As a sheep is dumb before the shearer, so he opened not his mouth," Isa. liii. 7.

XII. Christ is of a faithful spirit. He was faithful to God as a Son, and he is faithful to all his people, in all his promises, and under all those providences which he is pleased to exercise them.

Now put all these things together, and do they not show the most transcendent excellencies, which attend Christ's person?

Tenthly, the personal excellencies of Christ also appears, in respect of those things he is made unto his church and people, he is our only Mediator, our Surety, Testator, God's great ambassador, a King to rule us, a Priest to atone for our sins, a Prophet to teach us, a Foundation on which we build, a Sun to give us light, a Spirit to quicken us, the Way, the Truth, the Life; he is a robe to clothe us, our food to feed us, our Captain to conquer all our enemies (who has overcome sin, the world, devils, death, hell, and the grave for us) a Bridegroom to espouse us, and our heaven to glorify us: he is made of God to all that are in him, "Wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. In a word his personal excellencies are such, that he is all in all; he is all in sanctification, justification, adoption, union, and communion, pardon of sin, peace, reconciliation, regeneration, vocation, and in salvation.

USE.

Now if Christ, the pearl of great price, be so excellent a person, if this be so, if all these and many other most glorious personal excellencies are in him, what happy men and women are they who find Jesus Christ, and have a true interest in him, and right unto him? and what would not any person part with (who knows his infinite worth) to have him to be their own for ever?

2. We may also infer from hence, that but a very few know the Lord Jesus Christ, nor understand whom he is, nor the true worth and excellencies that are in his sacred person.

3. O what fools are they that lay aside this corner-stone, or disallow of this foundation, and build upon the sand, or without a foundation.

4. Moreover, let such tremble who tread this Christ under their feet, and exalt a false Christ above him, a Christ formed out of their own vain imaginations, or strive to ungod him, and render him but to be a mere creature; such a Christ is not worth one farthing, and those that trust in such a Christ shall perish: dare they make a mere man their Saviour, and give the glory of God unto another.

But to proceed to another proposition or point of doctrine, observe.

"And when he had found one pearl," &c.

Doct. 2. That all such who would find Jesus Christ, must seek him.

1. I shall show where they must seek this pearl.

2. When they must seek it.

3. How they must seek for it.

4. Why they must seek it. 5. Apply it.

As to the place where you should seek Jesus Christ the pearl of great price.

First, negatively, not on your beds; thus the sponse sought her beloved; "By night

Where we
must not
seek Christ.

on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth, I sought him, but I found him not," Cant. iii. 1. Certainly this denotes a cold, lazy seeking; Christ is not found upon the bed of sloth.

2. You must not seek Jesus Christ in the broad way; the spouse found him not there, no, she passed from thence, before she found him. Many seek in dead, carnal, and in invented forms, in that worship, and in such rites and services, that God never instituted. Pearls are not found in high-ways, or in the broad road, where multitudes pass.

3. You must not seek Jesus Christ within your own hearts; no, he is not there. All men naturally are without God, and without Christ, and without the Holy Spirit, and without hope.

4. You must not seek him on mount Sinai, not by the works of the law, he is not there.

You must not seek him by doing, or by your own righteousness.

Nor by outward reformation of your lives; you may be reformed, but not meet with Jesus Christ.

AFFIRMATIVELY.

First, pearls must be sought for where they are to be had. Pliny says, that they are usually found at the bottom of the sea: so Christ must be sought where he is to be found.

Where we must seek the pearl of great price. 1. You must seek him in the depths, in the great deeps of God's eternal council, there you may find him, for there he lay hid from everlasting. I do not mean you should seek or pry into deep councils that are not revealed, but in those councils that are now opened in God's word, and in that council held between the Father and the Son in eternity, there you may find him, and also in that covenant and blessed compact that was between them both, there you shall find mention is made of him, and meet with him.

II. You must seek him in the depths of eternal wisdom, and in God's glorious purpose and decree, for there also he lay long hid from the blind world, until God made known the blessed contrivance of his infinite wisdom.

III. You must seek him in the covenant of grace and of redemption, as the head and great representative and surety of all God's elect.

IV. You must seek him in the depths of God's eternal love. If you do not search into the treasures of infinite love, grace, and divine goodness, you will never find this pearl; do not mistake me, the fountains of these great deeps are now opened, so that you may by faith dive into this sea, and search for this pearl, and also soon find it.

V. You must seek this pearl in the revelation of God's eternal council, that is the field where this rich treasure lies hid. (1.) In the types and sacrifices under the law, there he is to be found by such who have a piercing sight, and can see through all those dark vales, which hid him out of the sight of blind and unbelieving men and women. (2.) You must seek him in the revelation God made of him in the prophesies of the prophets. (3.) and more especially you must seek Jesus Christ in the glorious gospel. They to whom the gospel is hid, Jesus Christ is hid, and such that understand the mystery of the gospel, whose eyes God hath opened to behold the glory of God that shines forth therein, they find Jesus Christ. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God, in the face of Jesus," 2 Cor. iv. 6.

But others to whom the gospel is hid (who think it is only a rule of good manners, or a new law of evangelical obedience) Satan hath blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, shine upon them. Christ shines not at all on some of these, and but darkly on others, ver. 3, 4.

VI. You must seek this pearl by believing, by faith: Christ is found by believing, but such that will not hear the gospel preached, utterly neglect the chief means or way of finding Jesus Christ; for the gospel is an instrument of the mighty "power of God unto the salvation of every one that believeth," Rom. i. 16.

True unto some it comes "in word only, and not in power," 1 Thess. i. 5; nor by the efficacious operations of the Holy Ghost: "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known to all nations for the obedience of faith be glory," &c. Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

O how little is the gospel understood, how few by faith search into it, and yet no where else is Christ to be found: true, you may find the gospel preached to Adam, and find the pearl there; and the gospel preached to Abraham, and find Christ there; but such who look not on Abraham as a type of Christ, or a covenanting head of all his true spiritual seed, or of all the elect, (distinct from his being a covenanting head to all his natural seed as such;) may deceive themselves and their poor undone offspring. "If any man be in Christ, he is one of Abraham's seed, and an heir according to promise," See Gal. iii. 16, and 29.

VII. You must seek this pearl in the promises of God, in the promises of the new covenant, or of the Gospel; for there he is to be found: I do not speak of conditional promises, according to the tenure of the law, or covenant of works, but of the absolute promises; pray observe well what I say. (1.) You are not to expect that you shall find Jesus Christ upon conditions, which you are to perform as a fit qualification, or as an antecedent condition, that is required of the sinner, in order to the blessings consequent thereupon, by virtue of the promise, and so consequently the benefits and mercies granted are suspended by the blessed God, till those conditions are performed, which conditions the unrenewed sinner hath power to answer, and may, or may not perform. I know some will tell you, that you must have Christ this way, or on such conditions? why, the conditions are repentance, faith, and sincere obedience; this they say, but is this gospel? for if faith and repentance be part of the covenant, or such things which are promised therein; then they cannot be the conditions upon which we shall have Christ, &c. But a new heart, faith, and repentance, &c., are promised, as part of the matter of the covenant of grace, therefore not such conditions of it. "I will take away the heart of stone, and I will give them a heart of flesh; I will be their God, and they shall be my people," Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. "All that the Father hath given to me, shall come unto me," John vi. 37. Shall come; that is, they shall believe in me; "faith is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8.

Christ must be sought in the promises.

(2.) If you would find Christ in the promise, be not satisfied with any promise that may come into your minds, unless you can take hold of Christ in that promise, it is Christ received in the promise that relieves the sinner; without this the promise can do the soul no good.

VIII. You must seek Christ in the way of your duty, in reading, meditation, and prayer, as well as in hearing the word. Certainly seeking of this pearl, seeking of Christ doth take in prayer: seek the Lord while he may be found: seek him by crying to him, calling upon him, and by pouring out your souls before him: if thou criest after knowledge, and lifteth up thy voice for understanding, then thou shalt find it.

God will, Christ will be found of them that seek; but pray consider that it is Christ who first gives poor sinners a heart to seek him, before he can do this: Christ first seeks us, and finds us, before we seek him, or can find him; he by his Spirit first apprehends us, and then he enables us to apprehend him; he opens our eyes to see the worth, the beauty, and glory that is in him, and then we desire him, long for him, pant after him.

Secondly, as I have showed you, where you must seek Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price; so now I shall show when, or at what time you should seek him.

When we must seek Jesus Christ.

1. Early. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me," Prov. viii. 17.

1. Now to seek this peerless pearl early, is to seek him before and above all other things, before riches, before honours, before pleasures, or any earthly thing, or enjoyment whatsoever. Many seek earth before heaven, earthly pearls above and more than this heavenly pearl, or this world before Jesus Christ. How do many persons enquire after, and earnestly seek for preferment, or to enrich themselves, and add to the substance: say they, O can you tell me how I may improve my stock, improve my trade, and increase my earthly riches; others they perhaps enquire after a good place, a good service, or a good wife; these things lie nearest their hearts, and these things they seek before and above the pearl of great price; nay, never may be think Christ, nor ask after Christ, and so they set a far greater value on these earthly things, than upon the Lord Jesus; they are not like Moses, who refused to be called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and all the glory of Egypt, and the pleasures of sin that are for a season, esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," Heb. xi. 24, 25.

We must seek the pearl of great price.

2. To seek this pearl early, "is to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near," Isa. lv. 6. God hath set a time, fixed a time, when he will

be found, and to seek him then, is to seek him early; again God hath a time in which he draws near to poor sinners by his word and ordinances, and by the influences and most gracious operations upon their hearts, and they that seek him then, do seek him early.

3. To seek this pearl early, is to seek when God calls. True, God calls once, yea twice, and man perceiveth it not; thus he called Samuel, and though he did not hear, (so as to know whose voice it was) at first calling, yet feeling he did hear before God had done calling of him, he heard and sought the Lord early, but O certainly it is dangerous not to hear at God's first call; he may not call some once, yea twice, nay, and again also; yet let none presume upon frequent warnings, or repeated calls of God; what a caution may that word be, viz., Prov. i. "Because I called and you refused"—why, what then, pray read ver. 28. "They shall call upon me, but I will not hear, they shall seek me early, but shall not find me;" early, that is in their affliction, may be as soon as they are sick, and fear they shall die; alas, man knows not his time, therefore his misery is great in the earth.

4. To seek the pearl of great price early, is to seek in due time, "God shall help her, and that right early," Psal xlvi. 5; that is, seasonably, in a due and fit time, when it will most make for his glory and his people's good. So we should in due time, i. e., at such a time when he may receive the most good, when mercy and pardoning grace will be most seasonable and sweet to our souls, as when we come under convictions of sin, and our souls are sick and wounded, and our wounds bleed. O then it is a seasonable time to get Christ, to fly to him, and to believe in him, every thing is beautiful in its season. When a man has just received a grievous wound, O that is the time to get a plaster; or as soon as a person is taken dangerously sick, that is the time to seek a physician, so as soon as thou feelst the weight of sin, the burden of sin, and thy conscience is awakened, then seek Jesus Christ, then at that very time, and not to delay. This it is to seek Christ early.

5. To seek Christ early, is to seek him in the days of our youth, "Remember now thy Creator," &c., Eccl. xii. 1. Remember his love in finding out a Redeemer, and in sending him into the world. O remember that he is a just, as well as a gracious God.

II. The pearl of great price should be sought when the Holy Spirit strives with thee; the time of the strivings, motions, and workings of the Spirit is Christ's time and way of seeking us, and that is the time of our seeking him, Christ came to seek and save that which was lost; all was an act of preventing grace; the Holy Ghost comes to enlighten our understanding, to awaken our sleepy consciences, to bow and incline our rebellious wills, and to change our carnal affections; and know, ye sinners, this is the time you should seek, if ever you hope to find the pearl of great price; even when the Holy Spirit begins to act, or move, and to operate upon your hearts: sinners only act Christ-ward, as they are acted, and move, as they are by the Spirit and by a divine principle moved. A dead carcase, or a stone, may as soon move of itself, as a dead sinner can stir, act, or do in a spiritual manner, unless he be influenced and moved by the Holy Spirit.

III. When we have a fall gale of the Spirit.

The time for a merchant to hoist his sails, and set out to sea, is when he has a fair wind; O, says he, now I must be gone, I have been becalmed a great while, but now the wind blows the right way, I have a sweet gale. Even so we should set out on our voyage to seek the pearl of great price, when we have a powerful gale, or strong operations of the word and Spirit upon our hearts.

A merchant-man makes four, nay, may be ten times more speed, when he has a full and strong gale of wind, than he can at other times; sometimes may be he makes way, and then he meets with contrary winds, and is drove back again. And thus it is with spiritual merchants, that seek the pearl of great price; now perhaps the wind of the Spirit blows, O then they are as it were upon the wing. O how they pray, read, hear, meditate; their souls are filled with love and longings after Jesus Christ: but by-and-by a contrary wind rises, Satan raises a storm, to drive the soul back again, and fill it full of fears and doubtings. Take heed you do not lose a fair wind, and beware of contrary winds raised by Satan, by sin, by wicked relations, and by the world, or by an evil heart.

IV. You must seek Jesus Christ to-day, even now, "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not you hearts," Heb. iii. 7; nay, and this the Holy Ghost says, we do not only tell you to-day, this very day you must do it; but God says, to-day, Christ says to-day, "To-day go and work in my vineyard," Matt. xxi. 28; and the Holy Spirit says to-day, if you will hear his voice. And dare sinners say, no, not to-day, it is time enough yet, I will stay till to-morrow: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth," Prov. xxvii. 1. Some perhaps may make fair promises, and say to-day, I go

Christ must be sought whilst the Holy Spirit strives with a sinner.

Christ must be sought when the wind of the Spirit blows.

sir, but go not ; like one of the sons bid to go to work in the vineyard. Alas, as I have told you, present promises about closing with Christ hereafter, are but seldom, if ever performed.

V. If some of you are come to the eleventh hour, certainly this is the time, or never, for such to seek Jesus Christ. Some of you are come almost to the end of your voyage, or end of your race, I mean the end of your lives. There are but few sands in your glass, your ship is old, and ready to be broken up. It is, I fear, too late for some to set out now on the seas of temptation, and opposition, to seek the pearl of great price, but if God give a call to any now at the eleventh hour, it is not too late for them ; but if Christ be not sought, be not received at this time, such are undone, and shall perish, for ever.

Thirdly, how must the pearl of great price be sought ?

I. Diligently. Naturalists tell us, that a choice and rare pearl is not to be found without curious and diligent searching. Pliny saith, they that find such pearls, must run through many dangers, amongst those huge and terrible sea monsters and great rocks. So they that would find Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price, must seek and search with all wisdom, care, and diligence, and endeavour to sail betwixt the dangerous rocks of presumption, on the one hand, and despair, on the other hand : O how many are split, and suffer shipwreck upon one of these rocks, and so never find the pearl, never rightly believe, nor receive Jesus Christ.

Moreover, all ought to take heed of those monsters that are in our seas, I mean among us, i. e., cruel and abominable imposters, who deny the Lord Jesus Christ, who preach up a false Christ, and others who deny any Christ, or utterly cast off all revealed religion, or the whole Christian faith. Some render Christ to be of no value or worth at all ; also some deny his imputed righteousness, and make their own righteousness the matter of their justification before God ; these men may fitly be compared to huge sea monsters, that make the finding of Christ a very difficult thing.

2. You must seek with much skill and divine wisdom ; first to seek in the right way, not by repenting and reformation of life, or by obedience, or inherent righteousness, to think to find Jesus Christ ; no, this is not the way to find Christ, if thou wouldst be an honest moral man, thou must reform thy life, and obey all moral precepts ; but thou mayest be further from finding of Christ, when that is done, than now whilst thou art a profane and ungodly sinner ; for publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before those who are self-righteous, or sober and civilized persons.—You must know the way to find Christ is by believing.

II. You must have wisdom to know the true Christ, and wisdom to know the right time. Wilt thou apply a plaster to that place, where there is no wound, and put on a robe given to thee as being naked, when thou in thy own conceit, art well clothed.

III. You must seek with full purpose and resolution of thy heart and soul, not fearing what men or devils can do unto thee, though thy wife rages, and is stirred up against thee, to dissuade thee, or a husband, or a father, or mother, or son, or daughter, or neighbours, pretended friends, remember what our blessed Saviour saith, Matt. x. 37 ; resolve to have Christ, though it cost thee thy life, every sin must die, and self must die, and thou must resist unto blood if called to it.

IV. Thou must seek Christ as one that knowest the great want, need, and necessity of him, as been undone without him ; and if thou art an unrenewed person, thou must seek him as one that is without God, and without Christ in the world.

V. Again, thou must seek Christ as one who is convinced of that great worth and excellency of him.

VI. Believingly, not doubting, but there is salvation to be had in Christ for the vilest of sinners, also believing his power and willingness to save thee, if thou art helped to come to him, cleaving to him, and resting upon him.

VII. Seek with longings, breathings, and pantings after him. Joseph and Mary sought Jesus sorrowing from the greatness of their love.

VIII. Seek with an heart inclined, touched with the loadstone of his love ; see Prov. ii. 1—4.

IX. Seek constantly and unweariedly, never give over until thou hast found him.

X. Seek him sincerely, not for the leaves, not for secular profit nor applause, nor out of vain-glory ; not simply to be saved by him, or for what he has, but for his own sake, what he is, and from a sense of his infinite glory and preciousness ; see John vi. 26.

Such that would seek this pearl must know the worth of it.

Christ must be sought believingly.

SERMON XXXIII.

And when he had found one pearl of great price.—Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

THE last day I showed you how Christ the Pearl of great price must be sought.

Fourthly, and lastly, I shall now proceed to show you why he must be sought, or give you the reasons why sinners should seek him.

I. Sinners should seek Jesus Christ, the Pearl of great price, because he came to seek them.

1. He sought the salvation of sinners in entering into covenant with the Father for them in eternity: it was to recover those lost sinners which the Father gave him, that caused him to become our Surety, and to enter into that holy and happy compact with God the Father.

2. In his taking our nature upon him, and in coming into this world, it was to seek lost sinners.

3. By his death, in his bearing of our sins upon his own body on the tree, it was to seek and save sinners, and to bring them to God: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," 1 Pet. iii. 18.

4. Jesus Christ seeks sinners by the ministration of the gospel, wherever the gospel is sent, it is sent to seek and bring sinners home to God; and it may give us ground to believe in those places where the gospel comes, are some sinners which were given to him, and whilst the gospel is continued in a place, certainly there are some yet not called, not found or converted.

5. Christ seeks sinners by his intercession, now in heaven; he doth not only pray or intercede for believers, but for sinners; "He made intercession for transgressors," Isa. lii. 12.

6. Christ seeks sinners by the motions of his Spirit on their hearts and consciences, and when convictions of the Spirit seize, and are strong upon the sinner's heart, then Jesus Christ may be said to have found the sinner, though the sinner may not have found him.

II. Sinners should seek Christ, because seeking him, and finding him, are coupled together: "Then shall ye seek me, and find me, when ye search after me with all your hearts," Jer. xxix. 13. Will any say it is in vain to seek Jesus Christ, they may as well say it is in vain for ministers to preach to sinners, and in vain for them to hear, read, pray; hearing and believing, nay, hearing and living are joined together; for as "faith comes by hearing," so life comes by hearing also: "Hear, and thy soul shall live," Isa. lv. 3. This finding, this hearing, and this believing is all one and the same thing; when seeking of Christ is of no use, preaching will be of no use also. But know, O ye sinners, that seeking of Christ, and finding him are joined together. Therefore it is an indispensable duty for sinners to seek Jesus Christ.

III. Because the promise runs to them that seek: "Seek, and ye shall find, ask and ye shall receive," Matt. vii. 7; though he that seeks not believingly, hath no promise of finding, nor hath he that asketh, unless he ask in faith; yet such who do seek in a right manner, have the promise of God, that cannot lie made to them; "He that seeketh me early, shall find me," Prov. viii. 17.

IV. Sinners should seek Christ, "the pearl of great price," because they are commanded so to do: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near," Isa. lv. 6. Again it is said: "Seek ye the Lord, and ye shall live," Amos v. 6. When thou saidst, seek my face, my heart answered, Thy face, Lord, I will seek," Psal. xxvii. 8. God saith, seek me, and will the sinner refuse thus to do; a duty here is enjoined, and a promise is annexed.

V. Because salvation is only in Jesus Christ; all that seek justification and eternal life, and do not seek Jesus Christ, shall certainly perish: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. No other name, or thing, not by repenting, nor mourning for sin, no, not by leaving off sin, or reformation of life, not by good works, nor by inherent righteousness, not by being baptized, nor by receiving the Lord's Supper, no, nor by giving to the poor, nor by suffering for Christ or religion; for there is no salvation to be had but by Christ alone. In the way of duty and of ordinances you ought to seek him, and may meet with him; but if any rest on their duties, works, or righteousness, nay, on faith itself as the matter by which they hope to be justified and saved, they will certainly perish. It is not faith

Christ came to seek sinners, therefore they ought to seek him.

Why sinners should seek this Pearl.

itself, but Christ that faith receives, or the object faith relies upon, that saves us. Doth my hand that applies the plaster to my wound cure me? No, it is the plaster; nay, the hand of faith is given to us also to apply the balm: "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast," Eph. ii. 8, 9. Now since salvation is to be had in none, in nothing, but in Christ, or by the pearl of great price, how doth it behove all poor sinners to seek him.

VI. Sinners should seek Christ, because by nature, or as in the first Adam, they are without him; the merchant before he sought the pearl had it not: "At that time ye were without Christ," Eph. ii. 12. At that time, what time? Why, "when they were dead in sins and trespasses," Eph. ii. 1, 2.

VII. Sinners should seek Christ, because the law condemns them, under God's fearful wrath, and the sentence of death every sinner retains, until they have found Jesus Christ, or do believe in him. "He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36.

VIII. Sinners should seek Christ to save them, because the devil seeks to destroy them: "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walketh about seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8.

O how many ways hath Satan by which he seeks to destroy poor sinners! there are many ways by which sinners may perish and be damned, but there is but one way by which they can be saved.

Lastly, Sinners should seek the pearl of great price, from the consideration of that infinite worth and value of him, and that good they will find in him, of which I have largely spoken, and shall now in a few words the application.

APPLICATION.

Let me tell you what Christ is to them that find him.

First, O be exhorted to seek him, and delay not. For,

1. He that hath Christ hath life; this the apostle asserts: "He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son, hath not life," 1 John v. 12. What he hath that hath Christ. He is the Bread of life, and such that feed upon him shall never perish. "He that findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord," Prov. viii. 35.

II. He that finds Christ hath a discharge from eternal death, he is justified, pardoned, sanctified; nay, he hath all things; "All is yours, ye are Christ's," &c.

1. All the things of this life are theirs; that is, so far as God sees them good for them, who would have any earthly thing for his hurt?

2. They have all they have without the curse; wicked men may have more of the things of this world than believers, but they have every thing with a curse, riches with a curse, honours and pleasures with a curse. Nay,

3. The people of God have all they possess with a blessing upon them, every thing is blessed to them, even afflictions, losses, poverty, sickness, and death itself.

III. Whatsoever Christ is made to believers, that he is made to every one that finds him. Two things such should consider, that would find and know how precious a pearl Christ is.

1. What he is in himself.

2. What he is and will be to him that finds him.

1. Whatsoever a great and inconceivable portion is to a man in a natural sense, that is Christ, and much more to him that finds him in a spiritual sense; for he is our portion and inheritance of our souls for ever, Psal. lvi. 5, xxxiii. 26, Lam. iii. 24.

2. What honour and external happiness attends a virgin that is espoused and married to a mighty and excellent prince, what peace, what glory, what satisfaction doth she meet withal? that and much more is Christ to every one that finds him in a spiritual sense, for every believer is espoused and married to him, Rom. vii. 4, 2 Cor. xi. 2.

3. What bread is to a hungry person, or drink to a thirsty person in a natural way, that is Christ, the Pearl of great price, to every soul that finds in a spiritual way; he is the Bread of God, the Bread of life, and Water of life to the soul.

4. What clothing is to a naked man, to the body, that is Christ to the soul that finds him: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. xiii. 14. We put him on as a garment in justification, and in sanctification also.

5. What rest is to a weary person in a natural way, that is Christ, and much more, (for his rest is glorious,) in a spiritual way, "Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28.

6. What peace is to a troubled and wounded conscience, that is Christ to him that finds him; he gives present quiet, and everlasting peace to the soul that hath him, and knows he hath him.

7. What sight is to one that was born blind, that is Christ in a spiritual way to every soul that finds him.

8. What liberty is to one who has been in bonds, (in prison, in captivity, or slavery) in a natural way, that is Christ and much more in a spiritual way to him that finds him: "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed." John viii. 36.

9. What millions of gold and silver is to a poor man, not worth a groat in respect of the things of this world, money answering all things; that and much more is Christ to that man that finds him in a spiritual sense.

10. What abundance of corn is to a nation in time of famine, (when its inhabitants were forced to feed on husks) that is Christ and much more to a hungry soul that finds him, who (like the Prodigal) feed on husks which the swine did eat.

11. What a pardon is to a condemned rebel just ready to be executed, that is Christ in a spiritual sense to a condemned sinner when he finds him, who was under the fearful sentence of divine vengeance.

12. What ease and a perfect cure is to a man tormented with intolerable pain, (whether of the stone, gout, or what is worse,) that is Christ to a tormented despairing soul, that finds him: or what a healing and infallible balm, is to a man mortally wounded, that is Christ to a wounded sinner that finds him.

13. In a word, what it is to be perfectly delivered from whatsoever is evil, either here in this world, or hereafter in the world to come, that is and will Christ be to every one that finds him.

14. And what it is to be perfectly possessed with whatsoever is truly, really, and spiritually good; that is or will Christ be to every one that finds him.

Secondly, from hence I infer, that that person that seeks not the pearl of great price, is a notorious fool, or out of his wits; who but a fool or a mad-man would neglect seeking of such a pearl?

Thirdly, how will sinners lament their folly in seeking other things more than Christ, nay utterly neglect the seeking of him.

Fourthly, I infer, that such who have got Christ, or have found this pearl, are the most happy people in the world.

I come now to the last clause of this parable.

"And sold all he had, and bought it."

No marvel he sold all he had to buy such a pearl.

1. I shall show you what may be meant by selling all he had.

2. What may be meant by buying this pearl.

Selling all he had, signifies no more than his parting with whatsoever his heart was inordinately set upon before he found this pearl.

1. With all his sins and horrid lusts; all that find Christ part willingly with every evil habit, and with every evil act of sin and wickedness, and it is by the Spirit and grace of Christ, he is helped to do this: a sinner finds Christ before he can part with his sins and iniquities.

2. All his old company with whom he took delight, and among whom he oft dishonoured God; he parts also with them with an abhorrence.

3. All his former hopes of heaven, and the foundation on which he built that hope.

4. All his own external privileges, of which (like Paul when a Pharisee) he might boast.

5. All his own good works, and inherent righteousness in point of justification, he sold also, or parted with. I do not mean he did not now any good works, or ceased being morally just and righteous: no, God forbid,

but he parted with them so as not to expect acceptance and justification by those things in the sight of God. Pray see what Paul says he did when he found Jesus Christ; he reckoned up all his legal privileges, and that righteousness he had when a Pharisee, and says, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted less for Christ," Phil. iii. 7.

Obj. 1 Perhaps some may say, true, he sold all his legal privileges and legal righteousness, but not his gospel inherent righteousness.

Ans. Yea, he parted with all his own gospel righteousness also in point of justification. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, for whom I have suffered

What it is to sell all for the pearl of great price

He that will have Christ must sell all his own inherent righteousness.

Gospel righteousness must be parted with in

the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." This is the selling all to have the pearl. St. Paul did not disclaim that righteousness he had before his conversion only, but he speaks now in the present tense, I count all things, &c. He first speaks of what he had and did count gain to him, and also what now he had done, or was wrought in him since a believer and an apostle, he sold all, parted with all his former and present inherent righteousness in point of trust or dependence, or in respect had to his justification before God; nay, and counted both in comparison of Christ, the knowledge of Christ and his righteousness, to be but dung or dogs-meat, as the word signifies: "And he found in him not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 9.

point of trust, or in respect of justification.

Whatsoever righteousness we have of our own, it is a righteousness of the law, as the law is in the hand of Christ, as a perfect rule of obedience; but the righteousness of God is set in direct opposition to the righteousness of any mere creature, and so is the righteousness of faith, placed in direct opposition to works: and from hence it is that Paul saith, "God imputeth righteousness without works," Rom. iv. 6. Faith and works, or grace and works, are opposed one to the other, not only faith and the works of the law, but works as such of what kind soever as done by the creature, are excluded in our justification; this further appears.

1. See what Paul saith in Rom. iv. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," Rom. iv. 4; that is, him that worketh with a design to procure justification by what he doth; this would render salvation to be a debt, let the work be of any kind whatsoever.

All kind of works are excluded in our justification before God.

2. Because that which is procured by works, is not had by grace: "And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace, but if it be by works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work," Rom. xi. 6. It must be wholly of works, or else wholly of grace, for these two cannot mix, they being directly contrary one to the other.

3. Because all boasting is excluded; by reason we are justified and saved by faith or grace alone: "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast," Rom. iii. 27, and Eph. ii. 8. If they are works of the moral law, or of the ceremonial law, or gospel works, still it should be of works, and the same reason remain for boasting. But if there is in our justification no room for boasting, there is no room for works; but there is no room for boasting. Ergo there is no room for works, but all works are excluded in our justification in the sight of God.

Thus it appears he that sells all to have Christ, sells or parts with all his own works and inherent righteousness in justification.

"And bought it."

It is not a proper buying, where the intrinsical value is given, or something one man gives to procure another thing, for the sake of which he hath it as a purchasing or procuring condition; but it is called a buying, because

What buying this pearl doth denote.

a man in buying parts with something he hath, to receive another thing which he hath not: "but it is a buying without money and without price; that is, without money or money's worth; and what can that be less or more, but a free giving, and a free receiving: for any other buying is utterly inconsistent with the free grace of God in the gospel; for righteousness is called a free gift; Christ is called the gift of God. Faith the gift of God, and salvation or water of life is given freely, and all of God's free and absolute promises without any conditions required of us, to procure any one gospel blessing. The gift of God cannot be purchased with our money, or by any thing we have to give for it: doth God sell his Son and himself to sinners? pray what doth he receive at our hands: "If thou be righteous, what givest thou to him, and what receiveth he at thy hands," Job xxxv. 7. Before grace, or before God gives us this pearl, what have we to give unto God, but a bundle of unrighteousness? Doth our filthy rags purchase Christ and his righteousness? Or doth he receive those rags of us? No, no, we must cast them away, and all other idols as abominable things. For.

1. He that God gives Christ unto, is righteous by an imputed righteousness; Christ's righteousness is freely given to him, imputed, or counted to be his, as an act of mere sovereign grace.

Christ is a free gift.

2. God when he gives Christ to a sinner, gives him his Spirit also, as his own free gift; and with the Holy Spirit he gives faith the fruit of the Spirit, and so the sinner comes to be renewed, and is inherently sanctified, and by virtue of these free gifts we come to

have a righteous principle planted in us, and are made righteous as an act of God's free grace, inherently righteous.

3. Also every one that hath received this grace, or this free gift, is a righteous person, by a practical righteousness he doth righteousness; the one is a righteousness by regeneration, this is a righteousness by conversation, as the effects of the former; "He that doth righteousness is righteous," 1 John iii. 7; that is, he is in a righteous state through justification; and hath a righteousness planted in him in sanctification. What givest thou unto him? The meaning is, thou givest nothing to him; a free gift is the bestowing of something where there was no obligation lay upon the donor; that is, a free gift which a person is not bound to bestow by any rule or law of righteousness upon any procuring condition or terms required of the receiver; but it is only given freely, as an absolute act of special love and favour; such a gift is Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, and faith to receive Christ.

Obj. But doth not faith, repentance, &c., purchase, or buy the pearl?

1. Answ. How can faith, &c., be said to purchase Christ, when it and repentance both are given as a free gift of God? Alas, we receive both these graces at the hand of God, and as a fruit of the Spirit, a man receives the Spirit, and so Christ takes hold of him before he can apprehend Christ, or actually receive him; and faith is not of ourselves, though it is the sinner that believes, as it was Lazarus that lived, and the life he had was his life, but yet it was a life in a supernatural manner given to him.

2. God bids us believe; so Christ bid Lazarus come forth out of the grave; he that commands us to believe, hath promised to give that grace to his elect, by which they shall believe, and Christ takes hold of him; God receives nothing of our hands, but all is given unto us freely.

Obj. But faith is an antecedent condition, and it signifies no more than an act of ours, which though it be neither perfect in every degree, nor in the least meritorious of the benefit conferred, nor performed in our natural strength, yet according to the constitution of the covenant it is required of us in order to the blessing consequent thereupon, by virtue of the promise; and consequently the mercies granted in this order, are and must be suspended by the donor, or dispose of them, till it be performed. Such a condition we affirm faith is.

1. Answ. The antecedent condition according to these men, purchaseth the estate or blessings promised; the lawyers reckon it is the purchase money, saith Dr. Chauncy, the consequent condition gets it, it is the quit rent; which if it be not paid, the Lord can enter and take the estate. So faith, &c., which it will have to be the antecedent condition money, deposited and laid down before they have anything of the spiritual estate. And they say it signifies no more than an act of ours, and pray whose should it be but ours, if the condition to be performed by us? and why is this put in, it signifies no more? Unless the meaning is, that Christ and his righteousness should be shut out, and it should be reckoned under the nature of this condition, merely as our own act, without respect to Christ the author of it, and Christ the true object of it. They tell us it is a negative qualification.—Yet say

It is not perfect in every degree. What's the meaning of that? This insinuates as if it were perfect in some degrees, and imperfect in other degrees. I had thought no grace was perfect in degrees, though it be true as to kind. But they will have it perfect in some degrees, and imperfect in other degrees; pray, in what degree is this condition perfect, and in what imperfect? And whether that be not an imperfect covenant that hath an imperfect condition?

It is not the least meritorious of the benefits conferred, by no means, (*i. e.*) by any intrinsic value and worth, either adequate to, or exceeding the benefits received.

Answ. No, their meaning is, what they have (saith one) is well worth their money; it is a good bargain: but by their favour (saith he) every federal condition is *expecto* meritorious; so that they may challenge their bargain upon the performance, if it be but 20 guineas, to purchase an £100. per annum, so that we have only their word for it, that it is not meritorious, when it is so really; the nature of the thing speaks it so to be to the understanding of all men of sense. No, no, do not think to wheedle Christ out of his merits, and God out of his honour, of his free grace, and us out of the comfort of both.

They say, It is not performed in our natural strength.

Answ. No, and yet a condition of a covenant made with man; a most unreasonable

Faith doth
not purchase
Christ.

Mr. Flavel's
discourse of
errors. p. 285.

What a kind
of condition
some make
faith to be.

Faith is no
condition nor
a use of jus-
tification in
God's sight.

Dr. Chauncy.

thing to require a condition of a covenant, of one that we know hath no strength to perform it. If a rich man should offer an estate of £1000 per year, to a poor man, that he knew was not worth a groat, provided he fetched twenty pounds of his own money, this act would be reckoned a ridiculing this poor wretch. God did not require that small condition of Adam, but that he was actually endowed with strength to perform it. They will say, God gives them ability to perform it; so he did Adam, previous to the covenant. As the rich man may tell the poor sir, I will give you the £20 to pay me for my estate; he will say, well sir, when you give it to me, I will bargain with you, and when I have it, though you gave it to me, I shall reckon it my money, as much as if I had raised it myself, or another had given it to me; and if we bargain, yet it is a bargain, and whatever I have of you is debt, and I can sue for it as purchased by me, saith the poor man. Now see how well qualified this condition is.

Dr. Chauncy.

My brethren, believe it, God makes no such bargain with sinners as this; there is no such buying of this pearl, as these men say,

They say according to the constitution of the covenant, this condition is required of us in order to the blessing consequent thereupon, by virtue of the promise.

This, as our author notes, is a paradox indeed; what do they mean by the constitution of the covenant? is it not according to other covenants by the constitution of their new scheme? is it not by a condition on the creature's part, to be performed, and a promise thereupon annexed? and is not the condition (saith the Dr.) performed *federale meritum*? or do this and live, *ordo federalis*, and the blessings consequent *ex pacto* therefore a debt; think not to beat us out of our senses, that the blessings of a covenant are only *consequentia ordinis vel posteritatis*; as one man follows another in a narrow path, or *ordine vel virtute pacti*, in or to a federal right and challenge of the benefits as a due debt.

2. How can faith be a condition of the covenant of grace, whereas it is a part or a branch of the said covenant?

Have not they the pearl, who have the spirit and faith given to them? or doth not God give men faith? but contrariwise it is their own act (without the seed thereof being first infused in them) and so Christ is purchased with their money.

3. What condition can he that is dead perform? or are not all before quickened by a vital principle infused into them spiritually dead?

4. Or is there any covenant of grace made with sinners, but that only made with Christ, and in him for all, and with all the elect? And hath not Christ obliged himself to God the Father, to answer all the conditions on their behalf (i. e.) work all their works in them and for them, as an act of free grace alone?

Obj. But our new scheme men we say, the mercies granted in our sense must be suspended by the donor or disposer of them, till the condition (which is faith) be performed.

Answ. You bid poor sinners come and buy, and you say not with the prophet, without money and without price; but they must have a parcel of money first to do it, implying still that sinners must bring faith, &c., repentance, &c., along with them, or there is no Christ for them; and that is as hard to bring as the money of perfect righteousness. For faith is wrought in the soul by the power of God, nay, according to his exceeding and almighty power, and in the same manner that he wrought in Christ, when he raised him up from the dead, as Paul shows, Eph. i. 19. Though we have not Christ without faith, so we have not faith without Christ, and both are promised and given freely; and faith itself is not a purchasing and procuring condition of the blessings promised, but one of the blessings of the covenant, and free and absolute promises of God; "I will be their God, and they shall be my people.—I will take away the heart of stone, and I will give them a heart of flesh.—I will put a new Spirit in them—I will put my Spirit upon them—I will put my law in their hearts, and write it in their inward parts."

If a man must have faith, before he can have Christ, and buy the pearl with that faith, which is his act; then salvation is by works, and with money, and not without money and price; and that which is worse, if faith be not contained in the free promise, as a part of the covenant between the Father and Son, but men must work it out of their own bowels, or get it as their own money to buy; it is impossible for any man ever to purchase this pearl, but all men must without remedy perish for evermore.

Quest. But doth not the gospel require faith as a condition of justification and eternal life?

What a condition faith is of justification and eternal life.

Dr. Channey.

I. Answ. Yea as a condition of connexion by way of order, as one thing dependeth on another (as our author observes) in logic, if a creature be a man, he is a rational creature; or if God be the first cause, he is the Creator of all things. And in this sense (saith he) creation is a condition of salvation, if a man be saved, he must be created; so if a man believe, he shall be saved; believing is a condition of connexion, a state of grace, is thus a condition of a state of glory, by way of connexion in the promise, but one is not the federal condition of another, but both come in as the gift of grace. In this sense the covenant contains all the conditions of order and dependance in the exhibition and performance; the hearing the word is the condition of faith, but hearing is not a federal condition; so the giving the Spirit is the condition of our union with Christ and of faith, and faith the condition of our receiving of pardon, and living a holy life—and holiness the condition of seeing God, and of having eternal life; but these kinds of conditions are federal entitling conditions to the promise, but are contained in the promise, and denote the connexion and dependance of one promised benefit with another.

2. Though faith be required of them that are saved, yea, and repentance, regeneration, holiness, and a new heart also; yet these blessings are all promised in the covenant, as part thereof. But faith itself is no federal condition, but only serves to show what God will do for, and work in such that he as an act of free grace will save.

From hence we may see how wofully blind they are, who assert faith, repentance, and sincere obedience are not only federal conditions of justification, but also are the matter or material cause thereof. And this is to buy the pearl indeed with our own money.

Thus having shown what is meant by buying the pearl, I shall run in some few things parallel-wise about buying, though the disparities are great, as hath been showed.

“And bought it.”

A parallel about buying the pearl.

1. He that buys a pearl, must know where it is to be had, he seeks it and finds it. First, So a poor sinner must know where to find Christ, and he seeks him and finds him, which finding is believing, as I have shown.

2. They that would buy must know the market-day, and repair thither. So must a sinner attend on the word and ministry of the Gospel, that would have Jesus Christ.

3. Buyers commonly ask the price of that they would buy. So sinners should ask the price or terms on which they must have Christ, and that is freely (without money, and without price) or not at all; they must come without money to this market. Good news for the poor.

4. Some come to market only to cheapen, ask the price of, way of buying, and that is all. So do some here; they think it is time enough to buy hereafter, and resolve to keep their sins and the love of the world in their hearts at present.

5. Some that come to buy like not the terms, they are full of money, and scorn to receive all freely; no, they are proud and haughty, it is too cheap for them. So some sinners will have no pearl, no Christ, unless they have it for their money, or on the conditions of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience.

6. Some come to buy too late, the market-day is over. So many (like the foolish virgins,) come too late to buy. See that parable.

7. In buying, some things are parted with, though it be not of any great value in respect of what they receive thereupon. So such who would have Christ the Pearl of great price, must do as Paul did, viz., part with all that is gain to them, or what they have set their hearts upon, or is their own, whether sinful pleasures, riches, or honours, inordinate desires; yea, and all their sins and lusts whatsoever; and also (as I said) with all their old hopes of heaven, and all their own righteousness, good deeds, or good works in point of trust or dependance, or in respect of justification in God's sight. But these terms the young man in the Gospel did not like of, therefore refused this pearl, and many now-a-days are like unto him.

8. Some refuse to buy in the proper season, and afterwards cry out against themselves for their folly. So they that contemn Jesus Christ, or refuse this pearl, out of love to sin, or love to religious or righteous self, will bewail their folly to an endless eternity.

APPLICATION.

First, Be exhorted to buy the pearl.

1. You that are poor, and have no money sure will buy, *i. e.*, you will have Christ, for you have nothing to trust to, or depend upon, for eternal life, if you buy not, none will.

SERMON XXXIV.

THE PARABLE OF TREASURE HID IN A FIELD.

“Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, which, when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all he hath, and buyeth that field.”—MATT. XIII. 44.

IN two parables in this chapter our Lord compareth the kingdom of heaven to things of small worth or value, viz., grain of mustard-seed, and to leaven, from the nature or quality of those things. But here he makes use of this and that of the pearl, to set forth the kingdom of heaven, by that which is excellent in its own nature, viz., by treasure, that the faithful might prefer the blessings of the Gospel and divine grace, as things of great worth; for what is esteemed by mankind more than treasure of great value?

The design and scope of this parable opened.

2. The kingdom of heaven may be compared to treasure hid, &c., to show that Christ and divine grace, or spiritual riches, are hid from the carnal eyes of the men of this world; and hence it is they have such low and contemptible thoughts of these things, they being of a spiritual and invisible nature in themselves, are not discerned but by him, whose understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of God. “What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him; so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God,” 1 Cor. ii. 11.

3. To show that men who would find Jesus Christ and all spiritual blessings in him, must search with great care and pains after them.

4. To discover that he who finds this spiritual treasure, must part with all that he esteems to be gain unto him, or is valued by him, that he may have, and possess divine riches as his own.

“The kingdom of heaven,” &c.

By the kingdom of heaven here, according to all expositors (I have meet with) is meant the word of the kingdom, or the dispensation of the Gospel, together with the grace and favour of God; all grace being dispensed by Christ the Mediator of the new covenant, who is a king, (as well as a priest and prophet), and it also tends to the erecting, setting up, and leading men into Christ’s spiritual kingdom here, and unto his eternal kingdom hereafter; and from hence it is called the kingdom of heaven.

“Is like unto treasure,” &c.

Though wicked men do generally love riches, or earthly treasure, yet they are ignorant of this, they do not account any thing to be treasure, but such things only which maketh men earthly, rich, and great in this world. But by this parable (and that of the pearl) our Saviour shows us there is better treasure than that which is earthly and visible to the carnal eyes, which tends to make men spiritually rich, and eternally happy.

There is, my brethren, a real and inconceivable worth in Jesus Christ and the spiritual blessings we have in and with him (as you have heard in my opening the parable of the pearl of great price,) this our Lord clearly shows by calling it treasure, that so all might with the greater diligence seek it. Christ is called a pearl, nay, a pearl of great price, and the Word is compared to gold, yea, preferable to much fine gold. Also the apostle calls the knowledge of Christ, and the great mysteries of the Gospel, treasure. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” 2 Cor. iv. 7. The grace and fulness which is in our Saviour, is called “unsearchable riches,” Eph. iii. 8.

“Hid in a field.”

The mysteries of the Gospel are called hidden mysteries; they were a long time hid in God, hid in his eternal decree and purpose, and also hid under the shadows and sacrifices of the law. But now by the Gospel are revealed to believers, but yet this treasure in the dispensation of the Gospel is hid still from the wise and learned men of this world. “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes,” Matt. xi. 25.

None can find Jesus Christ, know him, and partake of the riches of grace, but such that God opens the mysteries of the gospel unto; the gospel and ministration of it is a large field, in which such must dig deep with utmost care and wisdom, and with a piercing sight, who would find the treasure: some dig in this field, but never find the treasure; they have the outward ministration of the gospel, the cabinet, but find not the jewel: this treasure must be sought “as silver, and searched for as for hid treasure,” Prov. ii. 4; nay,

men must dig as miners search for golden ore. This field is very broad, very long and mysterious; in it is contained or hid the decree, counsel, and purpose of God from everlasting; in this field lies hid the covenant of grace, and the mysteries also of Christ's incarnation, the mysteries of God manifested in the flesh, the mysteries of the obedience, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Jesus Christ; the mysteries of election, redemption, reconciliation, justification, adoption, and the mysteries of union, and communion with the Father and the Son, and of eternal life; and all that would find these treasures, must dig deep in this field, and by faith and prayer, if they would find it.

"Which when a man hath found, he hideth."

What hiding
this treasure
denotes.

1. This shows it is sought and searched for by such that find it. No doubt finding of the treasure denotes the finding of Christ, the worth and preciousness of Christ, or what he is in himself, and what he is made to every one that finds him, or that believes on him. Moreover, he that finds Jesus Christ, or that believes in him, he hides him in his heart, that is, he receives him into his understanding, will, affections, and memory; he that hides not the word of God, the promises of God, and Jesus Christ in the promises, and in the ordinances, discovers to all, that he has not yet found this treasure.

2ndly, Hiding may signify two things: (1.) An high estimation or value such have of Jesus Christ; a man doth not hide or lay up with the greatest care, such things that are of small value. (2.) His care to keep it, lest thieves rob him of it; sin, the world, the flesh, the devil, and impostors, are spiritual thieves, and therefore the godly hide their treasure: Mary laid up all those things the angel told her in her heart; and so David hid the word of God; some men not having hid the true Christ, and treasure of the gospel in their judgments, wills, and affections, have lost that which they seemed to have, by strong delusions, which are sent as a judgment to deceive such, who "Received not the truth in the love of it that they might be saved," 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

"He hideth it."

There is a two-fold hiding of this treasure.

1. An evil hiding, which is not intended here.

A little to this.

An evil
hiding of
divine truth.

1. When a man hath received light and knowledge of Christ and divine truth, or in some degree it is revealed to him, and he (through the power of Satan's temptations, and the evil of his own heart) strives to smother it in his own breast, or conceals what he knows, and stifles his convictions, and that knowledge he hath keeps to himself, and will not make a visible profession of the gospel; this is an evil hiding: now the cause or reason why some do thus, I shall briefly show.

1. Because truth is only discovered to his understanding, they may be much enlightened, but his will consents not, subjects not to the power of it, nor is he in love with it, his affections being not changed, but he prefers some other things above it, or as the apostle hints, such do that receive the truth in the love of it.

2. It may be occasioned through shame; he is ashamed of Christ and of his word, the visible profession of religion exposeth men to reproach and contempt to the people of the world, and it must be the mighty power and efficacy of the Spirit put forth on the heart, that arms a man to despise all shame and reproach he may meet with (for the sake of Christ) by means of his making a visible profession of the gospel. Now this man not being under such a divine power, cannot bear the cross, nor suffer shame for Christ's sake. Nicodemus for some time was under the power of this great evil, he being a master in Israel was ashamed to own Christ publicly, and therefore came unto him by night, John iii. 1, 2. Our Lord shows us, that some are ashamed of him before men, and such he will be ashamed to own and confess before his Father in the great day, Matt. viii. 38. But all sincere Christians are not ashamed of Christ, nor of the cross, and gospel of Christ, they visibly own him, and do not in this sense hide the sacred treasure.

3. It may be through idleness, he is not willing to be at further pains, nor at the charge of selling all he hath to buy this field, or publicly to receive Christ and own him before men; the world is too much in his heart, (as it was in the heart of the young man that came running to Christ) or perhaps his own righteousness is too much valued by him, he cannot part with it in point of trust, that he may win Christ.

4. Moreover, fear may be one cause of the sinful hiding this treasure; he knows not what the losses may be he may meet withal, or what he may suffer for Christ's sake, if he visibly confesseth him before men: it was this which caused the stony-ground hearers to fall away, and deny the truth. "When tribulation and persecution rose because of

the word, they were offended," Matt. xiii. 2. Many in a time of liberty have owned Christ, who have hid their testimony and drawn back in days of persecution.

5. An evil hiding imports a non-improving of their light and knowledge; the slothful servant is said to hide his talent, Matt. xxv. 18, or his Lord's money in the earth, or in worldly cares, and the deceitfulness of riches; he improved not that which he had received.

Secondly, There is a good hiding of this treasure, which may denote.

1. Such endeavour to the uttermost, whatsoever it may cost them, to make it their own, and will not wickedly conceal nor hide what Christ hath done for them. What it is to hide this treasure. "Come to me all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul," Psal. lxxvi. 13.

2. They make use of all means to secure it (as I hinted before) and hence they lay it up in the safest place, watching day and night their deceitful hearts, that no corruption within may let in Satan or any enemy to deceive them of this treasure; they keep their hearts shut against all temptations and inordinate affections, they being sensible of the great danger they are in through sinful pleasures, riches and honours, or by means of heresies, errors, or by evil men, and evil company; they will not prefer any thing above it, nor neglect any duty God directs unto, for the securing of it; but as they have received it into every faculty of their souls, and lodged it in the secret recesses of their hearts, so they are daily in the exercise of faith, and of all the graces of the Spirit; and in prayer crying to God continually, to help them to persevere, and keep this treasure against all attempts of enemies whatsoever.

Now the reason why this treasure is and must be hid, is,

1. Because of the value of it; every true believer knows the worth of this treasure, and what is contained in it; who is able to compute the value of the God of truth, and Jesus Christ the pearl of great price, and all his riches. These things show what rich treasure this is, "they buy the truth," Prov. xxiii. 23, (Christ is the truth which they buy,) and sell it not, knowing nothing is to be compared to the excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The reasons why he hideth this treasure.

2. They hide it, by reason of the power and virtue they find it hath over them; their wills are so powerfully inclined and influenced by the efficacy of divine truth, that they count it their all, or the sum of their happiness; and from hence will sooner part with their natural lives than part with this treasure: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, neither is there any on earth that I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. Will a king part with his crown, or jewels of his crown? No, why this treasure is the believer's crown; now as outward grandeur and glory hath mighty power and influence upon a carnal heart, so true spiritual dignity, riches, and glory, have upon a spiritual heart; and as the causes here are more strong, noble, and powerful than natural causes, so the effects exceeded in their nature also, all natural or moral effects; that which the will thus powerfully inclined doth receive and embrace, that the affections most dearly love and prize; and from hence it is this treasure is hid by every saint of God.

3. They hide it from the apprehension they have of the deceitfulness and evil of their hearts, and of the rage and malice of Satan, who they know will if he can, raise up all the powers of hell and earth to strip them of this treasure. How hath Satan prevailed upon many, by open force taking the gospel in its outward administration from them; and by policy deceiving others, who have parted with this treasure for that which is not preferable to a brass counter, and if it were possible by his hellish delusions would even deceive the very elect.

4. They hide it in their hearts, because it is not only their riches, their honour, but also their food, they live upon it, trade with it; Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life: "They that find me find life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord," Prov. viii. 35. And upon him they live; what is dearer to men than the stay and staff of their life?

5. Moreover, this treasure is the seed of which our Lord speaketh in this chapter; and if the seed be not hid in the earth, it will not root; no more will the word of God, unless it be hid in our hearts. It is also like leaven which must be hid in the meal. So that from hence it appears there is a necessity of hiding of this treasure.

"And for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

A man that finds hidden treasure rejoiceth. So doth every believer that finds this spiritual treasure; the Samaritans when they found the field, found the gospel, and Jesus Christ hid therein, they rejoiced, "And there was great joy in that city," Acts. viii. 8. Moreover, when the eunuch had found this treasure, "He went on his way rejoicing,"

Acts. viii. 39. The gospel is cause of joy to all that find the rich treasure that is hid therein, for they are enriched thereby, and made for ever, and shall not be poor nor want any good thing while they live on earth, nor to all eternity.

What is meant by selling all.

"And goeth and selleth all that he hath."

He parts with all things, which before he counted gain unto him, whether it was a name among men, or the honours of the world, or unlawful or sinful desires, carnal affections, evil lusts, and sensual pleasures, self-interest, or self-righteousness; he no more trusteth in that, but esteems it as dung, that he may win Christ, "And be found in the righteousness of God, which is by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9. This no doubt is meant by selling all he had.

"And buyeth that field."

That is, he maketh the doctrine of the gospel his own, the ordinances and promises of Christ his own, the ministry of the word and sacraments his own; this is the field where this treasure is hid, he buys wine and milk, but it is "without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1, 2. (i. e.) he obtains the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, or receives the doctrine of free justification, adoption, and pardon of sin, he accepteth of Christ as he is freely offered; it is the doctrine and dispensation of the gospel, which he purchaseth on those terms which some like not of; he denies himself (being overpowered by divine grace) and takes up his cross, and followeth the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall say no more here of buying, it being spoken to, in my opening the parable of the pearl of great price.

Doct. Jesus Christ, and the blessings in him, are like to rich treasure, which is hid in the ministry of the gospel, which when a poor sinner finds, he hides, and with joy he parts with all he hath, that he may possess him, and have interest in all those blessings and benefits that come by him, or that are found in him.

In speaking to this general proposition, I shall shew,

1. Why Christ (and the blessing of the gospel, which we have in and by him) is called treasure.

2. Show you the nature of this treasure.

3. Show why it is called hidden treasure, or treasure hid in a field.

4. Show from whence it is that such that find this treasure rejoice and sell all for it.

I. Rich treasure is counted a most excellent thing, and therefore it is much desired; the hearts of mankind naturally run after riches and earthly treasure; Christ and the blessings of the gospel may upon this account be compared to treasure. What is equal in worth and value to the Lord Jesus Christ? He is called a precious stone; there are some precious stones of a very great worth; but O who can compute the intrinsical worth and value of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God; he is also called a pearl, not an ordinary pearl, but a pearl of great price; he that finds this treasure, hath all; all things are his, God is his portion, his inheritance, and his exceeding great reward; pardon is his, peace is his, and eternal life is his; and from hence all that know the excellency, worth, and preciousness of Christ, desire him above all things. "Whom have I in heaven but thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Neither is there any on the earth I desire besides thee," Phil. iii. 8, 9. Paul counted all things but dung in comparison of Jesus Christ.

Much treasure enricheth him that finds it, it maketh him rich, great, and honourable in this world. So this spiritual treasure makes all that find it very rich; mankind naturally are poor, and miserable, though they may be rich in gold and silver, or have store of worldly riches, yet they are in a spiritual sense very poor, have nothing to eat but husks, and are clothed with rags; their bodies may be clothed in cloth of gold, whilst their souls are naked, or clothed in filthy rags. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich," Rev. iii. 18. Gold is counted the best of earthly treasure; Christ and his benefits enrich the souls of believers; this is heavenly gold, and it makes all that find it truly and eternally rich, and also great and most excellent persons in all the earth; they are raised to the highest honour, they are born of God, born from above, and walk with God; God honoureth all such that fear him, and who are enriched with this treasure. "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren," &c. 1 Chron. iv. 9. Because he was enriched with grace, or called upon the God of Israel to be blessed indeed. He that findeth wisdom, findeth "Life, righteousness, and honour," Prov. xxi. 21.

III. Much earthly treasure makes men hated and envied by many persons, and are in danger to be robbed by thieves. So a believer is hated and envied by the devil and wicked men, because they are possessed with spiritual treasure, and are made like unto God in

Why Christ and the gospel blessings are compared to treasure.

holiness, all that are most like to God and Jesus Christ are hated by Satan and by the children of the wicked one; Satan also strives like an old and cunning thief to rob them of their treasure. Poor men do not fear thieves, they have no such occasion as the rich have. So the grand design of Satan by all his wiles, is to deceive and undo the saints of God; what devices hath the devil to rob us in these evil days, of the truths of God, of the doctrine of the gospel, and ordinances thereof, nay, of the true Christ himself; and thus this rich treasure exposeth the saints to many trials and dangers in this world, through the malice of the devil and wicked men.

IV. Such who have much riches, or store of earthly treasure, live high; they feed or fare not as the poor do; also they are more richly clothed and adorned, and delivered from the care and fears which the poor are perplexed with continually. So believers who are enriched with this sacred treasure, live glorious lives; they dwell high, they eat the hidden manna, or feed upon the bread of life, and are clothed in gold of Ophir, or in the rich robe of Christ's righteousness, and have a ring on their hand. See the parable of the prodigal son. Moreover, they can trust God, rely upon God, and on his promises; because they are rich in faith, and are delivered from slavish fear which possesseth the hearts of the poor; and indeed such Christians who are filled with doubts and fears, discover they have but a small measure of this spiritual treasure, or are not rich or strong in faith as others are.

V. A man that hath much earthly treasure can do more good to his neighbours than multitudes of others are able to do. So believers who have this heavenly treasure, who are rich in faith, rich in promises, and rich in experience, can do more good than any others; they can give better counsel, and administer more and better comfort to poor disconsolate persons. "The lips of the righteous feed many," Prov. x. 21, they can do more for others by their prayers. "The prayers of a righteous man avail much with God," Jam. v. 16. And if these men and women have the riches of this world, how much good do they do with it above others, how many poor saints and poor ministers do they feed and support under their necessities; while others who have none or but a small portion of this soul-enriching treasure, live to themselves, and do but little or no good so long as they live in the world. It is wonderful indeed to think what abundance of good, some men in this city to my knowledge have done, who are not only enriched with this treasure, but also with earthly riches; may be one man or two have done more than forty who pretend to religion and godliness as well as they, and perhaps as rich in the world as they are also.

VI. He that hath much earthly treasure, values himself accordingly, and rich and honourable are his companions, noble persons are his comforts, and with them he communes every day. So he that hath much of this spiritual treasure, values himself upon the best and worthiest grounds in the world. (1). In respect to his relation to God, he is a child of God. (2). He hath God for his portion. (3). He is allowed communion with God, he dwells with God, and God with him, he walks with God, and God with him; he sups with God and Christ, and they with him. (4). Because he knows he can never be poor, or be undone, he is assured he shall never want any good thing. A godly man values not himself from what he knows more than others; for he thinks he knows nothing as he ought, nor from what he hath done for God, but from a better ground. Moreover, the godly or such who fear God are his companions; "he hates to walk in the way of the wicked, or to have fellowship with the vile and base-born of this world," Psal. i. 1. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," Psal. cxix 68.

Psal. xvi. 5.
6.
2 Cor. vi. 18.
Psal. lxxxiii.
26.
1 John i. 2. 3.
2 Cor. vi. 16.
Rev. iii. 20.
Psal. xxxiv.
9, 10.
Psal. lxxxiv.
11.

VII. They that have much earthly treasure are delivered from that contempt, which others are exposed unto; beggars are counted the offscouring of the world. So he who finds this treasure is freed from that contempt which the Word of God casteth upon all wicked men. They are a poor, sordid, and base sort of people, hence called tares, vile and abominable ones; when the righteous, who have this treasure, are compared to gold, and called God's jewels; and indeed these are the rich that have many friends, God, Christ, the Holy Ghost, and all the holy angels of heaven, and all the saints upon earth are their friends, and show them-elves at all times so to be to them; what an honour is it to have such friends! and to be attended upon, and ministered to by the holy angels of God!

The parable of the wheat and tares.

VIII. Hid treasure is not found without much pains and diligent searching, no more is this spiritual treasure; Solomon shows us how wisdom, that is, Jesus Christ, and spiritual riches, must be sought. "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for un-

derstanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God," Prov. ii. 2, 5. Merchants that seek hid treasure, run through a thousand dangers, and stick not at any difficulty. Miners dig through rocks and under rivers to find the golden ore, or to follow the vein of silver, so nothing is too hard to such who seek and search after this hid treasure; they dig in the depths of God's eternal councils and purposes from everlasting, and dig into the covenant of grace, and into the mysteries of God manifested in the flesh, and dig into the mysteries of the gospel, word, and ordinances, and never give over until they have found this treasure.

IX. He that hath much earthly treasure, commonly sets his heart upon it, and it is his chiefest delight, so he that hath found this treasure, sets his heart upon it; God and Christ is his chiefest delight. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matt. vi. 21. They that are earthly think of the earth, speak of the earth, they mind earthly things, their hearts are on the world, when they approach near to God with their mouths, and seem to honour him with their lips, because earthly riches are their chiefest treasury; but they that are spiritually rich, whose treasure is in heaven, set their affections on those things which are above, Col. iii. 1, 2. That which is a man's choicest treasure, hath his heart, love, and delight; "Why doth thine heart carry thee away," Job. xv. 12. Why doth thy affection master thy judgment, or why are thy passions too hard for thy reason? the ill treasure of the heart hath power over, and is too hard for the whole man.

X. Such who find great treasure, rejoice; so he that finds Christ, or this spiritual treasure, rejoiceth; he selleth for joy all he hath to buy that field; a believer has cause of joy, he is happy for ever, let what will come, he rejoiceth in his portion, his treasure is safe.

XI. Such who find great treasure, can pay all their debts, so they that find this treasure, can plead a discharge from the guilt of all their sins in Jesus Christ; they see how all their debts are paid. This treasure (that is, Jesus Christ) satisfied the justice of God; though the bare finding of Christ, or believing in him, doth not pay our debts; yet none have their sins so actually paid as they can plead their discharge, but they that receive Christ, or apply the atonement; no man comes out of debt, nor does he know how until he finds this treasure.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to treasure hid in a field," &c.

I shall now proceed to show you the nature of this treasure.

1. It is heavenly, not earthly treasure, as far as heaven excels the earth, so far heavenly treasure, excels all the riches, wealth and treasure of this world, earthly riches is but like dung to this, that is of no value; this is called better substance, better in quality, and more in quantity. Worldly treasure enriches the outward man only, but this enriches the soul; the souls of the wicked are poor and miserable, because their riches suit not the state of their souls, it cannot answer nor supply soul-wants, nor raise their souls to honour; it will not buy soul-food nor soul raiment; no, such as is the nature of the soul, such must be the treasure that enriches it, and the food that feeds, and the raiment that clothes it, that is, it must be of a heavenly, a spiritual and immortal nature and quality.

2. It being heavenly and spiritual treasure, it followeth that it must be incorruptible treasure; gold, silver, and all the best things of this world are corruptible moth; and rust corrupteth it. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt," Matt. vi. 20. "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten, your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you," Jam. v. 2, 3. But this treasure, being incorruptible, is of a blessed nature, it cannot change nor alter, but always abides the same.

3. It is soul-satisfying treasure; the treasures of this world can never satisfy the immortal soul of man; that is still restless, unsatisfied, and craving. "He that desireth silver shall not be satisfied with silver," Eccl. v. 10. Man naturally labours for that which satisfieth not, Isa. lv. 2; that only which is man's chiefest good, tends to satisfy him, and that is the blessed God. And it is from hence that this treasure is of a satisfying nature, for he that finds it comes to enjoy God for his portion, he hath God's love and favour in Jesus Christ. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fat things of thy house," Psal. xxxvi. 8. Hence such who find Christ, that blessed gift of God, the living bread, and water of life, thirst no more, but abide satisfied, John iv. 14.

4. It is durable and everlasting treasure, not uncertain riches, which are compared to vapour. "Wilt thou set thy heart upon that which is not?" Prov. xxiii. 5. Wilt thou catch at a shadow or a vapour? if you see a man do thus, would you not think him out of his

wits? children have more wisdom, than to go about to take hold of a shadow; but such fools are the men of the world, they strive to hold fast a shadow, no man can carry any of his earthly treasure out of the world with him; this treasure being everlasting and durable treasure, a believer carries it with him to heaven, or rather goes thither to possess and enjoy it, "Riches and honour are with me, yea durable riches and righteousness; my fruit is better than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver," Prov. viii. 18, 19. This treasure is better in many respects, and one is, because it is durable; they are not uncertain riches. "Charge them that are rich, that they trust not in uncertain riches," &c., 1 Tim. vi. 17. A man may be rich to-day, and poor to-morrow; nothing is more uncertain than earthly riches, but should a man keep them as long as he lives, yet riches avail not in the day of wrath; they cannot help nor relieve a man on a death-bed, nor when God pours out his wrath upon him. But this treasure will stand him instead in the greatest time of need, as well as it is eternal treasure.

Secondly, I shall show you how it is hid, and why it is called hid treasure, or treasure hid in a field.

I have showed that by this treasure is meant Jesus Christ, with the saving knowledge and benefits of Jesus Christ; now Christ is like hidden treasure,

I. Because he was long hid in God, or covered, and out of the sight of men; that which is kept secret or not discovered, may be said to be hid. "To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God," Eph. iii. 9. It was in some respects hid from all, but more especially from the Gentiles, they knew nothing of it, it was hid from them. "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations," &c., Col. i. 26. That is salvation by Jesus Christ.

Why the treasure of gospel is hid, or called hid treasure.

II. It was hid from the Jews, who believed not under the law, hid under dark shadows and beggarly elements, so that they could not find this treasure; they could not see Christ in those sacrifices and shadowy ordinances; they were as a cloud, in which the sun of righteousness was hid, and so he is hid from them to this day, though it may seem strange, that they could not see through the sacrifices of poor animals, to the antitype of them; could they once suppose that the blood of bulls and goats could satisfy for the sins of mankind, or their blood could purge the conscience from sin?

III. Christ and his benefits are hid in the dispensation of the gospel, so that very few can find this rich treasure, they have the field, i. e., word and administration of the gospel; but carnal men see not the mysteries of the gospel, it is hid treasure to them, what, be justified by the obedience and righteousness of a poor man, hanged upon a tree, this was accounted to the learned Greeks foolishness, it was hid from them. "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness," &c., 1 Cor. i. 23; that is, such effect our preaching of a crucified Christ hath both upon the one and upon the other, it lies above their human reason, that that way men should be justified and saved for ever.

IV. This treasure was hid, (and is still) dark, parabolical, symbolical, or tropical expressive uttered by our blessed Lord, many had the field, I mean the parables and similitudes, they were spoken to multitudes, but the treasure hid in them few saw; and it is sad indeed to see how some men mistake the design of our Saviour in many of his parables; it is evident the treasure is still hid from most in our days. I have often cried to God, to help me, that I might understand them, and open them by the help of his own Spirit. But ah, how little do I know!

V. This treasure is hid by the Lord from multitudes, as an act of his sovereign will and pleasure. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to them it is not given." God acts according to his own sovereign pleasure. "Shall I not do what I will with my own," Matt. xx. 15. Is God obliged to send the gospel unto all the nations of the world, because he gives his special favour to some? must he be unjust if he does not afford them to every individual person in the world? Because he opened Lydia's heart, must he open every woman's heart? No no. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion, and whom he will he hardens," Rom. ix. 18. or hides the mysteries of his kingdom from. "At that time Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes—even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matt. xxi. 25, 26.

The learned Pharisees and Jewish Rabbins had the outward ministration of the gospel as the learned have now, but God did not, and now doth not, reveal the hidden mysteries

of his kingdom but to a very few of that sort, and it is only from the good pleasure of his own will be doth this.

Natural
light re-
veals not
the know-
ledge of
Christ the
Mediator.

1. That may be said to be hid which mankind cannot find, without God reveals it to them in a supernatural way: now the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the mysteries of the gospel, mankind naturally, or by the light of nature, cannot know. And from hence this treasure is hid from most nations of the world.

It is hid from the Pagan world; they know nothing of Christ crucified, and of salvation by him.

It is hid also from the Mahometan world; they esteem and honour Mahomet above Jesus Christ, they know him not.

It is also hid from the antichristian world, for though they have the name of Christ, or name of Christians, yet they know not Jesus Christ.

Moreover, it is hid from multitudes of the Protestant world; true, they walk in the field where it is hid, but many of them never found the treasure; it is therefore hid treasure.

The Gospel is a sealed book, and though it be given to a man that is learned, he cannot read it because it is sealed, and none can open the seal thereof but the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. That which needeth many gradations to unfold it, is a hidden thing, but the knowledge of Christ the Mediator, and mysteries of salvation, needed many gradations to unfold it; to our first parents it was made known by that promise, "The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head." This was the first discovery of this treasure, which God saw good to make of it.

Then to Abraham God gave a further discovery thereof, telling him that "in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18. Afterwards, it was revealed by the types, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the law, which but few could take in, though it was to reveal Jesus Christ the great sacrifice to them; and then by the prophets he was declared yet more clearly, and that he should be born of a virgin, and die for the sins of his people; yet how hard was it for any to understand or find this treasure, though God took all these ways, methods, and gradations, to reveal it to them?

And then when we come to the gospel dispensation, which far exceedeth for clearness all other revelations of Christ and salvation by him, yet what multitudes know him not, find not this treasure, though the light is so clear, yet it is hid from many. Some think the gospel is but a law of obedience, having the sanction of rewards to such who sincerely obey the precepts thereof, and threatenings of divine wrath to the disobedient. The mysteries of the gospel are hid still from them; they cannot find the way of free justification and eternal life, though they have the best and clearest external revelation thereof, of all that were before them.

Christ is
not found
without
much dili-
gence.

3. That which requires our uttermost skill, wisdom, and diligence to search and find out, is a hidden thing; but the true knowledge of Jesus Christ requires our uttermost skill, wisdom, and diligence in searching to find out, and therefore it is a hidden thing. Pray see what Solomon saith; "My son, if

thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding—Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding,—if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures—then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God," Prov. ii. 1—5. What is more clear and evident than this, *i. e.*, that our utmost diligence must be used in seeking and searching to find this treasure. Moreover, it must be sought for where it is hid, even in that very field and no where else; some seek for it within them, but there it is not. True, in all men there is some dark and blotted remains of the covenant of works, which reproves for sin, as it is against God, and Jesus Christ considered as Creator, but the true gospel silver vein lies not there, that is not the place of this gold where they find it; Christ is not hid in these secret chambers, (*i. e.*,) in the hearts of wicked men; no, that is a false Christ which such have, who cry, "Behold he is in the secret chambers," Matt. xxiv. 26.

My brethren, as men know not the price hereof, so many know not the place thereof, or field where it is hid. "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen, the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it," &c., Job xxviii. 7, 8. These vultures who pretend to have a piercing sight, know not the place of this treasure; many seek the living among the dead, "he is not here, he is risen," and ascended; though his word is near, even in the hearts and mouths of believers; yet the true treasure, the doctrine and saving knowledge of Christ, lies only hid in the gospel, or ministration thereof.

It is hid from many by the devil: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost—in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Satan, by God's permission, hides this treasure from many whom he hath deceived with his subtle wiles and delusions, and in these days hath not only hid from some men's eyes the true doctrine of faith, but from others the true and immediate object of faith also, many relying upon their own righteousness for justification; and others have lost the true Saviour.

Satan hides the treasure of the gospel from many persons.

"Which when a man hath found, he rejoiceth, and goeth and selleth all he hath," &c.

This brings me to the last general head proposed:

Fourthly, I shall show you why he rejoices that finds this treasure, &c.

I. He that finds this treasure, finds the Lord Jesus Christ, the Pearl of great price, which far exceeds all hid treasure and mountains of prey. How do men rejoice when they find a pearl worth ten thousand pounds. I have read of a pearl of an exceeding great value, but it was but as a bit of dirt or dung when compared to Jesus Christ. Therefore it is from the worth of this treasure, that a believer that finds it doth rejoice.

Why a believer that finds this treasure rejoiceth.

II. It may be from the great use this treasure is of to him, (1.) He was poor before, and this treasure enricheth him. (2.) He was naked before, but by finding this treasure he is gloriously clothed. (3.) He was forced before to feed upon husks, but now he is fed with rare and choice food, he feedeth on the Bread of life. (4.) He was far in debt before, but now this treasure he sees has paid all he owed to the law and justice of God, and that he is justified from all things, and pardoned for ever. (5.) He saw he was a child of wrath before, but now he is become a child of God. (6.) That he was a captive and in chains before, but now he is set at liberty. (7.) Condemned before, but now sees that sentence is taken off, and that "there is no condemnation to him (nor to any that are) in Jesus Christ." (8.) That he was a fool before, or without true knowledge and understanding, but now he is become wise (for Christ is made not only righteousness to them that find him) but wisdom also, I. objectively; Christ is the wisdom of God, and also he that discovers the great depths of God's eternal wisdom to us. 2. Christ is also made wisdom to us subjectively, we by finding of him are made eternally wise.

Rev. 3. 17
Luk. 15. 22
Joh. 6. 51, 54
Rom. 3. 23, 26
Acts 13. 39
Heb. 8. 11
Eph. 2. 3.
Isa. 61. 1.
Joh. 3. 15.
36.
Rom. 8. 1.
1 Cor. 1. 30.
1 Cor. 2. 4. 13.

III. My brethren, this treasure mainly consisteth in the saving knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," &c., 2 Cor. iv. 7. The apostle doth not only refer in these words to the ministrations or apostolical office, but to that sight of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the knowledge of which is life eternal; John xvii. 3; without this saving knowledge we have no God, no Christ, no grace, no faith, no union with Christ, no actual justification, pardon of sin, peace, not eternal life.

This treasure is the saving knowledge of Christ.

no faith, no

1. It is an experimental, not a mere speculative knowledge, not only a head-enriching, but also a heart-enriching knowledge.

2. It is a practical knowledge, such have spiritual acquaintance with God: "He that saith he knows him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," Job xxii. 21, 22, 1 John ii. 4.

The nature of the true knowledge of Christ.

3. It is an enlivening knowledge, it is always attended with a principle of divine life; and such "are renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10.

4. It is a translating and transforming knowledge, such are changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iii. 18; they are dead with him, and quickened, and raised up to newness of life, Rom. vi. 3, 4, 6; they feel the power of his death and resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, Phil. iii. 10; they find the stream of God's divine love and goodness, and the stream of Christ's love in the efficaciousness and sweetness of his blood and suffering; tasting that the Lord is gracious.

5. It is a knowledge of interest, they can say, "My Lord, and my God," and so a God-endearing, a Christ-endearing knowledge, and therefore it is a knowledge of application; they that thus know Christ, take hold of him, embrace him in the arms of their faith, and can trust in him, and all Christ hath is theirs.

6. It is a self-abasing, a soul-humbling, and a God and Christ-exalting knowledge. "I am resolved Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death," Phil. i. 12.

7. It is a progressive knowledge, a growing and increasing knowledge; "they go from grace to grace, from faith to faith," and are changed "from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

This is the treasure which this man found, and hence he rejoiceth, and hath cause of joy. Without this knowledge no man can love God, nor love Jesus Christ. Love always supposeth knowledge: "What is thy beloved more than another's beloved," Cant. v. 9. Nor can there be true joy unless we have the person, the treasure that is so desirable. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life," Prov. xiii. 12. When the desire comes, that is, when the object desired is enjoyed, then peace, and delight, and joy is in that person.

IV. He that finds this treasure, makes the field his own, he secures the field: the doctrine of the Gospel is his own, it is well rooted in him, and thereby he is delivered from all soul-undoing and soul-destroying evils; and is possessed with all soul-enriching, soul-satisfying, soul-delighting, and soul-ravishing good; he has in himself a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life, John iv. 14; bread to eat that others know not of, and "is abundantly satisfied with the fat things of God's house, and drinks of the rivers of his pleasures," Psal. xxxvi. 8, therefore he may well rejoice.

V. God is his Father, his Portion, his Friend; Christ is his Saviour, Redeemer, his Bridegroom, his Surety, his riches, his Advocate, nay, his all; and the Spirit is his Comforter, his Guide, his Leader, his Helper, his Strengtheners, and his Quickener: the word is his rule, the promises and ordinances are his patrimony; the angels are his guard, his retinue, and heaven is his inheritance.

He rejoices therefore, and selleth all to buy this field; if he was possessed of ten thousand worlds, crowns, and kingdoms, yet he would sell them all, part with them all for this treasure.

APPLICATION.

1. I infer from hence, that there is a great depth in the Christian religion; men must dig in this field, and search with enlightened minds, before they can find it; it is not every one that hath the Bible, or hath the ministration of the gospel, that finds the treasure; the further we dig into these mysteries, the more we are enriched with the saving knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. This field is like the water of the sanctuary, where a lamb might wade, and yet a river that no man could pass over, Ezek. xlvii. 5.

2. Let none therefore be wise in their own eyes, in their own conceit, and think they know enough, know all, for such certainly know nothing; none know anything as they ought to know; all know but in part, and see darkly as in a glass.

3. We infer, the gospel is a great blessing. O bless God, you who have the field where this treasure is hid, you have the gospel in a clear and gracious ministration thereof, which thousands in the world have not, and so it is impossible for them to find this treasure; nay, you have the field of the word opened and explained to you, that you may the better discern where the treasure lies hid in it, the types opened, the prophecies opened, the metaphors opened, the parables and similies opened, and the doctrine of the word explained and opened, the sacraments opened; O what encouragement is here for you to search, when so much is done for your instruction.

4. We infer, that Ministers have need of great light and understanding, or to be men of skill and experience: ignorant preachers are a plague and a curse to a people; O take heed who ye hear.

Exhort. Be exhorted you that are sinners, to seek this treasure, and resolve to purchase this field.

"With joy he hideth, and goeth straightway and selleth all, and buyeth that field."

Buying, you have heard, only signifieth his parting with all he before counted gain to him.

I. Such that find this treasure will rejoice.

Why he that finds this treasure doth rejoice.

1. Because of the worth of it, and the good he receives hereby.
2. Because of what is contained in it, Christ, grace, justification, pardon, peace, &c.

3. Because he is delivered from all damning evil, and possessed of all true good.

4. Because he cannot be dispossessed of it for ever: God is his God for ever and ever and Christ is his Saviour, and heaven his inheritance.

II. Suppose a man mortally wounded should find a balsam, which being applied, heals all his sores, would he not part with joy, or throw away all his old plasters, which to no purpose he before applied.

III. Or suppose a man was in prison, in chains and fetters, being condemned to die, and meets with a friend that has got his discharge and free pardon, would he not with joy part with his chains and filthy prison, and rejoice and triumph in his liberty? what is sin, the world, self-righteousness, but as chains and fetters, which he that finds this treasure with joy parts with?

IV. Or suppose a man was a captive, and he should obtain a ransom, would he not with joy part with and sell all he had in captivity, and return home? My Brethren, this is the case here, the sinner hath found his friend, that has paid his ransom, and assures him, he is redeemed from sin, wrath and hell, and is set at liberty, made free indeed, free for ever: is not here cause for him to rejoice? and will he not now sell all he hath, part with all his sins, which were as chains in spiritual Turkey, and part with all his old friends, that promised to procure his freedom, with all his old hopes of salvation, peace and justification, and also part with all his old companions, and return to his father's house.

V. Or suppose a poor man was digging in a field, to get his bread, and had nothing but rags to cover his nakedness, and should find vast treasure, a million of guineas, or broad pieces of gold, would he not rejoice, and willingly sell all he had, could he but find a friend to bestow this field, and all the treasure that lies still hid in it, on him, would he not sell or part with his rags, his pick-axe, and his spade, by which means before he thought to live by hard labour, seeing now he is become very rich, and need not dig or work for his bread any more.

Thus it is here, this man was working for life, but clothed with rags, and fed upon husks, but now he hath found Jesus Christ in the dispensation of the gospel, in that blessed field; and this field, this holy doctrine, is by the Lord made his own, and all the rich treasure hid therein; O now he rejoiceth, and he hides it, lays up treasure in heaven, he lays up all (by believing) in the hand of Christ, or commits all to the keeping of the Lord Jesus, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and life also is hid.

U S E .

Sinners, seek this treasure; the promise is, "If ye seek ye shall find." As to the right seeking, see the foregoing parable of the pearl of great price, where it is largely opened.

2. You that are professors, who conclude you have found this treasure, examine yourselves. O try yourselves, lest you should be deceived.

(1.) If you have found this treasure, you know when, and how you found it; and if it was not by believing in Christ, you have it not, it is no otherways obtained.

(2.) Have you parted with all you had? do you account (with Paul) whatsoever was gain to you but loss for Christ, and esteem it as dung, to be found in him, having his righteousness? &c.

(3.) Do you rejoice in Christ Jesus? are your hearts raised on high? are your affect upon things above? do you find more joy and gladness in your hearts, than when corn and wine increased? is the light of God's countenance more dear to you than all things in this world, his favour above life to you? Ps. iv. 7.

(4.) Where are your hearts? remember what Christ says, "Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also." The Lord grant it may be with us all thus, and that you may seek this treasure and find it, so will profit redound to you, and glory to God, to whom be praise for ever. Amen.

PARABLE

OF THE

WHEAT AND TARES OPENED

SERMON XXXV.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way: but when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also," &c.—MATT. xiii. 24, 25, &c.

The scope of the parable.

I. THE design and scope of this parable (as it plainly appears to me) is to show, that though the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, and faithful ministers in the primitive times, had lain a good foundation of the church, and sowed good seed, from whence wheat or holy persons sprung up; yet through the remissness of some succeeding ministers, Satan through his malice, by his instruments, (or subtle deceivers) would sow false doctrine or pernicious errors, which would produce evil persons called tares; *i. e.*, men of abominable principles, holding dangerous heresies, and guilty of vile practices, and these would spring up among the wheat.

2ndly. To show that the good and bad should abide together in the world, and not that the tares should be rooted out by persecution, or be cut off by sanguinary laws, but that both should abide together in the field of the world, to the end thereof.

3rdly. That at the last, a discriminating day will come, or a time when the wheat and tares shall be separated or severed from each other, and one be gathered into God's kingdom, and the other cast into hell. So much as to the scope of the parable.

Secondly, We shall proceed to explain the terms and parts of this parable.

The explanation of the parts of the parable.

1. By the kingdom of heaven here is meant the Gospel-church, in which would not only be true believers, but also some hypocrites or ungodly persons; or, 2. The ministration of the Gospel dispensation.

2. The man here spoken of, is the same as in the foregoing parable, *viz.*, the Son of man, the Messiah, Jesus Christ; for it is he that sows the good seed, from whence the wheat ariseth, or godly Christians spring up. See our Lord's own exposition of this parable, ver. 37. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man."

The man that soweth the good seed is Jesus Christ.

2. The good seed are godly Christians, "the good seed (saith our Saviour) are the children of the kingdom," ver. 38.

What meant by the good seed.

3. "The tares are the children of the wicked one," ver. 38, either such that are erroneous in their principles, or secret hypocrites.

What meant by the tares.

4. The field is the world; though it may, as some think, also refer to the church. Marlorate saith, by a synecdoche, a part put for the whole, it signifies the church, though this seems doubtful to me, and I rather believe it means this world.

The field is the world

1. For where is the church put for the world? though the elect before called, are called the world sometimes, as John i. 29, 2 Cor. v. 19, 1 John ii. 2; *i. e.*, the elect amongst Jews and Gentiles.

2. Because tares, when discovered to be such, must not grow amongst the wheat in the church; but ought to be cast out, though they ought to live together in the world.

The sower of the evil seed is the devil.

5. "The sower of the evil seed (our Lord saith,) is the devil," from whence the tares sprung up, *i. e.*, the children of the wicked one: that is, they are the product either of evil doctrine, or else of the filthy lusts that Satan by his temptations infuseth into the hearts of all unrenewed persons; for all sin and false doctrine is of the devil. "Ye are of your father the devil," John viii. 44, *i. e.*, the produce of his evil seed.

6. The harvest is the end of the world, when time shall be no more, for the godly and the wicked to live together, as now they do and shall, until the end thereof. The harvest is the end of this world.

7. The reapers are the angels. "As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom, all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear," ver. 40—43.

1. This shows the woful state of all wicked men and seducers at the day of judgment. The angels will find them all out, and bind them up in bundles, and cast them (after the judgment is ended) both body and soul into hell. The woful state of the wicked at the day of judgment.

2. It also shows the blessed state of the righteous, *i. e.*, such that shall be found clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and also inherently righteous, being renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The happy state of the righteous at that day.

For none are made, or imputed righteous, in the first sense, who are not truly inherently holy and righteous in the second; there are two or three verses which our Lord opened not, ver. 25—27.

"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares, and went away," ver. 25.

By men sleeping here, no doubt is meant the ministers of the Gospel, or pastors of churches, being remis and careless in watching against Satan's sowing of tares or evil seed; either the seed of lusts and earthly mindedness, (by which means some professors might be utterly spoiled, and come to nothing) or else the seed of errors and heresies; both are from Satan.

"But when the blade was sprung up," &c. That is, when true believers brought forth the fruits of the Spirit, to show they were wheat.

"Then appeared the tares also," ver. 26. Then some false or corrupt persons appeared and were discerned (by him who is all eye, and perhaps to the angels and men also) to be amongst the saints.

"And the servants of the household came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hast it tares?" ver. 27.

By the servants are either meant the angels, or else ministers or magistrates; as God is the God of truth, and of holiness, so all errors and evil seed is from the devil.

"The servants said unto him, wilt thou that we go and gather them up?" that is, the tares.

(1.) Some conclude by the servants here, are meant the angels. If to angels, then it may denote that God would not have some judgments to be brought upon the wicked, lest some godly persons fall also with them.

(2.) Some think our Lord refers to Christian magistrates, who have been, and may again be pious persons, and may be ready to cut off by death such offenders, whom our Lord would have lived in the world until the end thereof comes; not but that murders and traitors ought by the sword of justice to be cut off, or pulled up; but not such who are only guilty of divers sorts of errors in matters of faith, or such who many ways are immoral in their lives.

"But he said, nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them," ver. 29.

This shows that persecution upon the account of religion, is utterly unlawful, though men may hold grand errors, yet no magistrates have any power to persecute them, much less in the highest degree, so as to put them to death. Persecution for religion is utterly unawful.

1. Because the best of men on earth are not infallible. They do not know but that which they call heresy may be a truth of Christ. "After that way, which they call heresy, (saith Paul) so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the law and the prophets," Acts xxiv. 14. And as good men are not able to distinguish between some truths and errors, so they may think such and such are tares who may be wheat, *i. e.*, gracious and holy persons; and this is the reason our Lord allegeth why they should not root out the tares, "Lest they root out also the wheat with them."

2. Because Jesus Christ is only the king and sovereign of the conscience. None ought to impose upon the consciences of men in matters of religion. They must stand and fall in such cases to their own master.

3. Because it is directly contrary to that golden rule, or true moral precept, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye the same unto them." Persecu-

tion is therefore a palpable violation of this holy precept. Would they have others (were they in like power) to persecute them, (for what they believe and practice, according to their light and consciences) no sure, why then they ought not to persecute others; besides, we never find that any Gospel church was a persecuting church, but contrariwise were persecuted.

4. Because such severities have no tending to convince the conscience (if it be erroneous) it may make men to act like hypocrites, *i. e.*, out of fear to do that which is directly against their consciences, and so to sin against God, who alone hath power over it, and will punish those at last accordingly, for obeying man rather than God. When the disciples asked their Lord, whether "they should call for fire from heaven to consume their enemies, (He answered) ye know not what spirit you are of," Luke ix. 54, no more do they who persecute others for their conscience sake.

Let yet none suppose that our Saviour by these words, "Let both grow together until harvest," meant that he would have his people suffer wicked and heretical persons (if Church censures not discovered,) to abide in his church; no, for that is directly contrary to those rules of discipline he hath left in the holy gospel, both in respect of private and public offences; and also in the case of heresy, such ought to come under a just and righteous censure, but for no such evils; but only for murder, treason, felony, &c., ought persons to be delivered up to the civil magistrate, to suffer corporal punishment. This condemns the church of Rome, and all other people, who are persecutors of men for religion.

Thus having briefly opened the several terms and parts of this parable, I shall proceed to take notice of some doctrinal propositions, from some of the principal things contained therein.

All Divine Grace and Holiness proceeds from Christ.

Doct. 1. That it is our Lord Jesus Christ that soweth by his word and spirit the good seed, *i. e.*, that seed from whence all the holy habits, holy acts, and the holy lives of all true believers springs; all grace and holiness proceeds from Jesus Christ, "Of His own will begat he us by the word of truth," James i. 18. Ministers cannot sow the grace in sinners' hearts, no, they are indeed instruments in Christ's hand, by whom he works, but Christ is the great agent, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God," &c. I Pet. i. 23. And hence we are said to be "born of the Spirit, and are spirit," John iii. 6. *i. e.*, spiritual. "Which were born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13.

Believers are a choice and precious people.

Doct. 2. Believers are a choice people, choice grain; they are wheat, the product of choice and precious seed; or may be compared to wheat; which is the most precious grain in all the world.

Believers are a choice and precious people.

First, I shall show you the saints are a precious and choice people.
Secondly, Show you why they are compared to wheat.
Thirdly, Briefly apply it.

I. By the names given to them they appear to be a choice and precious people.

(1.) They are called the excellent in all the earth, and such that are more excellent than their neighbours, "My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight," Psal. xvi, 3.

(2.) They are called precious; "If thou separate the precious from the vile."

(3.) They are called, "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold," Lam. iv. 2; also are often called gold, which is a precious thing.

(4.) They are called honourable; "since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable," Isa. xliii. 4.

(5.) They are called God's inheritance, his portion, his treasure, nay, his jewels, "They shall be mine in that day that I make up my jewels," Mal. iii. 17.

(6.) They are called Christ's brethren, also his friends, his love, his dove, his spouse; all serve to show that they are a very choice and precious people in God's account.

II. They are a choice and precious people, because of the seed from whence they spring; they are the seed of God, the seed of Christ; "He shall see his seed," Isa. liii. 11, the seed or product of the Holy Spirit, and of the word; therefore in respect of their choice and precious birth they are a precious people.

III. In respect of that holy image which is stamped on them; they bear the image of God, and are like to God, and to Jesus Christ; the new creature is a glorious creature, a most choice and excellent creature.

IV. In respect had to their union with Christ; "He that is joined to the Lord is one

spirit; every believer is espoused, joined or married to Jesus Christ: they are the beloved, and dear Spouse of this most excellent Prince, and therefore are a precious and most choice people; the church is the Queen of this Prince; "Upon the right hand did stand the Queen in gold of Ophir," Psal. xlv. 9.

V. In respect of those rich robes, Christ hath put upon them the wedding garment, i. e., the righteousness of Christ is a glorious robe; moreover it is said, that "The king's daughter is all glorious within, and her clothing is of wrought gold," Psal. xlv. 13; inherent righteousness is a rich garment.

VI. In respect to those choice ornaments with which they are adorned. Grace is compared to a crown of gold on the head, and chains about the neck," Prov. i. 9, Ezek. xvi. 12. Now what are these, but the precious graces of the Spirit?

VII. If we consider what an excellent spirit they are of, and how they walk with God every day, and what communion they have with the Father and the Son, it fully shows, they are a choice and precious people in God's esteem.

VIII. Also the precious food they live upon, and the choice and excellent privileges God in his free grace hath bestowed upon them, and what glory they are heirs of, shows they are a precious people.

IX. They are the elect of God, and the price of the blood of Christ, also the workmanship of the Spirit, therefore a precious people.

X. The care God takes of them, and the precious thoughts he hath towards them, and the wonders he hath done, and is about to do for them, tends to make them great, and glorious, and renowned, or a choice people in his sight.

Quest. How the saints come to be a precious and peculiar people?

Ans. 1. They become a peculiar people by virtue of God's special and peculiar love from everlasting; that they who are the people of God, were beloved with a peculiar love, is evident; "The Lord appeared to me of old, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love," &c., Jer. xxxi. 3. Our Lord Christ saith, before he was made, his delight was with the sons of men, Prov. viii. 31. That is, with those that were given him, delight proceeds from love. My brethren, all those blessings which we receive in time, are but the effects or fruits of God's peculiar love to us, before all time, or from everlasting; we must receive all divine favours, either from our merits, God's mercies, from our deservings, or from his peculiar affections, all do not (that is evident) receive alike favours and special blessings; from whence is it? can God's love be purchased? or can sinners deserve anything at his hand? no, no, he had a peculiar love to some from everlasting, and from thence they become a peculiar people; "Therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

2. They become a peculiar people: by virtue of God's peculiar choice they were elected, (as I told you) as well as beloved from everlasting, "According as he hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love,—having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. i. 4; all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ, are according to God's choice of us, ver. 3. Peculiarity, either of state or qualifications, flows from the Father's choice or election; "that his purpose, according to election, might stand," Rom. ix. 11, 13, (he saith) "Jacob have I loved," &c. Either it is of man's free will, or of God's free grace; but "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," ver. 16.

See how St. Paul argues in this case, "Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace," Rom. xi. 5. Well, but may not this election be from foreseen faith, good works, or holiness, no, and if it be of grace, (saith he) it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work," ver. 6. We do not signalize ourselves by our love and obedience to God, that we are a peculiar people, and have peculiar favours, as it is among men, as when a commander, or soldier acts with much bravery and courage, is promoted to peculiar honour by his prince; no, if it be thus, it is of works, and grace is no more grace.

III. They become a peculiar people, by virtue of that peculiar covenant, made between the Father and the Son, before the world began. Jesus Christ, my brethren, did not engage or covenant with the Father to become a Surety, and to die in the stead of all mankind; no, but only for his own elect; he was not like the first Adam, a head or representative for every individual man and woman in the world, for then all must and would be saved. See St. Paul, "Who hath saved us, and called us, not according to our works, but accord-

ing to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. What grace we receive in time, it was in that covenant granted to Christ for us in eternity; and his covenant stands firm, his seed shall endure for ever, it is confirmed by the promise and oath of God, "Who hath sworn to it by his holiness, and will not lie to David," Psal. lxxxix. 27, 28, 29, 35.

IV. They become a peculiar people, by virtue of a special and peculiar price laid down to redeem them. Did God love all men alike, and Christ give himself for all with the same degree of love, and with the same intention, design, and purpose of grace to save all, as he did in respect of some, certainly then all would be saved; for who shall frustrate the absolute design and purpose of Jesus Christ? But this was not so, "His name shall be called Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins," Matt. i. 21. Not save all people from their sins, no, none but his people, i. e. such that were given to him by the Father. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all," Isa. liii. 6. Us all, who were they? Read the 8th ver., "For the transgression of my people was he stricken," John. x. 15. "I lay down my life for my sheep." "Christ purchased the church with his own blood," Acts. xx. 28.

God, in the gift of the Son, acted for his own sovereign pleasure; like as a prince may redeem and save some captives, or pardon some notorious rebels or traitors, and not all, though they as well as the rest deserved to die; all men are guilty of the highest treason against God, and he might justly have left all under wrath; but as an act of infinite, peculiar and sovereign grace, Christ died in the room or stead of some, to redeem and save them.

V. They become a peculiar people, by means of the special and peculiar workings and operations of the Holy Spirit, upon their hearts; is there no specific difference between that grace which is given to some, and that given in common to all? As the gospel is not sent to all, but to one nation and kingdom, and not to another, so the Spirit (where the gospel is preached) works grace in one man, and not in another. "The wind blows where it listeth—so is every one that is born of the Spirit," John iii. 8. The Spirit is a free agent, he opens one man's heart and eyes, and not another; he gives faith, knowledge, and regenerates some, and passeth by others; the Spirit divideth to every man (that is, to every saint) as he will; either God maketh the difference between one man and another; or else men makes themselves to differ; there are, my brethren, special and peculiar operations of the Spirit, and only common operations. "Paul planteth, and Apollos watered; but it is God that gives the increase; neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth anything; but is it God that gives the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. To such that are elected, whom God will save, the gospel comes in power, but to others in word only; and were there not such a special power put forth upon some, all would reject the word, and perish for ever. God does no wrong to such that refuse Christ, though he manifesteth peculiar love, to such that truly believe on him; thus by their receiving peculiar grace they become a peculiar people; such as is the cause, is the effect; the effects cannot exceed the cause; the bare preaching the word is not the cause of men's believing, but it lies in the agency of the Holy Ghost; and if the cause of light, grace, and regeneration lay in the power of man's will, or in the power of him that hears the word, then the will and power of man would be more noble and excellent than the new creature, which is but the effects thereof.

There is a common faith, a temporary faith, and a faith that is precious, and special, and only peculiar to God's elect, this cannot be denied, unless men will contradict the Holy Ghost. "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect," Tit. i. 1.

"To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour," 2 Pet. i. 1.

Observe, this precious faith is given according to the righteousness of God; that is, according to his justice, truth, and righteousness, in performing his promise to Jesus Christ, in behalf of his elect in the covenant of grace and redemption; or else through Christ's righteousness, his obedience, death, and merit, who purchased it for them; it is true in both respects: special faith hath special operations, and they are called the operations of God, and they are peculiar operations to his elect.

VI. They are a peculiar people, by virtue of that peculiar and vital union they have with Jesus Christ; like as a virgin of low degree, by marrying a king, is brought or raised to peculiar grandeur, honour, and greatness; so are sinners that are united and espoused to Christ, raised to special and peculiar dignity, and spiritual grandeur.

VII. It is by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Ghost hath taken up his habitation in these men's hearts, they are his temple, the Father dwells in them, and the Son dwells in them through the Spirit, or by the Spirit; and they walk with God, converse with God, and have communion with the Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit, and thus they become a peculiar people.

Secondly, Why are the saints compared to wheat? I told you, wheat is the product of a rare and choice seed. So are they the fruit and product of choice love; electing love is choice love; redeeming love is choice love; espousing love is a choice love; but all this may be said of every true believer: and they are also the product of the Holy Ghost: the seed that forms the new creature is the Holy Spirit.

Why the saints are compared to wheat.

2. The seed of wheat must be first sown in the earth, before it can produce increase; so must the seed of grace be first sown in men's hearts, before they can bear God's image, or bring forth the fruits of holiness unto his praise and glory.

3. Wheat is a profitable sort of grain, to that land where there is plenty of it. "So the saints and people of God, are a profitable people unto the world; they are the interest of those nations, cities, and places where they dwell; thus was Joseph profitable to Potiphar, everything was blessed which he had for Joseph's sake," Gen. xxxix. 5. So was Laban blessed for Jacob's sake. "The lips of the righteous feed many," Prov. x. 21; "as poor," saith Paul, "yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things," 2 Cor. vi. 19. Sodom was safe whilst Lot was in it; "except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and should have been like unto Gomorrah," Isa. i. 9.

Happy is that land, that has in it abundance of choice wheat; but much more happy is that land, or kingdom, that hath abundance of choice Christians, or Christ's spiritual wheat in it.

4. Wheat will abide, endeavour and live in the sharpest winter, when some other grain will not. So true believers do abide, endeavour and live in the times of sharpest trials, persecutions, tribulations, and temptations.

"Because I live, ye shall live also; they shall not know when drought comes, neither cease from yielding fruit," John xiv. 19. Cold nor heat injures wheat, but it thrives the better, so spiritual cold nor heat hurts true believers; but as their tribulations abound, their consolations abound also; they being ordained to bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain," John xv. 16.

5. Wheat seems sometimes as if it were quite dead; you can in winter hardly see one green blade; so the saints seem sometimes to themselves as if they were almost dead, "I have been afflicted, and ready to die from my youth up," saith Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. 15. "My hope," saith Job, "is perished;" but though they seem as dead bones, and cry we are dead, yet they have life in their roots.

6. Wheat is sometimes, by reason of unseasonable weather in the spring, very sickly, the colour being changed; so in like manner by reason of Satan's temptations, and the corruptions of their hearts, and evils of the times, poor believers are very sickly and weak, and their countenance is changed.

7. Yet when the sun shines sweetly upon wheat, and God sends dry and seasonable weather, it wonderfully on a sudden revives, (as I have often observed with my own eyes). So when the Sun of Righteousness shines sweetly on believers, they on a sudden revive; "they shall revive as the corn," Hos. xiv. 7.

8. Wheat needs weeding; and if it be not, it will soon be grown over with weeds, thistles, nettles, &c. Therefore the diligent husbandman takes care upon that account, though slothful persons too much neglect their fields; so the hearts of believers must be daily weeded, lest the seed of grace be choked, and the weeds of corruption cover their souls, as you heard concerning the thorny ground. "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful," Matt. xiii. 22.

Some Christians are too much like the man Solomon speaks of, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, &c. Then I saw and considered it well, I looked upon it, and received instruction," Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.

See the parable of the sower.

9. Full ears of wheat hang down their heads, being full of corn; so sincere believers are humble, and lowly-minded; they are poor in spirit, being little, nay, nothing in their own eyes: how humble was Abraham? "I that am but dust and ashes," &c. And David,

who cries out, I am a worm and not man. And Agur, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the knowledge of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy," Prov. xxx. 2, 3. And also Job, "I abhor myself," Job xlii. 6. Isaiah cries, "Wo is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips," &c. Isa. vi. 5. Paul also saith, he was "less than the least of all saints," Eph. iii. 8. That soul that is humble, and nothing in himself, is full of grace. "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich," Rev. ii. 9.

But proud and haughty professors, are like empty ears of corn, that hold up their heads; they are light, and of a lofty spirit, thinking none more wise and knowing as themselves.

10. Wheat is not ripe presently, but must have time to grow to maturity, and receive the former and latter rain, before it is fit for the sickle.

So believers are not come to full growth in grace, as to degrees, as soon as they are born again; no, that child would seem a monster, that in a week's time after it is born should grow to the stature of a man; a full assurance is not had presently, nor without time, and much diligence, and such must receive the latter, as well as the former rain of the Spirit; though some are ripe for heaven sooner than others.

11. Tares oft-times are found to grow amongst wheat, which tends greatly to mar its beauty. So in the churches of the saints are often found wicked persons, by which means the beauty of those congregations are much marred; and the ungodly of the world vilify and reproach them, as if they were all such; therefore as soon as they are discovered, they are cast out of the church, as the incestuous person was, I Cor. v. 1—5.

12. Wheat, when it is fully ripe, is gathered into the barn; so when Christ sees a believer is ripe for heaven, he gathers it as a flock of corn fully ripe.

13. Sometimes a harvest seems much in bulk, but there is but a little corn. So the spiritual harvest may seem much in bulk, a mighty appearance of a great harvest; but there may be but a few sincere believers amongst them.

14. Wheat dies first, before it rises; "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." Wheat seems to rot and die before it rises, so the bodies of believers must die, and lie under the clods of the earth, before they are raised at the last day. But remember, it is the same corn of wheat, the same grain that is sown, that rises again; it is the same I say, as to the matter or substance of it; (though like a grain of wheat, it is not the same as to its beauty and glory) but if it were not the same body, it could not be a resurrection, but a new creation; and then shall not that body that glorified God here be raised to glory; nor the same body of the wicked that sinned be punished, but an innocent body. And by the same reason it may be denied, it was the same body of Christ that suffered for our sins, that was raised from the dead, and so all our hopes of being saved must perish for ever.

APPLICATION.

1. We infer, that the world is strangely deceived, who look upon believers, or the people of God, as a base and contemptible company, even as the refuses of all things; whereas they are, as you have heard, the most honourable; none so excellent, choice, and precious in all the earth, as they are.

2. We refer the excellency of divine grace; all men, my brethren, naturally are alike vile, sinful, and odious by sin; there is no difference; it is only that mighty work of the Spirit of God upon the souls of his elect, that makes them so glorious, amicable, and precious in the sight of God; and that our chief comeliness is that which we have in Christ, by having his comeliness, his righteousness put upon us; by which means Christ calls, "His spouse, his love, his dove, his undefiled," Cant. v. 2, 4, 7, and saith, there is no spot in her; "Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty. For it was perfect through my comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord," Ezek. xvi. 14.

3. This should teach all true believers to admire the special and distinguishing love and grace of God to them in Jesus Christ, and to see they lie low at his foot, and ascribe all the glory and praise to him alone.

4. Moreover, what reproof may this be to the ungodly, who hate the saints, because of that grace and holiness that is in them, and strive to tread them under their feet; alas, it God that is in them, Christ that is in them, which they hate; for as they are men they hate them not, but because they are such men that cannot run to the same excess with them, cannot worship with them, nor have fellowship with them; "They being not of the world, but because Christ hath called them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them."

5. The saints also may learn from hence, to strive to be a choice people, a holy people, a peculiar people, above all other people in the world. Let it appear, my brethren, that we are the product of a choice seed, the offspring of God, such that are born of God, that are the chosen of God, the delight of God, or the wheat of Jesus Christ; the best wheat, not lean wheat, not smutty wheat, some wheat is smutty; it is black, and needs washing, and so indeed do many of the saints of God, they are not white wheat, but contrarywise, have much filth cleaving to them, many spots, blemishes, and infirmities. Such ought to labour after the sanctification of the Spirit, and mortification of sin; "And to hate the garment spotted by the flesh," Jude 23; and get their hearts, their consciences and their lives cleansed by the Spirit, and by faith in the blood of Christ; "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1.

6. Moreover, by what you have heard, you may try yourselves, and see whether you are the choice, the holy and beloved ones of God, or not; such that are like wheat, you may go for such, and think yourselves to be such, and yet be mistaken, and not be such; some are taken to be as wheat, who may be but tares, or chaff in God's sight.

(1.) Are your hearts and lives holy? Do you differ from others? Who hath made thee to differ from another? As there is some wheat better, more fine than others; so there are some of the saints, who in grace, holiness, and spiritual gifts, excel others; yet all far excel all unrenewed sinners, both in heart, in principles, and in conversation, and in the end of their conversations also.

(2.) Are you humble, lowly-minded, full of grace, seeing your own nothingness; and like a full ear of wheat, do you hang down your head in the sense of that inward corruption and filth of your own hearts?

(3.) Are you profitable to all you converse with? Do others receive spiritual benefit by you?

(4.) Do you endure temptations, and thrive under sore trials, and flourish like wheat in a time of drought?

(5.) Do you love God and Jesus Christ, with your chiefest love and affections, and all that are his members, all that are born of him? Then no doubt but you are wheat in his sight?

SERMON XXXVI.

Another parable he put forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field, &c.—Matt. xiii. 24, 25. &c.

WE have prosecuted one point of doctrine, from one principal part of this parable, viz. That believers are a choice grain, they are wheat; the product of precious seed, &c.

I shall now proceed to another point of doctrine.

Doct. 2. The ungodly are a base sort of people; low and contemptible, The ungodly a base sort of people. tares, good for nothing.

1. That the wicked are a base, low, and a sordid sort of people, appears by the names that are given to them in God's Word; they are called sons of Belial, unprofitable, or without yoke, rude or untameable.

2. They are called the children of the wicked one.

3. Children of darkness, and children of this world.

4. Infidels, people without faith; every one that believes not savingly in Christ, is an infidel, though not an infidel in the grossest sense; he may own a deity.

5. They are the children of the devil; "In this are manifested the children of God, and the children of the devil," 1 John iii. 10; as the saints are a renowned, an honourable people, by being called the children of God, so the wicked are a sordid, a base and contemptible people, by being called the children of the devil. What adds greater glory to the one, or greater shame and contempt unto the other?

6. They are "called children of fools, yea, children of base men," Job. xxx. 8. The Hebrew word, as Caryl notes, signifies a man fallen, or falling and withered in his understanding. A fool wants filling, or furniture for his mind; he is like bare walls, or an empty house. They are children of Nabal, (saith he) a son of Nabal, is of the same signification in holy language, with a son of Belial; disobedient, rebellious ones, who will not

endure the yoke ; or foolish ones, as having little wit to choose their way, so they make as little conscience of their way ; but as he observes by an Hebrewism, it doth not refer to their parents, as to themselves, base men, as Mr. Broughton renders it, or the most ignominious among men ; they are men without honour, who understand not, and so are like the beasts that perisheth.

7. They are frequently called rebels against God, and haters of God ; “ The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves,” Psal. lxxxii. 15. Can a more odious name be given to men, than to be called haters of God ?

8. They are called devils ; “ Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil ?” John vi. 70. “ The devil shall cast some of you into prison,” &c., certainly he means wicked men influenced by the devil.

9. How often are they compared to brutes ; nay, to the most contemptible of brutish creatures. They are called dogs, swine, &c. “ Cast not your pearls before swine ;” “ beware of dogs,” Mark vii. 6. Phil. iii. 2.

10. They are called tares, because it imitates the wheat, and groweth up with it, as if it were the same kind with the wheat ; it should not, saith one, be translated tares, Leigh’s crit. but evil seed ; it is that which we call the deaf ears, which grow up with the wheat, and cannot be discerned till harvest, and then it appears nought ; for those we call tares, or fitches, are soon discerned, and plucked up ; nor are fitches so contemptible, being good food for cattle. Therefore that seed called tares among us, cannot be the tares our Saviour alludes to.

Now since wicked men, particularly hypocrites, who strive to imitate the saints of God, are called tares, or evil seed, it shows they are of no worth, of no value, but hateful in the sight of God.

And though those tares are so much like wheat, whilst in the blade, that they cannot, as Mr. Wilson observes, be discerned ; yet when the harvest comes, they will appear vile and contemptible.

2. The ungodly are a vile, low, and sordid sort of people, doth appear. I. In that they are the offspring of the devil, the seed of Satan ; as they are men and women, it is true, they are from God, or his workmanship ; but as they are wicked and ungodly, they are from the devil, “ Ye are,” saith our Lord, “ of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do,” John viii. 44 ; hence Cain is said to be of the wicked one, 1 John iii. 12.

He that committeth sin, is of the devil ; not every one that sins, for there is not a just man on earth, that doth good, and sinneth not ; but he that sinneth with full purpose and consent of his will ; or that liveth in a course, trade, or custom of sinning, he is of the devil ; let him be whosoever he will, though he be a king, or one of the greatest potentates of the world, and boast never so much of the nobleness of his descent, blood, and family, he is for all that of the devil. O how may this tend to lower the top-sails of the haughty monarchs of the earth ! Believers (you heard the last day) are the seed of God ; but all wicked men are the seed and offspring of the devil ; they are begotten of him, proceed as it were from his cursed loins.

II. Ungodly persons are a base, a sordid, and contemptible people, appears from that low, that base, worldly, and earthly spirit they are of ; the apostle gives them their character, “ Whose end is destruction, whose God is their bellies, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things,” Phil. iii.

19. That is, they mind earthly things more than those things that are above ; value their earthly riches, their sinful pleasures, and carnal honours, above God, or Jesus Christ ; nay, preferred their base, sordid, and vile lusts, above all that good which is in the blessed God, or in Jesus Christ. Doth not this show what a poor, base, and contemptible spirit they are of ?

III. But not only from hence do they appear of a base and sordid spirit, but much more in that they are so much like the devil himself in sensuality and earthly-mindedness ;

they show they are like mere animals ; but by their pride, cruelty, malice, envy and hatred of the saints, they show themselves to be mere incarnate devils, or devils in the shape of men ; they have his very image upon them, as they proceed from him ; is the devil an enemy to God, to Christ, to the saints, and to holiness and virtue ? So are wicked men. Do devils sin freely, with full purpose, and cannot but sin ? So do wicked men : Do devils do what they can to encourage vice, and all profaneness, and by one means or another strive to hinder or suppress real godliness ?

Wicked men
of the seed and
offspring of
the devil.

Wicked men
of a base,
and low,
earthly spi-
rit.

Wicked men
are like the
devil.

This is also the great design and endeavour of some wicked men; is the devil so malicious an enemy against the godly, that God seeth it necessary to restrain or chain him up.

The like he seeth in ungodly men, and therefore he restrains them also; for as the devil is boundless in his rage and malice to mankind, so are many of his emissaries against their fellow creatures.

Doth the devil prompt and tempt men to sin, to make them if he could as vile as himself? So do wicked men entice, tempt, or draw others to sin, and to commit all acts of abomination also. Is the devil swelled with pride? So are wicked men. Is the devil an accuser of the brethren? Why, wicked men are in that like unto him. Also thus as wicked men have Satan's name given to them, so they have his hellish nature also in them, and therefore are a base, vile, and contemptible people.

Note also, that pride, malice and envy, are diabolical evils; and the more proud or malicious, the more like the devil is any man or woman.

IV. Ungodly men are a low, base, and sordid people, if we observe what food they eat or live upon; princes and noble ones of the earth fare high, they eat the fat, and drink the sweet; they have all varieties of delicious food; but the baser sort, such that are ignoble, poor, and contemptible, feed on mere trash, on roots, or mean diet; even so the saints being noble and high-born souls, kings children, princes, or the most honourable of the earth, you heard they feed on choice food, heavenly food; they eat at the king's table; they "eat that which is good, and their souls delight themselves in fatness," Isa. lv. 2.

But the wicked feed on husks, which the swine eat, with which (like the Prodigal) they would fain fill their bellies; nay, they are said to feed on ashes, and on the wind; by husks are meant the riches, honours, and sinful pleasures of this world, which can never satisfy the immortal soul of man.

See the parable of the Prodigal Son.

By feeding on the wind, is meant false doctrine, errors, and airy notions; and hence it is that this sort are puffed up like bladders with pride and vain-glory, Hos. xii. 1.

V. This further appears by the poor and vile clothing they wear; noble persons are known by their rich apparel, their excellent robes, and by being decked with jewels, pearls, and precious stones; if you see a person in cloth of gold, and a crown on his head, you presently say he is a king. Thus the saints, you heard, are in a spiritual manner clothed and adorned.

Ezek. xvi. 12, 13, Psal. xlv. 9, 13.

But the wicked are clothed with nothing but filthy rags, Isa. lxiv. 6, even the best of them, who live a moral sober life; for if a believer's own inherent righteousness is in comparison of the righteousness of Christ, but as filthy rags, or filthy garments; Zech. iii. 5; what sordid rags are they that wicked men have on, even the best and most reformed of them? And as for the rest they are quite naked, and their shame appears to all, and therefore they are a poor, low, wretched, base, and sordid sort of people, and so may well be compared to tares, Rev. iii. 17.

VI. It appears also by the company they keep; wicked men delight in the baser sort, they cannot tell how to behave themselves amongst such that are born from above; no, no company pleaseth them but such who have the same swinish and brutish nature, who like a sow love to swallow in the mire and filth and horrid pollution, 2 Tim. ii. 2.

VII. In respect of those filthy and loathsome sores they have on them, they appear a base, a hateful, and sordid sort of people; they have nothing from the soles of their feet unto their head but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, as well as they are covered with nothing but loathsome rags, Isa. i. 6.

VIII. They are a low, base, and a sordid sort of people, doth also appear in respect of their end, to which they are appointed; tares are for the fire; when harvest comes, then the wheat shall be gathered into Christ's garner, and the tares shall be bound up into bundles, and thrown into the fire, and they shall be burned, being good for nothing but to make fuel of; hence also they are compared to thorns and briars fully dry, which were not created of God, but are the fruit of the curse, Isa. xxvii. 4, Gen. iii. 12.

APPLICATION.

I. We may infer from hence, that God doth lay the wicked under the highest contempt.

2. How blind are all ungodly persons! In a spiritual sense they only see with fleshly eyes, and behold things that are visible and temporal; but they cannot discern any beauty in spiritual things and objects, because they are spiritually discerned. Moreover, they cannot taste how good God is, they favour not, relish not, heavenly food; no, nor is it possible they should, unless they had a heavenly nature; for it is the new man, the new creature, or such that are born of God, who know how gracious and good God is.

3. We infer that sin hath made a fearful change on mankind, and strangely altered his first glorious constitution, marred and spoiled his beauty; how glorious was he when he came out of God's hands! He was made but a little lower than the holy angels; but by sin he is become almost as black and odious as devils.

4. From hence also we may infer, that "a wicked man is loathsome," Prov. xiii. 5, as Solomon saith; and well may the Holy Ghost say, that sinners naturally were cast forth in their blood and filth, "to the loathing of their persons," Ezek. xvi. 5.

5. Moreover from hence we may see the cause why God values them no more. They are of little worth to him, and therefore he hath, for the sake of his own people, his beloved ones, given whole nations of these sordid wretches to the sword, and valued them not, but trod them under his feet as dirt and filth: "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee; since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee," Isa. xliii. 4. Well, and what then? "Therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life;" and from hence also it is said, he reproveth kings for their sakes; "When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another, he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes: saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," Psal. cv. 13—15.

The haughty kings of the earth are as filth, or hateful persons in Christ's sight; and he therefore "will come on these princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth the clay," Isa. xli. 25; they shall know that he abhorreth them, and will take vengeance upon them, for all the wrong they have done to his saints and beloved ones, who are as precious to him as the apple of his eye.

6. From hence also we infer, that grace is of a transcendent nature; and what a change doth it make in one of these odious, loathsome creatures? O when God gives his Spirit, infuseth grace into the heart of a vile sinner, what a wonderful change doth it produce in such a one! It makes the vile honourable, the deformed beautiful, and the swinish nature a lamb-like nature; the churl liberal, the proud humble, the malicious pitiful; in a word, it turneth the diabolical nature into a God-like and a Christ-like nature and disposition.

7. Let sinners therefore from hence learn to lothe themselves, and attend upon the word of God. O look to Christ! Cry to him that he would work a blessed change in you, that you may find the effects of the blood of Jesus, and the nature of true faith upon your hearts; that though now you are base and filthy creatures in God's sight, being polluted with sin, and in many things resemble the devil, you may find a blessed change, and become beautiful and glorious in God's sight.

8. We also infer from hence, that there is just cause for sinners, when God opens their eyes, to lothe themselves. "Ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed," &c., Ezek. xx. 43. Grace makes a believer ashamed of his former state, and abominable filthiness, "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord," Ezek. xvi. 63.

Lastly, you that are Christ's wheat, the product of his good seed; or who are believers, praise God and admire his free grace, who hath wrought such a blessed change in your souls who were once as vile, as filthy, and as abominable as others; but now ye are washed, justified, and sanctified, O let God have all the glory! It is he alone that has made the difference, and let it appear you are a choice and precious people; and labour to live to the glorifying of his grace, who hath called you. I shall now proceed to another point of doctrine, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

Doct. The blessed God would have the wheat and tares, i. e., the godly and the wicked, grow together in the field of this world, and both to ripen for the harvest; i. e., the end thereof.

1. I do would have his own people abide in the world, though they meet with many sorrows, afflictions, trials, and hard usage whilst they are here, by reason of sin, Satan, and the ungodly that dwell therein, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou wouldst keep them from the evil," John xvii. 15. Our Lord doth not mean afflictive evil, or the evil of afflictions, (unless it be such afflictions that are penal, or in a way of wrath, and divine justice, which none of the godly shall ever meet with; because our blessed Saviour hath born all penal evil, or vindictive wrath, for them) it is therefore the evil of sin; such sin that would or might be ruinous to their souls, he prayed we might be kept from such evil; for the Father heard our Lord always, therefore he granted what he asked of him here.

Quest. But why would he not have his wheat, his saints taken out of the world?

1. He doth not mean that he would have them live in this world always ; no, but so long, even until they are ripe for heaven ; wheat is not ripe presently. Believers shall abide here, until they are actually fit and prepared for God's garner above.

Why God would not have his people be taken out of the world.

2. Because they are in some sense the "light of this dark world," Matt. v. 14. Should all the saints be taken out of the world, what a dark world would this be ? they are the salt of the earth, ver. 13 ; this world would stink in the nostrils of God, were it not for the saints that are in it, who like salt in some sense preserve it from putrefaction.

14. Should Moreover,

See the saints the light of the world, and the salt of the earth.

3. Because they have much work to do for God's glory, and for the good and benefit of mankind in their several generations, whilst this world shall continue.

The saints, especially the ministers of the gospel, are God's witnesses, who stand up for him, witness to his truth, his holiness, justice, mercy, love, faithfulness, &c., to the establishing and comfort of the elect and to the condemnation of the wicked, and the aggravation of their sins.

Quest. But why would God have the tares also to grow in the field of this world, and not rooted out of it ?

Ans. 1. He would not have his church and people to root them out, (were it in their power) for the reason he gives, i. e., lest they root out some of this wheat with them, which I have spoken unto already.

Why God would have the tares not rooted out of the world.

2. God himself will not destroy them, or root them all out of the world presently ; because their sins, like those of the Amorites, may not be yet full, or they may not be fully ripe for the harvest.

3. That God may show his patience, long-suffering, and forbearance towards them, as the apostle shows.

Rom. ii. 4, 5. Rom. ix. 22. 2 Pet. iii. 9.

4. Perhaps some of God's elect may be amongst them, or at least some of their offspring may be such ; for the election of grace runs to many persons, who are the children of ungodly parents ; or such that are here called tares ; an hypocrite, or an abominable wretch, may have a godly child ; the stock therefore must live until the fruit be brought forth ; but no more as to this. Moreover, we may note from the answer given to the servants, (who would pull up the tares).

Doct. That some of the tares are much like the wheat ; or do in some things especially, whilst in the blade, resemble the saints, being not discovered till harvest.

This shows, that by the tares, hypocrites are rather meant than profane persons, who show their sin, as Sodom, and hide it not.

I shall hint a few things to this observation.

1. Hypocrites may own the true doctrine of the gospel, and make a profession of religion, and be taken for saints by the godly, as is showed in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

2. They may be under the common illuminations of the Spirit, and partake of the gifts thereof, as is showed by the apostle, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.

3. They may be found in the discharge or performance of all external duties of religion ; and particularly they may pray often ; for thus the Pharisees did ; " I pray twice a day," &c.

But having in two parables showed largely how far a hypocrite may go, (and how much he may resemble a true Christian) I shall say no more to it here.

See parable of the sower, and of the Virgins.

SERMON XXXVII.

Will thou then that we go and gather them up ? but he said, nay, lest while you gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until harvest. —Matt. xiii. 28—30.

I HAVE spoken already to one or two points of doctrine, showing both the nature of the wheat and tares.

Doct. 6. We again observe, that the remissness of Christ's ministers and churches, in not watching against Satan and evil men, is of a bad and dangerous nature.

The danger of ministers' remissness or sleeping.

While men slept, the devil sowed his evil seed ; that is through the negli-

gence, slothfulness, or remissness of Christ's ministers and his people; Satan by his vile instruments sowed the seed of errors and heresy in the church, or rather in the field of the world; from whence many evil men sprang up, to the hurt and prejudice of God's people.

And this evidently appeared in the succeeding ages, next the apostles' time; O what evil men! Yea, cursed wolves rose, as St. Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus there would, "For I know this, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock," Acts. xx. 29.

1 Tim. i. 20.

What evil men were Hymenæus, Alexander, Nicolaitains, Hermogenes, and after them Arius and his followers, who denied the God-head of our blessed Saviour; and multitudes more of cursed heretics also sprang up, which doubtless was through the carelessness of some of Christ's servants, and all chiefly through the malice of Satan, that enemy of God, and of the souls of men, and to show his cruel hatred to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine of the gospel, yet no doubt but those wars that rose in the church about the Arian heresies, is condemned, by our Lord in this parable; it may be feared, some wheat might be plucked up in those times among the tares, by the slaughter of such a multitude.

U S E.

This may caution all ministers of Christ, and churches, to take heed they sleep not, but watch, and take heed lest evil seed be sown amongst them, I mean the seed of error and heresy; or such doctrine that tends to licentiousness, or to corrupt the doctrine of God's free grace. For.

1. Many may under fair pretences of exalting Christ, sow pernicious and poisonous seed; and others under a colour of promoting holiness and sanctification, have corrupted the doctrine of free justification by Christ's righteousness alone.

2. By way of council, beware of such men who are lifted up with pride, who to magnify themselves, seem to despise others, perhaps more worthy than themselves.

3. Beware of such that effect novelty, and strive to promote new notions in matters of religion, and all to have themselves admired by the multitude, and unthinking persons.

4. Likewise have a watchful eye, of such that cry up this and that man, and cry down others; lest the evil seed of the enemy spring up, and prove ruinous to their own and other men's souls; also lest they prove tares.

5. Moreover, watch such who are subject to wander from their own fold and pasture; and such also that are ready, on every small occasion, to take offence, and quarrel with their brethren, or to neglect to assemble themselves with the church, Heb. x. 25; also such that seem earthly, cold, or lukewarm in the things of God. But I shall add no more to this.

Let both grow together until harvest.

Doct. 7. From hence I note, That both the wheat and the tares, true believers and hypocrites, saints and sinners, do ripen for the harvest.

1. I shall show you how the wheat, or sincere Christians, ripen for the harvest,

2. Also how the tares, or evil men, do ripen also.

I. As Wheat after it is sown hath its ripening time. So have the saints and people of

How the
wheat ri-
pens for the
harvest.

God.

(1.) They are first rooted in Christ, by virtue of a vital union with him.

(2.) Then they spring up.

(3.) They ear as it were, and appear full of grace and divine virtue.

(4.) Then afterwards they come to full maturity.

II. Wheat ripens gradually, that it is hardly discerned: so the godly ripen gradually also, it is hardly discerned by themselves or others. He that most complains for want of growth, may be the most growing Christian; for there is a growing downward in humility.

III. Wheat must have showers to ripen it. So must the saints have the showers of divine or heavenly doctrine, or spiritual dew to ripen them; one minister by his doctrine planteth, his gift chiefly lieth that way: another he watereth, his doctrine tends most to establishment, growth, or to edification of the saints, and to their comfort and consolation.

"I have planted, and Apollos hath watered," 1 Cor. iii. 6.

I have gathered you to Christ, (as if Paul should say) and Apollos hath built you up, and confirmed you in Christ, with sound and edifying doctrine; "But God gave the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 7, the new heart; and all increase of grace is from God; it is he that bleaseth the word and ordinances; the word of God is the rain, and it comes with power, and is set home upon the soul by the Holy Spirit, there is a divine growth.

Rain is much desired in a time of drought, and much prayed for, and it is a great judgment to have it withheld. So the divine rain of heavenly doctrine is greatly desired by all sincere Christians; "I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for thy commandments," Psal. cxix, 131; moreover, there cannot be a worse judgment than for God to withhold or take away his word and ordinances from a people; or to have the word, and yet the soul cannot receive it, or take it in, but like rain that falls on a rock it slides away; this argues the heart is hard; in time of drought the husbandman cries, O Lord, send rain! O send a soaking shower to soften the earth! And to cause the corn to grow and flourish, even so should we cry, when the spiritual rain is withheld from us, Heb. vi. 7, 8.

IV. Moreover, believers grow and ripen for the harvest, by means of the shining and sweet fructifying influences of "the Sun of righteousness," Mal. iv. 2; if Christ is withdrawn, or shines not upon our souls, we grow not, flourish not in grace and holiness, but droop, and seem to wither or decay in our souls; it is Christ that quickens, enlivens, and ripeneth us for harvest; and such who have most of the influences of the Spirit ripen most; they flourish while others decay; "it is from me that all thy fruit is found," Hos. xiv. 8.

V. Some Christians are like wheat smitten or blasted, in respect of their hope, peace, joy, &c., and so seem to languish; we find God of old smote some with a mildew, Amos iv. 9. O let us fear nothing more than this! Also some sow sparingly, and so shall reap sparingly, whilst others shall reap plentifully, 2 Cor. ix. 6. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward," 2 John viii. Ministers may fail of a full crop: and members fail of a full crop also.

Quest. What should a believer do to ripen for the harvest?

Ans. 1. Improve all opportunities, all seasons of grace; consider well the worth of them; also how short and uncertain they may be; some that ripen not, thrive not, neglect gracious seasons and opportunities, or are very careless and negligent in the matter; they prefer the world above the word.

What
believers
should do to
ripen for
harvest.

2. Observe well and cherish all those convictions of your consciences, and of the Holy Spirit, either in respect of sin or duty, lest ye sin them away.

3. Improve all the dispensations and providences of God, or those various trials, afflictions, and temptations you meet with; the rod feeds as well as the word; the godly are "like the palm-tree," Psal. xcii. 12, which thrives the more by the weights hanged upon it; or like camomile, the more it is trod upon, the more it grows and flourishes, Jer. x. 5.

4. Live much in the sense and thoughts of death, and of the judgment day; O think much of the harvest, *i. e.*, the end of the world! Deut. xxxii. 29. That will quicken thee to duty, and tend to make thee more serious and diligent in the whole course of thy life.

5. See that you gather day by day, get more strength against sin, and the corruptions of your own hearts, and mortify these inordinate lusts, and give not way to a carnal and worldly frame of heart, Rom. viii. 13; "But live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit," Gal. v. 16, being spiritually-minded; these thrive and ripen apace for the harvest: "Abstain from all fleshly lusts that war against the soul!" 1 Pet. ii. 11.

6. Labour to "add to your faith virtue," &c., 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7, to grow in faith, get stronger and more stedfast faith in Jesus Christ; and grow in love to God, to Christ, and to his saints; and not only in faith and love, but in humility and patience also; how did those saints, St. Paul speaks of ripen? "Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you towards each other aboundeth." So that we glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure," 2 Thes. i. 3. This is, my brethren, the glory of Christians; that they grow in all the graces of the Spirit, and in experience, in holiness, and heavenly-mindedness.

7. The way to ripen for heaven, is to strive against all those things that hinder or obstruct your growth, as thorns and briars; *i. e.*, the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, Mat. xiii. 22; we must also labour against spiritual drowsiness, sleepiness, and idleness, in God's service, and against all things whatsoever that tends to hinder our communion with God and Jesus Christ: it is a sign a Christian ripens for glory, when he cannot be satisfied if the face of God be hid, or hath lost sight of it; they will also not withhold doing good while it is in the power of their hand; some refuse doing good whilst they live, or leastwise so much good, pretending they purpose to do it at their death. O then, say they, the servants of Christ, the interest of Christ, and the poor saints, shall be remembered.

Alas, it is far better you do it now, for may be then they may not need it as they do now, or perhaps Satan will be too hard for you, and change your purpose before that time comes; or others may (may be) deceive such to whom you intend to leave something; "whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might," Eccl. ix. 10; do it now; do

not defer it; present promises touching what a man, saith he, will do in time to come, seldom ends in real performances.

8. Labour in all things to keep a good conscience, both towards God, and towards man; this was the care of holy Paul, that so whether he was present or absent he might be accepted of God.

9. Labour for a full assurance of faith; when a man has attained to a full assurance he is ripe for heaven; but many may be ripe without this assurance.

Secondly, I shall show you how the tares, or the wicked, ripen for the harvest of sorrow and eternal burning.

Note by the way, as the godly ripen for the harvest of joy, so the wicked ripen for the harvest of sorrow: as the growth of the one is gradual, so also is the other.

How the tares ripen for harvest. (1.) Mercies not improved, but slighted and neglected, ripen the wicked apace for the harvest. God affords a plenteous time or season to gather in, and to lay up, or to provide for another world; but they neglect it, and trifle it away; they have sermon after sermon, but no word fastens upon their hearts; "the gospel comes to them in word only," 1 Thes. i. 5; perhaps they put the word away from them, as that which concerns them not; but may say when they have heard a sermon, there was a word for such a one, and such a one, but did not hear any word that concerned themselves, and so the word becomes to them "a savour of death unto death," 2 Cor. ii. 16.

(2.) When conscience is disregarded, men turning a deaf ear to those checks and sharp rebukes they find in their own breasts, this tends to ripen them for ruin; for as a man uses or deals with his own conscience, (which by light received from God's word reproves for sin) in the same manner he deals with the Holy God himself; for conscience acts, and speaks, and reproves by the command and authority of God. It is God's vicegerent in the soul, and this ungodly sinners shall know one day. * Conscience is God's witness in man, and will at the great day come in against all ungodly persons, as being privy to all heart-evil, and all deeds of wickedness done in secret, Rom. ii. 15, 16.

(3.) When a man "being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck," Prov. xxix. 1, ministers, parents, good men, and his own conscience, often reproves him; and God by many sore providences and disappointments reproves him; but still he is hardened, and Pharaoh-like goes on in his former evil, and wicked courses; O this ripens such persons for the harvest wonderfully!

(4.) When the judgments of God instead of softening, harden the sinner; this was that which ripened Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God brings fearful symptoms of his wrath and displeasure upon this and that man, this and that nation, but they regard it not; may be just whilst the hand of God is upon them, they will cry out, and say, if the Lord pleaseth to spare them, they will amend their lives, &c. But no sooner hath the Lord done it, but they are as vile, as hypocritical, and as abominable as they were before; nay, perhaps worse, "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of God," Isa. xxvi. 10. And this made the prophet say, "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, &c., the goodness of God in his sparing mercy works no change in them; but that which should lead them to repentance hardens them in their sins.

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of the Lord leadeth thee to repentance, but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. ii. 4, 5.

(5.) When the motions of the Spirit, in his common operations, Gen. vi. 3, are quenched; God strove with the old world, and so he strives with sinners now, but they resist the Holy Ghost; but yet he is pleased to exercise patience toward them; but at last he will pour forth his wrath, when they are fully ripe for cutting down; "What if God willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endure with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitteth to destruction," Rom. ix. 22.

(6.) The tares or wicked men ripen for the harvest, by letting lusts conceive in them; they readily and freely suffer it to conceive, and then ruminate upon it, and are pleased with the thoughts thereof; either from the profit, or the pleasure and sweetness of it: the lusts of malice seem sweet to some men, as unclean thoughts are pleasant and sweet to others.

(7.) Another gradation or progressive motion to ripening sinners, is when lusts conceived, break forth into acts, or into the abominable commission thereof; "When lust is conceived it bringeth forth sin," &c. James i. 15.

(8.) A third step is, when sins, yea, great sins, are extenuated and rendered small; and little sins perhaps looked upon as no sin, or such that never offended their blind and misguided consciences.

(9.) When sin is delighted in, some men they take pleasure in wickedness, they love their cursed abominations. Sin is a sport unto them, they "drink it in, as the fish drinks water," Job xv. 16; sure such are near ripe for harvest.

(10.) When they are told of their sins, and hellish pollution, and they plead excuses as if the fault was not theirs: but like Adam, say, the woman thou gavest me, she gave me and I did eat: I was drawn in unawares to commit this and that sin; such or such enticed me into their company; sirs, this far from confessing their sins, is but the way to hide and cover them; and certainly this sort are near ripe also for ruin, or for cutting down.

(11.) Such men are certainly ripe for the harvest, who are found glorying in their sin and shame," Phil. iii. 19. Some gloried, how many virgins they have defiled: or, how many whores they have had: and still have others, how craftily they cheated such and such persons; and others, how many robberies they have committed. Some also glory, how many silly fellows they have drunk down, (as they call it) O to what a degree of sin and wickedness are such beastly wretches arrived, who thus glory in their filthiness!

Lastly, a hardened heart, a seared conscience, final unbelief and impenitence follows, and so they come to be fully ripe for the harvest; many do not only love all acts of wickedness, and glory in their shame, but draw in others, or are ring-leaders to all profaneness; and also hate, reproach, and vilify all that are truly pious and religious; now if any man hates any child of God, because of his likeness to God, or because of his religion and piety; O to what a degree of wickedness are such grown! But to close with this, pray take notice, that when neither the Word of God, nor the Rod of God, neither mercies, nor judgments, neither reproof from without, nor the checks of conscience from within, take any place to humble sinners, or leastwise to restrain them from their hellish practices; but God hath left them to their own hearts' lust, and to walk in their own conceit; and he says to all reprovers, let them alone, who have hard and impenitent hearts; these are every way ripe for the harvest.

APPLICATION.

See here what different effects the gospel hath upon the children of men; even as the sun hath in respect of his hot beams, i.e., if it shines upon wax, it softens that; but if it shines upon the clay, it hardens that; also it shines upon a garden, and causeth the herbs and flowers thereof to send forth a fragrant scent; it shines upon a filthy dunghill; and what a loathsome and stink doth the same beams cause or produce! So the gospel sun makes the hearts of believers soft and tender, but it tends (through sin and Satan's temptations) to make the hearts of some wicked men more hard; the gospel is a savour of life unto life to some, and the savour of death to death to others; some bless God for the word, and others blaspheme God and his servants who preach it.

1. We see as the sun that shines on the wheat ripens that; so the same sun shining on the tares ripens them.

2. We also may infer, that no evil is like unto the evil of sin, in respect to the horrid effects of it upon the minds of the children of men. And O what folly, madness, and ignorance is there in their hearts, considering what the effect of sin is which they so much love, and what the fruit of it will be in the end! for when sin is finished it bringeth forth death.

3. From hence let me exhort sinners to ponder their way; consider what we are a doing, and whether they are going; O what will the end of these tares be? "Where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?" 1 Pet. iv. 18. Even where the wicked rich man appeared; "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment," Luke xvi. 23; some men's eyes will never be opened, until they are in eternal flames.

4. O let us try ourselves by what hath been said, and see whether we ripen for heaven or for hell!

5. By way of admiration, we may all stand and wonder at the patience, goodness, mercy, and long-suffering of God; who lets the wicked alone so long before he cuts them down: you that are tares tremble, but let the saints and people of God rejoice, who are his choice grain, the wheat of Jesus Christ, for they shall not be taken out of this world, until they are ripe for heaven.

SERMON XXXVIII.

Let both grow together until harvest—Matt. xiii. 30.

DOCT. THE harvest will come, which will be a discriminating day; the wheat then shall be clearly discovered from the tares.

1. I shall show you how fitly the end of the world may be compared to harvest.

2. Show how then the wheat shall be known from the tares, or sincere believers from hypocrites.

Why the end of the world is compared to harvest.

1. The harvest is the time that the husbandman longs for, and hath much patience until it cometh.

So this spiritual or mystical harvest is the day which all the golly long for, and are exercised with patience under all their trials and afflictions until it comes.

2. When the harvest is fully ripe, then both the wheat and tares are severed one from another by the servants of the husbandman.

So all sincere Christians and hypocrites, shall, by the angels, be separated one from another at the end of the world.

3. When the harvest is fully ended, there is no more wheat nor tares growing, or to be found in the field.

So when this world is ended, there will be no people, either golly nor wicked, to be found to live as they do together, now in this world, any more for ever. For as the saints shall be received into God's glorious barn, so the wicked shall be cast into hell.

4. Harvest is a time of great joy to an industrious husbandman, but the sluggard meets then with great disappointment, and is perplexed with grief and sorrow.

So the end of the world will be the day of the saints' joy and gladness; "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away," Isa. xxxv. 10. The joy of believers then shall far exceed the joy of harvest.

But the wicked and slothful person, who sowed to the flesh, whose heart, doctrine, and life, demonstrated they were tares, when the end of the world cometh, shall reap sorrow, shame, and confusion of face for evermore. "He that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall reap life everlasting," Gal. vi. 8.

Secondly, how shall the tares be known from the wheat, or hypocrites be discerned from sincere believers, at the end of the world?

1. The tares, or ungodly persons, shall then be known by their contemptible bodies; for though the bodies of the wicked shall be raised immortal, to endure everlasting punishment; yet their bodies shall not appear glorious, as the bodies of the saints shall; for the saints' bodies shall be made "and fashioned like to Christ's glorious body," Phil. iii. 21.

And by that the one shall be clearly known from the other.

2. The ungodly will (no doubt) be known by their company, the saints shall be attended by all the glorious angels; but the wicked shall have no other retinue than their own condemned companions, viz., ungodly persons and devils; such company men have chiefly loved and delighted in here, shall be their companions for ever in the world to come; and by this men may know how it shall go with them in that day.

3. The wicked will be known by their being naked, or perhaps by that which will be worse than being naked; but the righteous shall be most gloriously clothed, even in wrought gold; we cannot conceive how glorious their immortal robes will be in that day.

4. The wicked will be known by their dismal cries and lamentation. "Behold, my servant shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit," Isa. lxx. 14. The consciences of the wicked will accuse, condemn, and terrify them, so that their lamentation will be exceeding great.

5. The ungodly will in that day be known from the saints, by that signal act of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats," Matt. xxv. 32. This division and act of Jesus Christ will make a full discrimination.

6. Moreover it will be known by the different placing of the one and the other; and "he shall set the sheep on his right hand, the goats on the left;" by these things the tares shall be known from the wheat, when the harvest comes, and the saints return from their graves; which will make good that word of the prophet Malachi, "Then ye shall return,

and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." Mal. iii. 18.

Even in this parable our Saviour saith, that the "Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," verse 41. Like tares they shall be bound up in bundles, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. From this clause let me note.

Doct. That the wrath of God in hell, or the place of the damned, is like a furnace of fire; into which all ungodly men shall be cast after the judgment day is ended.

The woeful state of the tares or ungodly at the end of the world.

What is more dismal, more terrifying, and more tormenting, than to be cast into a hot burning fiery furnace? The torments of the wicked will be intolerable. See that similitude of the fan in Christ's hand, and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; "And then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," verse 43.

1. We have here a description of the glorious state of believers, called the righteous; they shall shine.

The happy state of the saints at the end of the world.

2. The nature or manner how, or to what degree they shall shine, "as the sun."

3. The place where they shall thus shine, i. e. "in the kingdom of the Father."

4. The time when, then, that is, at the end of the world, or at the resurrection day, then shall the righteous shine. Believers have a twofold righteousness.

1. The righteousness of justification, viz., the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ; and in this righteousness they shall shine gloriously for ever, for that is the righteousness that carries them to heaven; "Of righteousness, because I go to the Father," John xvi. 10.

2. The righteousness of sanctification, which shall be perfect in that day, and in that righteousness they shall shine gloriously for ever also.

Quest. What need shall the saints have to shine in Christ's righteousness, when they shall be perfectly holy in themselves?

Ans. Great need and reason there will be for it.

The saints shall shine in the righteousness of Christ for ever.

1. Because it was not their own inherent righteousness which was their title to heaven, but the righteousness of Christ alone; therefore they shall boast of, and shine in the righteousness of Christ for ever.

2. Because their own inherent righteousness was imperfect and full of spots whilst they lived upon the earth, and it was made perfect only as an act of Christ's purchase, or the fruit of his merits and obedience to make them meet for that inheritance.

3. Nay, had it been perfect in this life, yet it could not have justified them, nor saved them from hell, (much less brought them to heaven) because it could not have paid off their old score, or satisfied divine justice for original and actual sins, or breach of the holy law of God. For if a man could live now such a holy life, as never to offend God in word, thought, or action; yet his old sins (unless Christ's righteousness be imputed to him) will cast him into hell.

4. Because the righteousness of Christ is the righteousness of God, i. e., of him that is God and not man only; it is not the righteousness of a mere creature, therefore that righteousness being put upon the saints, they will shine more glorious in, than in any righteousness, though complete, of mere creatures.

And from hence the saints shall sing praises unto God and the Lamb for evermore, and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12. Then shall the righteous shine like the sun.

Doct. 1. The great glory of believers is reserved to that time; now their life is a hidden life, and their glory is veiled.

"Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not appear what we shall be," 1 John. iii. 1—3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3.

Observe this well, though believers have glory conferred upon them in this world, being now the sons of God, yet their glory doth not yet appear, it is not manifested, nor shall it be until then.

Doct. 2. When the end of the world comes, or at the day of the resurrection, the saints shall shine forth gloriously.

1. Because the saints being God's jewels, are then all made up, or completed every way, and shall shine before wicked men and devils, to the shame and confusion for ever of those wretches.

2. Moreover, as heirs, they then come to a perfect age, and to possess the purchased inheritance, to the praise of God's grace and glory.

3. Then the marriage of the Lamb will be celebrated, and the bride be adorned in all her marriage-ropes and rich attire, Rev. xix. 7.

There are degree of glory. What heart can conceive, or tongue express, the glory of Christ's Marriage-day, or the glory every true believer shall shine more glorious than others; for some shall "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars for evermore," Dan. xii. 3. Our Lord says, they shall shine as the sun, which is far more glorious than the stars; all vessels shall be full, but some shall be greater bodies of light, and so shine brighter than others.

4. Because then the bodies and souls of all believers shall be reunited, both being made perfect; a curious piece of work, whether a jewel or clockwork never appears so glorious until it is all joined together, and every way perfected; so the glory of the saints will then every way be full and perfect, both in respect of soul and body too.

5. Because Christ then will appear; "And when he appears we shall appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4. "And we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 1 John iii. 4. Then, and in that day, "Our vile body shall be changed, and made like unto his glorious body," Phil. iii. 21, though not in respect of degree, but in quality and similitude. As a star in its quality is glorious, but in degree not so glorious, as the sun; Christ is God, and in him shall the glory of the Father, nay, the glory of the whole Godhead

How we shall see God in the other world. bodily, shine forth; also in him we shall see God, who is invisible to any material or created eyes, we shall see him as he is, we shall behold his glory, and be with him where he is, as he hath asked it of God, so it is granted him, "Father, I will that those also that thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me," John xvii. 24, &c. that is, that they may partake of his glory. To behold the glory of God, is to be glorified, but all our glory certainly will reflect from the glory of Christ's person, whose glory will be astonishing.

6. Because then will be the time of "the manifestation of the sons of God," Rom. viii. 19. Then they shall be crowned with glory. Sirs, that will be the saints' coronation-day; then shall the crown of life, the crown of glory, the crown that fadeth not away, be given to them. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous Judge will give unto me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearance," 2 Tim. iv. 8.

7. Then will be the time of the saints' reaping, as now is the time of their sowing; and "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy," Psal. cxxxvi. 5. They shall reap a full harvest not only of what they have sowed or suffered, but the fruit of that seed which Christ by

A whole Mystical Christ must be glorified. his obedience and suffering hath sowed; it will be the harvest (I say, or reaping-time) of Christ's sowing, the time when he shall have his full reward for all he hath wrought; and not of his own glory, but what he hath wrought for his saints: also it will be the glory of a whole Christ; not only Christ personally considered, but also Christ mystically considered: the body of Christ then shall be perfect, no one member shall be wanting; so that then will be the time of Christ and his church's perfection; and as all the whole body will be complete or perfect, so shall every particular saint arrive to a complete perfection also, both in knowledge, love, beauty, and glory; and hence it is that they shall shine so gloriously. Christ shall be in the top of his glory, and believers in the top of their glory also.

"Shine as the sun," &c. This denotes the greatness of the glory of the saints. What creature is so glorious as the sun? *Gloria quasi clara*, saith Aquinas, because glory is the bright shining forth of excellency. The glory, excellency, and splendour of believers in that day will be amazing. A little to open this, consider.

I. The sun is the greatest glory of this world, or far excels in glory all other things.

Why the glory of the saints is compared to the glory of the sun. So the saints shall shine forth in the greatest glory, beyond the glory of Solomon, or all earthly potentates whatsoever.

II. When the sun shines forth in his full strength, all dark clouds and mists are vanquished, and driven away. So when the saints shall shine in their greatest glory, all dark mists of ignorance, and clouds of sin and corruption, shall be expelled from them for ever—no more unbelief nor dark day for ever.

III. The sun is a singular light, and shines with a singular glory, *sol quia solus*; there are many stars, but one sun; so the glory of the saints shall be a singular glory; no glory like that glory, or to be compared to it.

IV. The sun is a pure, bright, and spotless creature, far brighter than the moon or stars. So the glory of the saints will be a pure, bright, and spotless glory; not like the glory of this world, nor like to the glory which attends the saints while they are here in this mortal body.

V. The glory of the sun is an unchangeable glory; he alters not, changes not in his glory as the moon doth.

So the glory of the saints in that day will ever abide the same, and never change or be less, because they then shall arrive to a full perfection of glory; nay, it shall exceed that of the sun, because, (1.) The sun sets or goes out of our sight but the saints' sun shall never go down, their glory never sets.

The glory of the saints shall be full, and never be less.

"Thy sun shall no more go down by day," &c., Isa. lx. 20. (2.) The sun is sometimes clouded, its glory appears not, but the glory of the saints shall never be clouded any more, as it was in this world. (3.) The sun shall then be ashamed. "The sun shall be ashamed when the Lord of host shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously," Isa. xxiv. 23. That is, the glory of the saints shall so far excel the glory of the sun, that the sun shall, as it were, be ashamed (as such are said to be, when they are outshined) or outdone by others. (4.) The sun is sometimes eclipsed by the gross body of the moon interposing betwixt us and it; but the glory of the saints shall by no dark body of sin, corruption, or of this world, be eclipsed any more for ever.

VI. The sun is so glorious, that mortals cannot behold it, but their eyes will dazzle. So the glory of the saints will be too great for sinners to behold, it would even put out their eyes, or confound them. O happy believers!

"In the kingdom of the Father." Our Lord here gives us to understand that his mediatorial kingdom shall have an end, and God shall be all in all; and then also it is said, "The Son shall be subject unto him that put all things under him," 1 Cor. xv. 28. Yet this doth not signify that there is any inequality of essence or power in the Son with the Father; no, nor that the glory of the Son shall not shine to eternity; but it only signifies, that as Christ, considered as Mediator did receive his commission and authority from the Father, and so acted all he did in his Father's name. Even so when all his elect are gathered, and his whole work and office in his mediatorial kingdoms is finished, then the sun will yield up that commission, that power and authority to God the Father, by which he acted as Mediator; and then comes in that kingdom which is called the kingdom of the Father, and so God shall be all in all; *i. e.*, there will be a present and immediate communication of God to his saints, different from those mediums by which he manifested himself to them in the mediatorial kingdom of Jesus Christ. This will be the last act (as I may say) of the Son's obedience and subjection to the Father. As he is God's servant he hereby intimates, that as Mediator he will not fail in his subjection to the Father, even to the last minute or moment of time. But this is so far from lessening the honour of the Son, that it rather tends to magnify his glory, he being no longer then in the state or capacity of a servant, having finished all his work committed unto him to do as Mediator. From hence I might note, that the chiefest glory of the saints will be in the kingdom of the Father, or when the mediatorial kingdom of Christ shall cease, or be ended.

What is meant by the kingdom of the Father.

What is meant by the Son's being subject unto God the Father.

APPLICATION.

1. We may infer from hence how vain and foolish a thing it is for any to hide their sin, or cover their iniquities. The day will come that shall discover what men are, and all the thoughts of their hearts, and all their deeds of darkness, shall then be laid open; for "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Eccl. xii. 14.

2. It may tend to terrify and awaken all hypocrites, for they shall, when the harvest comes, not only be severed from the wheat, but also be cast into hell, or into a furnace of fire, together with all profane and abominable idolaters, blasphemers, murderers, and adulterers. They might as well be openly profane, as secretly wicked; for hypocrites and unbelievers shall have their portion together, with the abominable and profane persons and devils.

The fearful state of hypocrites.

3. This may provoke every one of us to examine and try ourselves, judge ourselves, since the time will come which will try every person: "if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged, nor be condemned with the world," 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32.

O then let us be exhorted to this great work and duty! Is it not better to examine our own hearts and ways now; and if sin be in us, or if our hearts are not right with God, to

see to it, and judge and condemn ourselves, and fly to Jesus Christ? For there is mercy in him for hypocrites as well as for others, though it be so great a sin in his sight; and no sin more hateful to him.

But what comfort and consolation may this be also to all sincere Christians? Comfort to saints. Let such lift up their hearts with joy! O what a blessed and happy condition are they in now! But what will their state be when this life is ended?

Such need not to fear death; for, as their souls go then to Christ, so when Christ comes, he will bring them with him; "they shall appear with him in glory." What a harvest of joy, (Col. iii. 4.) shall we, if we are some of Christ's wheat, or true believers, reap at that day! Moreover, it may stir us up to long for this harvest, or to pray for the end of the world. These things being considered, certainly there is nothing may cause greater joy to sincere Christians; the thoughts of this harvest-day may cause us to leap for joy; how doth the husbandman long for harvest, when he reaps the fruits of all his cost and pains!

The signs of Christ's coming are upon us. The signs of Christ's coming, and of the end of the world, are certainly upon us: it is now but a short time to harvest; pray for the latter rain, which will ripen both the wheat and tares for this great harvest-day.

4. And lastly, labour for patience: "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early, and latter rain; be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth near," Jam. v. 7, 8. And thus I shall close with this parable.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

MUSTARD-SEED OPENED.

SERMON XXXIX.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest amongst herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.—Matt. xiii. 31, 32. See Luke xiii. 19.

SOME of the parables of our blessed Lord (I told you in the introduction) were prophetic, and so, as I conceive is this, viz., (1.) To discover the great success the gospel would have, and to what glory the church of God should grow in after-times, though it was very small at the beginning; this therefore may be the scope or chief design of our Saviour in speaking of this parable.

(2.) Some conclude our Lord hereby also designed to set forth the nature of true grace, particularly the grace of faith; which though at first it be but very small, yet if it be true grace, or saving faith, it will grow very strong in the end.

But I conclude he chiefly designed hereby to encourage his disciples in respect to that great and wonderful success the gospel and gospel-church should meet with in the world in after-times.

Secondly, as to the parts and terms herein contained.

1. By the kingdom of heaven I understand is here meant the kingdom of grace ; the church, or dispensation of the gospel. Why the church is called the kingdom of heaven is showed largely in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, to which I refer the reader.

2. Like unto a grain of mustard-seed. I find worthy authors do not agree as to what is meant by the grain of mustard-seed in this place.

1. Some say it signifies Jesus Christ. Thus St. Ambrose, as I find him quoted by Mr. Henry Vertue.

St. Luke saith it was sown in a garden, so (saith he) was Christ sown or buried in a garden, and from thence he rose again and became a tree. Christ (saith he), is compared to a grain of wheat, Luke xiii. 19, that fell into the ground, also to wheat because he strengthens man's heart : and " to a grain of mustard-seed," John xii. 24, because he heats the heart of man. Mustard-seed hath a heating property in it. Moreover, he was very little or small in the eyes of the world, though he became great and glorious, and so will remain for ever : but this sense I approve not of, for some reasons which I shall not here mention : indeed he himself runs afterwards to Christ mystical, consisting of head and members.

2. By his grain of mustard-seed (as hinted before) I judge chiefly is meant the gospel, or the ministry thereof, from whence the church sprang up. Thus Marlorat and our Annotators take it.

" Our Saviour (says the one) tended hereby to let his disciples know what success his gospel should have over all the world, that they might not be discouraged to see the little success it had at present."

(Saith the other), " by this parable the Lord declares what success the gospel should have through the whole world : for the kingdom of heaven was at first very small."

" Which a man took and sowed in his field." By the man here, also is meant Jesus Christ the Son of man, for he sowed the good seed from whence the church sprang up.

" In his field." The field is the world ; the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. The church grew up out of this world, and grows still in the world.

" Which indeed is the least of all seeds," &c., or the least of seeds which produceth so great a plant. No doubt our Saviour refers to that sort of mustard-seed which was in those eastern countries, which were very small, or the smallest of seeds ; much smaller than ours, and grew much bigger also.

" Which when it is grown, is the greatest herbs." The saints and people of God, though they are the smallest people, or the least or meanest among men, or in the sight of the world, and in their own sight also are as nothing ; yet they having taken root, and begun to grow in the knowledge of Christ, and true Christianity in the primitive time, they shall gradually grow bigger and bigger, and at last become like a great tree, or be the most flourishing and most glorious people in all the world.

" So that the birds of the air shall come and lodge in the branches thereof."

By the birds of the air may be meant the saints. The time of singing of birds is come ; that is, the time when the saints that have been oppressed shall break forth into singing, when the winter is over, or the days of their tribulation are gone. The saints may be compared to birds on divers respects :

1. Birds delight in the air, or in the higher region ; so the saints are said " to dwell on high, our conversation is in heaven," Phil. iii. 20, Col. iii. 1, 2, their desires and affections are set on things above.

2. Birds mount towards heaven as the lark and eagle, &c., so it is said, " They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up as on eagles' wings," Isa. xl. 31.

3. Birds want a place of defence and safety when trees are cut down : so when godly princes fall or good magistrates are displaced, the saints are exposed to many dangers.

4. Some birds are made a prey of by fowls of prey, so have the saints been, and will be by the wicked until this tree is come to its full growth, more or less.

5. Birds make sweet music, sweet melody, especially in the spring : so do the saints sing and make sweet melody in their hearts and voices in the ears of the Lord Jesus Christ, but more abundantly shall they sing when the day of Zion's glory cometh in and Babylon is down.

6. Birds suffer much and are almost starved, and many are cut off by fowlers in a sharp winter's season : so in times of persecution the saints have suffered much for want of bread,

What is meant by the kingdom of heaven, viz. the gospel church.

See Vertue's parables, pag. 206.

Annotator.

Marlorat's Expost. of Matthew.

The saints are compared to birds.

Saints compared to birds.

their food has been taken away, and many of them have been cut off by the hands of wicked and blood-thirsty men.

“ Shall lodge in the branches thereof.”

The time shall come when the saints shall with safety lodge in Sion, the church shall grow to that strength and power, that the poor and oppressed ones of Jesus Christ shall be secure in the branches of the church authority and government.

From hence let me note this proposition, viz.,

The gospel church shall become a great and mighty people.

Doct. 1. That though the church and people of God were a very small, shattered, and weak people at first, yet they shall grow to a great height of strength and glory in the latter days; so that all that love Christ shall be safe under her wings.

1. I shall show you how the church hath been oppressed, broken, and shattered, like a tender branch growing out of the ground.

2. Show how the church shall gradually grow like a tree or tender plant until she comes to her full perfection, that the saints with safety shall lodge in her branches.

3. Apply it.

First, The church was very small at its first plantation in the primitive time. The number of the disciples were but about one hundred and twenty, Acts i. 15.

Believers in Christ then were the smallest people in the world; for the whole earth might be divided into three parts.

The church was small at first.

1. The Jews, who were a great people, even like the sands of the sea for number.

2. The Gentiles, who were left under darkness and ignorance, were more, no doubt, in number, than the Jews.

3. The Christians, and these were but like a grain of mustard-seed comparatively to both the other.

How the church grew.

Yet they grow in a short time wonderfully, three thousand being added to them by St Peter's (Acts ii. 4) preaching of one sermon: and after that we read of 5000, and in a few years they increased to a wonderful number, filling many cities and countries. What a vast multitude were put to death for the space of 300 years after Christ, in the ten persecutions under the Roman emperors.

Secondly, I will show you how the church hath been oppressed broken, and shattered like a tender plant sprung out of the ground. This was done three ways, through the rage and malice of Satan.

The ways by which the churches were hindered.

1. By false doctrine, that very early crept into the church; and many, even in the apostles' days, were corrupted hereby.

The first we read of were those false teachers that rose up amongst the Jewish Christians, who taught circumcision, and many other Jewish rites, and mixed the righteousness of the law with the righteousness of Christ in justification; (1 John ii. 23); and also others in the same times denied Christ was come in the flesh, and some declared there was no resurrection, and thereby overthrew the faith of divers Christians; and some said the resurrection was past, (1 Tim. i. 19, 20). Also the Nicolaitans did much harm to the Church of God, which sect rose from Nicholas, who was one

What errors got into the church.

of the seven deacons chose to take the care of the poor in the Church at Jerusalem (Acts vi. 5, Rev. ii. 15). They asserted polygamy lawful; that men might have more wives than one, or rather community of women: and many other errors molested the churches, and tended to mar her beauty. And afterwards also

rose Arius, whose heresy corrupted thousands, who denied the God-head of our blessed Saviour; affirming he was a created spirit, and which spirit assumed the nature of man in the womb of the virgin. Moreover, multitudes of other errors broke in; and soon after Antichrist was revealed, who sprung up out of the apostacy of the Church, as was foretold by St. Paul, 2 Thess. ii. 3. Moreover, until all errors in doctrine and discipline that abound now are vanquished, the Church will not shine in her glory; but greater light is near.

2. This blessed tree, which sprang from this grain of mustard-seed that was so small at first, was also injured greatly, and its growth obstructed by divisions, contentions, and many other enormities that were in the primitive churches, and in the next ages following, and this also spoils her growth and glory now.

3. She was also sorely oppressed and vexed by grievous persecutions; many of her precious branches being that way lepped off, most of the apostles themselves being barbarously put to death, or suffered martyrdom. Yet, notwithstanding all the wrong the

church sustained by those and other means, she abode visible in the world, though at last was forced to fly into the wilderness from the face of the red dragon, Rev. xii. 6; but she hath of late times looked out as the morning, and as fair as the moon, Cant. vi. 10; and shall in a little time come forth as clear as the sun, and as terrible as an army with banners.

Thirdly, I shall briefly show how the church shall gradually grow like a tree, or tender plant, and come to her full perfection, when the saints with safety shall lodge in her branches, or under her power and protection.

It hath befallen (you have heard) this blessed plant to receive much harm in its growth and beauty, but the predictions, or prophesy of our Saviour hinted in this parable, shall be fulfilled, in spite of all opposition from men and devils, i. e., it shall become a mighty tree; and the ways by which it will be done, I shall briefly speak unto.

1. "God will arise and have mercy on Sion when the set time is come," Psal. cii. 13. Jehovah hath seemed to many to sleep, and to have neglected his church for a long time, but he will quickly arise or rouse up out of his seeming sleep, and take pity on her as he did in the type, so he will in the antitype, i. e., as he delivered his people out of literal Babylon, so he will save his people and gospel-church from mystical Babylon.

2. He will raise up men, even the kings of the earth, to hate the whore, and to make her desolate, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire, Rev. xvii.

You will see them in a little while deeply engaged in the church's cause, or in behalf of Sion, and he will also stir up his own people, or some of the sons of Sion, to execute his wrath and vengeance upon Babylon, "reward her, as she hath rewarded you," Rev. xviii. 6; so that in due time it shall be said, "Come and behold the works of the Lord, what desolation he hath made in the earth," Psal. xli. 8.

But this will not begin until the ascension of the witnesses, which will be in one street of the great city, which I doubt not is Great Britain, Rev. xi.

3. It will be done by a farther and more glorious appearance of Jesus Christ, or by the rising of the Sun of Righteousness; for the son of perdition shall be destroyed by Christ's bright appearing in the glory of gospel light, which will expel all antichristian darkness, errors, and superstitions, which are still amongst us, 2 Thess. ii. 8.

4. The growth and glory of the church in the latter days, will be effected or ushered in by a more eminent and glorious effusion of the Holy Spirit: the latter rain will come down, and I am persuaded, like that which fell in the primitive times at the day of pentecost.

Why may we not expect the returning of God's miraculous working power? There may be the same need of miracles as there was at first; what else can tend to remove these great differences that are amongst the Lord's people, I know not, neither am I alone in my apprehensions in this case; besides, we have of late seen something of this nature; many cures have been wrought in a miraculous manner, which seem to be but some drops before the shower falls; moreover, we read that at the fall of Babylon, there shall be apostles and prophets in the church: "Rejoice over her, ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath revenged you on her, Rev. xviii. 20. The apostolical office was by a special and an extraordinary mission; nor can we expect any such an office again in the church, without some are called and endowed with the same extraordinary spirit, which I expect will be in a short time.

5. It will be effected by virtue of a thorough and blessed union amongst all the Lord's people; for when God has poured upon the nations of the earth all his fierce anger, and devoured his enemies with the "fire of his jealousy, he will return to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon him with one consent," Zeph. iii. 1—10; and then, and not till then, the two sticks shall become one in Christ's hand, and then also will the church appear as terrible as an army with banners, Cant. vi. 10.

6. It will be effected by God's setting his king upon the holy hill of Sion, and making him higher in the exercise of his regal power (as King of nations, as well as King of saints) than the kings of the earth, Psal. ii. 6; and then "all the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High," Dan. vii. 27; the stone that shall smite the image on its feet, shall become a great mountain, and fill

How or by what means the church shall grow and become a mighty tree.

By what means the church shall become great and glorious in the latter days.

How Babylon shall fall.

And the glory of Sion branch forth.

Miracles shall return again.

Extraordinary apostles may be expected again.

A blessed union near amongst all God's people.

the whole earth; which will begin on the ascension of the witnesses, and sounding of the seventh trumpet. Look for these things; though they do not well who boldly prefix the very year; but however, the tenth part of the great city shall fall first, in which the antichristian names of men shall cease for ever.

Signs of
the glory of
the church
in the last
days.

I shall only add some of the signs of those days, or what things are precedent to them, which our Lord would have well observed; "Now learn the parable of the fig-tree; when his branches are yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know the summer is near; so likewise, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door," Matt. xxiv. 32, 33.

1. When the enemy comes in like a flood, and without any great resistance seems to threaten to swallow up the church, and swell the banks and bounds of all human power, then the Lord's own arm shall bring salvation, Isa. lix. 16: this, saith an ancient writer, will be one sign, i. e., chap. lxiii. 5, when the world makes invasions and inroads upon the church in several kingdoms like a land-flood, and all things seem to tend to confusion, and the nations are in amaze, and some princes and people fall off to the beasts; the sign, my brethren, seems to be upon us; look abroad, when, since the reformation, was a more dismal face of things?

2. Sign, when the enemies of their church are at their height, and their sins are fully ripe, particularly the Romish harlot is lifted up (in one or another kingdom,) in pride and power, saying, I sit as queen, and shall see no sorrow, then the things long looked for draw near.

3. Sign, when we hear of wars, and rumour of wars, and the rushing of nations one against another with a design to overthrow the gospel and kingdom of Christ, which will usher in the great earthquake which shall be upon the ascension of the witnesses, then the time is near.

4. Sign, when there shall be an universal defection and darkness in all the churches of the saints, and false doctrine and errors more than usual abound, and deadness, security, and formality increases on the people of God, so that all the virgins seem to be asleep, then is the time near, even at the door. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood; or, as the prophet Joel saith, "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and stars shall withdraw their shining," i. e., Joel. iii. 15, the gospel church, that great light of heaven, shall lose some of that light she for many years gave to the world, particularly (from the time of famous Luther) in the doctrine of justification; and many ministers who seemed like stars, shall suck in corrupt principles about that glorious truth, and so withdraw their shining; now this has not been to such a degree until of late years; and then the earth shall be turned into blood, or nothing but blood, blood and slaughter almost everywhere, as if all the earth was like to a common shambles, to quarter out the limbs of sinners. The woman clothed with the sun, had the moon under her feet; what moon is that, but this world in its external and changeable glory?

Jer. xxv. 27.
Jer. xlix. 12.
Lam. iv. 21.
Ezek. xxiii.
3.
Psal. xxxiii.
8.
Isa. x. 12.

Sign 5. When the cup of trembling shall be taken out of the hand of Sion, and pass into the hands of her enemies, and they come to drink the dregs thereof, and be drunk, spew, and fall, they shall rise no more. And when the Lord Jesus makes Jerusalem a cup of trembling to all her enemies, Psa. xi.

6, then fire, and brimstone, and horrible tempests, shall be the portion of the cup of those pretended Protestants that have put the saints to grief. But then fearful trembling shall seize upon them; for God has not forgot the blood they have shed: this sign draws near. Also,

Sign 6. When all the churches (as the people in Egypt) groan and sigh under oppression, and break forth into mighty crying unto God with a loud and hideous noise, as a woman in travail, Psa. cii. 5, 6, with bitter mourning, Isa. lxii. 1, and an universal cry to Jehovah, then God will come and avenge his own elect: "He hath a respect to the prayers of the desolate—now will I arise, saith the Lord, and devour at once," Isa. xli. 14.

Sign 7. When the Lord sends forth variety of strange sins and wonders in the heavens, in the earth, Matt. xxiv. 27, and in the waters, strange fish, strange monsters, strange hail, thunder, and lightning, and strange and universal earthquakes, and men are filled with fear, looking for what shall come to pass, "lift up your heads, your redemption draws near," Luke xxi. 25—28.

Sign 8. Saith a worthy and ancient author, when God is hammering and squaring fit instruments for his great work, as he hath done in all times of his church's extremities of

old, as Moses in Egypt, Joshua, the Judges, Ethiel, Ehud, Sampson, Gideon, Baruk, Sampson, David, Cyrus, Zerobabel, &c., especially when he makes crooked instruments to strike a straight blow, or unlikely persons to do great things not expected from them, this shows Christ is about to appear in his glory.

Sign 9. When the most knowing and understanding persons in the prophecies shall agree that the witnesses have been slain, and are upon their feet, Mahometan power ceases to be any more a plague to the antichristian party, and so the second is passed away, the time is at the door, Isa. xxvi. 21.

Sign 10. When God riseth up to make inquisition for blood, and puts it into the hearts of some of the ten kings to hate the whore, and a religious war breaks out between the Papist and the Protestant princes, and God takes peace from the earth, so that the breach cannot be made up, lift up your heads.

Sign 11. Before the Sun of righteousness ariseth to build up Zion, Psal. xcvi. 2, 3; clouds, great darkness will be round about him, and most will be amazed, and not know what to think; and from this cloud a fire will break out before him; sword, pestilence, tempests and whirlwinds, and strange plagues upon the enemies of the church. Sirs, the morning of the day of Christ's power is like to be very cloudy and tempestuous, and full of trouble; but it is to the enemies of Christ; and a fire shall burn up and consume them; but the saints shall be preserved in those times in a wonderful manner.

Sign 12. When the errors of some men, who have prefixed times, shall tend so to blind and harden the world, and also to deceive the godly, that there will remain but little faith in any about Christ's glorious appearance in his wonders; but most will conclude the time afar off; then he is just at the door, Matt. xx. 4.

But to proceed, I have showed you how small the church was at first, also the causes of her decay and witherings, until antichrist was revealed, and that she hath of late looked out as the morning, which began about Luther's time; and how her path hath shone, and shall shine more and more to the perfect day; with the signs of her near approaching glory.

Now to close; I shall prove she shall become a great and mighty tree in the last days. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God," Psal. lxxxvii. 3.

The power and glory of the Church shall be great.

"It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above thee, and all nations shall flow unto it," Isa. ii. 2. That is the time when birds shall dwell in her branches, the mountain of the Lord's house is the regal power and authority of the church; and this shall be established in the top of all earthly powers, governments, and pre-eminence whatsoever, viz.; the saints shall have the supreme authority and rule over all powers and governments of the earth; "And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth," Dan. ii. 35.

This is expounded by Daniel, ver. 44, "And in the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever," See Mich. iv. Some, through ignorance, have thought that this kingdom refers to the gospel-church set up by Christ and his apostles in the primitive time; but that cannot be, because this kingdom is set up when the government of the Roman monarchy is in its feet. The stone smote the image on the feet; the Roman power in the apostles' days was in its iron legs, i. e., in its greatest strength: besides, the stone then did not smite, but was smitten by the Romish power for near three hundred years; the ten toes of the image and the ten horns, refer to the same state of the Romish monarchy, compare this with Dan. vii., "And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him," Dan. vii. 27, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The saints had never yet all the power and kingdoms under the whole heavens given unto them, but they shall have it in the last days.

"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ," Rev. xi. 15; that is, upon the seventh angel sounding his trumpet, they shall become Christ's kingdom.

"Thy people also shall be all righteous, and they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified," Isa. lx. 21. See here what a glorious tree this mustard-seed will grow unto. "A little one shall be-

come a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I the Lord will hasten it in his time," ver. 22. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen on thee," Isa. lx. 1. "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising," ver. 3. "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see all; they gather, themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall be nourished at thy side," ver. 4. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" ver. 8. Time would fail to give the multitudes of Scriptures which fully confirm this truth, which make good the predictions of our blessed Saviour in this parable.

The glory of the church will appear in those times to consist in these things following.

In what the glory of the church shall consist.

1. In the abundance that shall be added to her; she shall fill the whole earth.

2. In that mighty power and authority; she shall be clothed with the government, being wholly put into the hands of the saints.

3. In that kings shall be converted, and bring their glory unto her; they shall throw their crowns at his feet.

4. In respect of that holiness and purity that shall be in all the Lord's people, both in doctrine, discipline, and conversation; all errors will be vanquished; "Thy people shall be all righteous."

5. In respect to outward peace; oppression shall rise up no more; wars shall cease to the ends of the earth.

6. In respect of love, peace, and union, amongst all the people of God; no more any names of infamy, nor of distinction; all shall be of one heart, and of one way, and all serve the Lord with one consent.

7. In respect had to the glorious presence of Christ; his glory shall then be seen, and shine forth; the latter house shall exceed the glory of the first.

Lastly, In respect of the church's stability, safety, and security; "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence," Isa. iv. 5.

APPLICATION.

1. We infer, that the love of Christ to his church is very great and wonderful, and he will make it manifest to all the earth; in a short time it will appear he hath not forgotten Sion.

2. Let us learn from hence not to despise the day of small things; see how little and small the church was at the beginning, and to what greatness and glory God will raise her at last: small beginnings may have glorious endings.

Though the church is now low and small, yet God is able to raise her.

3. Let no weak beginner in religion be discouraged; "God will bring forth judgment unto victory," Matt. xii 20. Nor let him that has the smallest talent neglect the improvement thereof; he knows not what it may increase to.

4. Let none proudly overlook nor exult over weak Christians.

5. And let all the saints be of good cheer, and lift up their heads; though now under sorrow and affliction, their redemption draws near.

6. Let us cry mightily to God to arise and have mercy upon Sion; be much in prayer; let us fast and pray, pray day and night.

7. Watch; be on your watch-tower; take heed you sleep not, and "So the day comes upon you unawares, while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept:" the midnight cry will amaze if you awake not until it is heard.

See the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

SERMON XL.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed, which is indeed the least of all seeds, &c.—Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

By the grain of Mustard-seed, chiefly is meant the church of Christ, which was very small at first; this I have spoken to: but some conclude by it also may be meant true faith: though from the latter part of the parable I doubt whether our Lord does refer to faith or not: yet because faith in another place is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, I shall speak to this second thing, but rather from Matt. xvii. 20, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say to this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove," Matt. xxi. 21. "Verily I say, if ye have faith, and doubt not, if ye shall say to this mountain, be thou removed, and be cast into the sea, it shall be done."

Faith is compared to a grain of mustard-seed. Some think that it only refers to the faith of miracles; but sure such have a great and strong faith: for the faith of miracles is in its nature or kind no weak faith.

Faith like to a grain of mustard-seed.

I conceive, as our annotators observe, it may refer to the grace of faith in any believer. There is nothing too hard which God hath promised for faith, when a believer doubts not; but certainly, not simply considered as a grain of mustard when it is first sown; (for our Lord shows, as so considered, it is small and weak) but when it is grown high and strong: nothing is too hard for faith,—for,

1. Is there a mountain of guilt lying upon our consciences? Faith will remove it, and by enabling us to cast it upon Jesus Christ, (who hath borne our sins,) thrown them into the bottom of the sea.

The power and excellency of faith.

2. Or is there a mountain of opposition against us, or in our way of following of Christ? True faith will cast it out of its place.

3. Or is there an evil habit like unto a strong tree deeply rooted? Faith will pull it up. From hence note,

Doct. True faith or grace in a believer may be small, little, or weak at first; yet it is of a growing nature; and it will become strong by exercise, through Christ's watering, and gracious influences.

1. I shall show that true faith is small or weak, at first, in some Christians.

2. That it is of a growing nature.

3. How we may know a weak faith from a strong faith.

4. Apply it.

First, That there is a weak or small faith is evident, "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt? why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Matt. vi. 30, Matt. viii. 26.

There is a weak faith. There is a strong faith.

There is also mention made of a great faith; "And Jesus unto her, O woman, great is thy faith," Matt. xv. 8, Rom. iv. 20. Also we read of a strong faith; "Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God." "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus," 2 Tim. ii. 1.

How weak was the disciples' faith when they feared that the ship would sink to the bottom, where Christ the ever-blessed God was? also when some of them doubted whether Christ was the true Messiah; "We trusted it had been he that should have redeemed Israel," Luke xxiv. 21. And others talked of going again to their old trade; "I go a fishing," John xxi. 3. This shows the weakness of their faith.

Secondly, Faith is of a growing nature, it may become great and strong, though at first but little, like a grain of mustard-seed.

To what a degree was Peter's faith grown (who before denied his Master)? "If we this day be examined of the good done to this impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole," Acts iv. 8, 9. Who more strong now than blessed Peter? his faith was grown already to a great degree, like a mighty tree.

Faith is of a growing nature.

"We are bound to thank God always as is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you towards each other aboundeth."

Quest. Doth grace grow by infusion of new degrees, or by co-operation with it? Or is it increased by exercise only?

How faith grows.

Ans. I doubt not but both these ways faith may be said to grow and increase. (1)

The Lord Jesus doth increase and strengthen our faith by the influences of his Spirit: "Lord, increase our faith;" and, (2) It also grows by feeding on the word, ordinances, and promises of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a child grows by the nourishment it receives; "As new-born babes desiring the sincere milk of word, that they may grow thereby."

(3.) By a constant use, study, and exercise, faith is increased in believers, until they come to a more perfect stature in Christ Jesus.

Thirdly, What is the nature of a weak faith, and wherein doth it differ from a strong? Heb. v. 14.

I. A weak faith is commonly attended with many doubts and fears; as appears by what our Saviour said unto his disciples, "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?" Matt.

The nature
of a weak
faith.

Christ appears in an ordinance, in a duty, or in providence, and manifesteth himself; but the soul doubts whether it be Christ or not; it may be, saith he, a temptation, or delusion of Satan. Also Christ appears in a promise, and sets some sweet word upon the heart; but yet the weak Christian doubts still whether it be by the good Spirit or not.

II. A weak faith is attended with much remaining ignorance, or wants clearer light in the mysteries of Christ and of the gospel; they cannot see wherein their great strength both (to wit) in our head, the Lord Jesus Christ; as Sampson's great strength lay in his hair; but weak Christians look for it in themselves. (1.) They see not that abundant grace that is in Christ, and that it is for them that there is in him such a fulness. (2.) They see not so clearly, that the righteousness of Christ is continually imputed to them, or that they always are clothed with that blessed garment. (3.) They cannot discern clearly that Christ is their life, and "that because he lives they shall live also;" John. xiv. 19. (4.) They see not their conquest and victory that is in Christ, but look and expect a perfect conquest in themselves over all their enemies; which, while in this body, we shall never find; but sometimes we may be foiled, and have the worst of it; nay, come off with broken bones, as David and Peter did.

III. Ignorance in respect of God's eternal love, the covenant of grace, together with the power, promises, and faithfulness of God.

IV. Ignorance of the suretyship of Christ, and of that blessed union which is between the Lord Jesus and every believer, though never so weak; also they may be ignorant of the nature of grace, and of true faith itself; 1 John. v. 13. They may not know that they do believe, and that they have eternal life. Hence it is that we are exhorted to grow in knowledge as well as in grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18.

V. Weak believers must see and feel; they live more by sense than faith: Thomas must see and feel before he would believe; "because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they that see not, and yet believe;" John xx. 25—29. Thou believest upon the testimony of thy senses, but it is a more noble act of faith, to believe without such a sensible evidence; not to give credit to anything but upon the evidence of our senses, can hardly, in a proper sense, be called faith, it is only what sense confirms, which before we had the relation of, but did not believe.

Therefore by how much we live by sense and the sensitive evidences, or by seeing or feeling, the weaker our faith is; and from hence some are ready to say, I will open my Bible, and observe what place my eyes are first cast upon, and also desire that God would some way or another, in a visible way, satisfy them about their state and condition; which as it is dangerous, so no doubt but it is from Satan; yet I intend not by this an exclusion of signs or marks of saving grace, or a reflex act of faith; but a weak Christian is ready, I say, to give up all his hope, if he finds and feels corruptions bubbling up, and fears they are not mortified. What, saith he, have I so many evil thoughts, earthly thoughts, nay, blasphemous thoughts, and am I so dead in duty, and yet a believer? Though they are grievous to him, and are his burden, and the sickness of his soul, and he cries out for help against them, and will not give the least consent to their quiet lodging in his heart; yet he is ready to give up all his hope; which argues great weakness of faith.

Were my sins excused, and could I but obtain power against them, and was I in a holy and lively name of sinner, I could believe; but one that is strong in faith, though they find great deadness, and want of such strength and victory which they desire; yet believe and rest with comfort upon Jesus Christ, knowing that their acceptance and justification flows not from any sensible holiness or righteousness in themselves, but from Christ's merits and righteousness only; and, as a presumptuous and impenitent sinner can

be no true believer, so he whose faith is grounded on that inherent holiness which is wrought in him, is but a weak believer: for as our own righteousness and holiness adds nothing to our justification before God, so our human frailties cannot diminish anything from it. Yet I deny not but mortification of sin, holiness, and heaviness of spirit, may be evidence to our own consciences of our justification and comfort: "for faith without works is dead," Jam. i. 12, 8, 26.

VI. A weak faith, or one that is weak in faith, cannot either bear the frowns nor smiles of God; for when afflicted, he is ready to conclude it is in wrath, and that God loves him not; and when in a prosperous state, and he enjoys the favour of God, and the light of his countenance, and is in a lively and fruitful frame of heart; he, with David, is ready to say, he shall never be removed; "in my prosperity I said I shall never be moved." Psal. xxx. 6. "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled," ver. 7. Weak Christians, when fruitful, are ready to say with Leah (in another case) "Now will my husband love me, because I have borne him six sons," Gen. xxx. 20. Now will God love me, because I have done so much good, mortified such and such corruptions, and with holy zeal discharged such and such holy duties. When, alas! it is not for any of these things we are accepted and beloved, but only in Christ, and because he hath, and will love us; it is from himself, and in Christ, and not for the sake of any thing we do, or have done. True, we are beloved, and accepted (in Christ) and when we do well, it is approved by the Lord; but it is not for our doing it, or because we do it. Moreover, infirmities, sins, and corruptions, believers, may offend God, and cause him to hide his face; but pray know they cannot remove his love from us; and though our holiness doth please him, yet our want of such degrees of holiness that are in some, can never provoke him to cast us off, and disown us to be his children: for, as God loved us not for our righteousness, so he will never cast us off for our unrighteousness, if we are his elect children; and though he afflicts us, yet he will not forsake us; "My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail," Psal. lxxxix. 33.

A weak faith can neither well bear frowns nor smiles.

Sins of believers separate them not from God's love.

VII. Weak believers live more on their hard labour than by faith, or are more for doing than for believing; and have their eye more upon their sore and sickness, than upon their physician; or more on what they have done and do, than upon what Christ hath done; and have their eyes more upon that grace that is in them, than upon that grace which is in Christ; they can live, they think, when they are increased in goods; but cannot live so as to hold up their heads when they can find nothing in themselves. See Hab. iii. 17.

VIII. A weak believer is ready to let go his hold in a storm, or cannot encounter with difficulties. When a storm rose, and tossed the ship, the disciples feared they should perish; Matt. xiv. 30, 31; and when Peter saw the winds boisterous, he began to sink. A storm of temptation, reproach, and persecution, is ready to make them stagger, nay, to fall, as many did in the late persecutions; which showed their faith was weak.

Quest. From whence is it that some are so weak in faith?

Ans. Some believers are but new-born, they are but babes in Christ; and can you expect a new-born babe should be as strong as one twenty years' old?

The cause why some are weak in faith.

2. Some are diseased, may be consumptive; distempers cause weakness: a strong man, by a fit of sickness, may be brought to great weakness: so may a strong Christian: he may fall into a consumption of his faith, love, and other graces.

3. Some believers have not such strengthening food as others, or are not fed in such fat pastures: or if they are, yet they cannot digest strong meat, must live upon the milk of the word, Heb. v. 12, 13.

4. Some fall, by some temptation, under the power of some sin: and these strangers devour or consume their strength. Grace is a tender flower, which weeds are ready to choke, or hinder the growth thereof, Hos. vii. 9.

5. And lastly, God may not give to some the like degree of faith which he gives to others: or they may not improve that measure of grace they have by daily exercise.

Secondly, True faith is of a growing nature: that faith that is weak may become strong.

1. We have proved this hath been so in many Christians.

Faith is of a growing nature.

2. And now I shall give you some reasons to prove it shall grow if it be true faith, true grace.

1. Because grace is a vital principle, it hath life in it; it is of a fructifying quality, though it be at first but as a grain of mustard seed. (2.) Because this seed is sown in good ground; God hath made the hearts of believers good and upright, they have honest

hearts; "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger," Job xvii. 9. (3.) Because they are grafted into a living stock or root, which is full of sap; "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. (4.) Because undergrowing and strengthening promises, "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine," &c., Hos. xiv. 7. "They shall grow up as calves of the stall," Mal. iv. 2. "The righteous shall grow as the cedar in Lebanon," Psal. xcii. 12. Christ hath promised, he will bring forth judgment in these unto victory.

5. Because they are planted in a very fruitful place, or hill, even on Mount Zion: "Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, they shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is righteous, and that there is no unrighteousness in him," Psal. xcii. 13, 14, 15. (6.) Because they are continually under growing influences, the Holy Spirit daily quickens and operates upon their hearts, and blesseth the word and ordinances unto them: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," &c., Isa. xl. 31. (7.) Because "They are ordained to go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain," John xv. 16. They are not chosen only to believe, but to be fruitful, to be holy, and to continue so as well as to be eternally happy.

U S E.

1. Counsel. Trust not in your own strength, neither judge of thy strength by the strength of those graces that are in thy own heart, but by the grace that is in Christ.

2. Caution. Do not give up thy hope because thy faith is but small.

Obj. But I fear I have no grace at all; what, such a deceitful heart, and yet have grace? attended with so many evils in heart and life, and yet have grace? what such deadness and coldness in holy duties, and yet have grace? what, so dark and so little sense of divine power, and yet have grace? what, temptations and unbelief so prevalent, and yet I have grace? so unworthy, and so unlike Christ, and yet have grace?

Ans. All this may be, and yet thou have grace, and be a true believer: a little seed may be overlooked, especially when thou hast but a very little light in thy house.

Thirdly, I shall show you in the next place, who they are that have a great faith, whose faith is become a tree.

1. Show how they come by it.

2. The nature or quality of it.

How some come to be strong in faith.

1. God gives some a great faith, or much grace, and great knowledge: some have five talents, and others but two.

2. They have more fruitful showers and shinings than others.

3. They are singled out for special use and services above others.

The quality of a strong faith.

Secondly, The nature of a strong faith is such, that it grows the more by weights and pressures: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree," &c., Psal. xcii. 12.

Nothing can hinder their growth. (1.) The palm-tree is amiable to look on; all its branches shoot upwards, none grow out of the side of this tree; so all the desires, thoughts, and affections of these are heavenly.

(2.) The palm-tree is very weak when first planted. Pliny says, they therefore planted three or four together, and by that means they strengthen one another; so those saints that grow strong cleave one to another in all cordial affections, and, like the palm-tree, clasps together in close and sweet communion.

(3.) The palm-tree thrives the more by having weights hung upon it; and nothing can bend it, or make it grow crooked: though this tree be oppressed, yet it endureth and prospers, saith Ainsworth. So strong believers grow and thrive under all weights and oppressions of sin, the world, the devil, and wicked men without, and false brethren within; yea, nothing can hinder them from going straight on in their way; no, though God seems to frown, and good men frown upon them, and strive to discourage them; yet they grow the more in faith, hope, love, humility, and in patience, though they want sensible comfort from God, and respect and love from the saints.

(3.) A great faith, or a strong believer, will take hold of Christ, though it has not such a particular promise set upon his heart as others have: thus it was with the woman that had the bloody issue, and the woman of Canaan: what promise had they? and yet with what a strong faith did they take hold of the Lord Jesus! "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," Matt. xv. 28.

(4.) Much more if it hath but one word from Christ, such believe; "Speak the word,

and my servant shall be healed," Matt. viii. 10, Luke vii. 9, Matt. viii. 8.

(5.) A great faith lays the soul very low in his own sight, yet hath much confidence in Christ: "I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof."

A strong believer an humble person.

(6.) All strong believers were ever very humble. How humble was Abraham, and David? "I am a worm," Agar, Job, "I loathe myself" Isaiah, "I am undone," &c. Paul, "I who am less than the least of all saints," &c. They have greater light that have a great faith, or have great discoveries of God, of his holiness, love, and goodness, and of their own vileness.

(7.) A great faith, or a strong Christian, will not be discouraged, though he meets with repulses from Christ, and from his disciples or ministers. What repulses did the woman of Canaan meet with? first, she cried, "O Lord, thou Son of David," &c. Matt. xv. 22—26. "But he answered her not a word."

A strong faith will have no denial, nor be discouraged by repulses.

2. Then the disciples came and besought him to send her away; but still she cries to him.

3. Then our Lord said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," yet she continues her request, then she came and worshipped him, "Saying, Lord, help me."

4. On this he said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to dogs," What a repulse was that? "She said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table," verse 27. Lord, though I am a Gentile sinner, or a dog, yet let me have the crumbs that fall from the table thou hast spread for the children.

"Then Jesus said, O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt," verse 28. Thus it appears no discouragement, no repulses will such who have a great faith regard; they will have no denial. Such say, with Jacob, "I will not let thee go until thou hast blessed me." A weak faith, if it meets with repulses, or is denied the mercy desired, is ready to give up all hope, and leave off praying. But a strong faith will "wait upon God, that hideth his face from the house of Israel," Isa. viii. 17.

(8.) A great faith, or a strong believer, believes in hope against hope. This did Abraham; he was strong in faith, and believed when he could not see by any human reason how the promise of God could be accomplished, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb," Rom. iv. 18, 19, 20, "but was strong in faith, giving glory to God."

A strong Christian, one strong in faith believes in hope against hope.

9. A strong faith can live in a famine of the word, or when all outward means fail, weak Christians must have fresh provision every day. A man strong in faith lives upon the fulness of the fountain, and can live when the stream seems dried up; such bring forth fruit in times of drought; "They are not careful in years of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit," Jer. xvii. 8.

10. A strong Christian can trust God, and wait patiently upon him, though he hath it not given unto him every day; but weak believers are like to poor men, they must have present money, all in hand, they cannot live upon a bare promise."

A strong faith can trust God.

(11.) One strong can get up a high hill, when a weak person is ready to faint, and be weary; so a strong believer, one strong in faith, can ascend courageously up the hill of opposition, and get over the stile of carnal reason, and go through the valley of the shadow of death, and not faint; but the weak are weary by running with foot-men, and how then can they "contend with horses, or live in the overflowing of Jordan," Jer. xii. 5.

Isa. xxiii. 4. Isa. lxiv. 7, 18.

12. A believer who hath a great faith, can obey God in the hardest thing, though it be to offer up an only and a beloved son, whereas a weak believer cannot hardly yield in a way of obedience, to precepts very easy; when opposition is made against him, a strong believer consults not with flesh and blood, nor his own strength, nor who are against him; but the worth and worthiness of Jesus Christ, and what strength is engaged for him.

APPLICATION.

Exhort. Be exhorted to labour for a great faith.

MOTIVES.

1. Thou hast strong corruptions that daily beset thee, and a strong devil to tempt thee, and a world full of powerful enticements to deceive thee.

Motives to stir up all to labour for a strong faith.

2. Consider that the work is great thou hast to do, and it needs great strength, or a strong faith, it is fighting work, and set forth by running of a race; also it is called wrestling, all which require much strength.

3. Because thou knowest not what sufferings thou mayest be called unto, though we have liberty now, peace now, prosperity now, yet persecution, trouble, and adversity may break in upon us; our way may be rough and rocky, which will be difficult for weak believers to pass through.

4. Because a great faith (as you have heard) tends most to glorify God, or to bring honour to his great name, and it argues also that thou hast the clearer knowledge of God. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee," Psal. ix. 10.

5. A strong believer meets with the strongest consolation, or with the sweetest comfort; commonly according to the degree of our faith, or measure of grace, is our peace, joy, and consolation. How often do weak believers droop in their spirits, and at every turn are ready to let their anchor, hope, slip? therefore labour after a strong and great faith.

6. Have you not been a great while a gathering, and have had fruitful seasons to grow and gather strength in? what, alas! be always babes in Christ? This is a reproach to the ministry, and a dishonour to yourselves.

1. If you would have a great or strong faith, be sure see your faith is of the right kind, I mean, the faith of God's elect: for if it be not of the right kind, it is not worth improving, for at the best it will be but a strong presumption, and deceive your souls at last.

2. If thou wouldst have a great faith, pray hard, be much in prayer; he that believes not effectually, will not pray fervently: cry, Lord, increase our faith; this was the prayer of all the disciples.

3. Consult the power, goodness, love, mercy, and faithfulness of God, who hath promised, and cannot deny himself.

4. Take heed of the least sin; for nothing tends more to spoil the growth of faith, and to sow the seeds of doubts and fear in the soul than sin.

5. Give all diligence; the faith of assurance is not easily obtained, attend upon the word and ordinances, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, that is, sure to yourselves.

Lastly, call to remembrance your former experience, and do your first works, and that is the way to recover lost strength, and to grow in grace. So much to this parable.

THE
P A R A B L E
O F
LEAVEN HID IN THREE MEASURES OF MEAL.

SERMON XLI.

Another parable spake he, saying, the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.—
Matt. xiii. 33.

The scope and design of this parable is doubtless much the same with the former, viz.

1. To show the quick and powerful nature of the word of God upon the hearts of men.

2. To show his disciples that the word must be received into the heart before it can operate.

3. To let them know that though the gospel had then but small success, yet in the end it would wonderfully spread and prevail throughout all the world.

Leaven is spoken of in the gospel under a threefold consideration, or as referring to three things:

1. To the doctrine and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," Luke xii. 1.

2. To malice and wickedness; "Purge out therefore the old leaven, therefore let us keep the feast neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. In both these places it is mentioned as an evil and hurtful thing.

3. In this place the kingdom of heaven, or the holy word and gospel, is compared unto it.

From hence we may perceive what different use our Saviour makes of the same thing, which ariseth from the different nature or quality of that which he refers unto, as, in another case, Christ is compared to a thief, and Satan also is compared to a thief; the first in respect of the suddenness and uncertainty of his coming at the last day, the second upon the account of his evil and abominable design, which is to steal, rob, and destroy; so upon the account of these noble and excellent qualities of a lion, our Saviour is compared to a lion; and upon the consideration of those evil, ravenous, and devouring qualities of a lion, the devil is also compared to a lion; and so in several other cases.

1. By the kingdom of heaven I understand is meant the gospel-church, or the dispensation thereof.

2. By leaven is meant the Word of God, which our Lord intimates hereby (where it is received and hid in the heart), powerfully works and operates.

"Which a woman hid."

Jesus Christ, no doubt, is meant hereby; but because it is a woman's work to leaven her meal, he saith, "A woman hid," &c.

"In three measures of meal." That is, but a small quantity, denoting the Word of God was received at first but by a very few persons," Luke xv. 8-10.

"Until the whole was leavened." That is, all the whole body of the elect. He shows hereby, that when the Gospel began first to be preached, and in a spiritual way, to leaven the souls of men; it should wonderfully succeed, and never totally cease, until multitudes, even all that shall be saved, were leavened therewith. Note.

Doct. The Word of God may be compared to leaven.

1. I shall show you in what respects the Word may be compared to leaven.

2. Apply it.

1. Leaven is of a diffusive quality. So the Word of God, through the Spirit, is of a diffusive nature, both in respect to every soul that receiveth it, and also in respect of people to whom it comes; for though at first but a few at Jerusalem, and the regions thereabout, received the Gospel; yet how did it spread and diffuse itself into many nations in a short time?

2. Leaven diffuseth itself gradually; it doth not leaven the whole lump presently.

So the Gospel spread and operated by degrees; as it diffuseth itself into every faculty of the soul at first, so it never ceaseth until the life, and whole man, is leavened therewith. And thus also it shall never cease in the world in its workings and operations, until all nations are spiritually enlightened and leavened with the quickening and saving influences thereof.

3. Leaven is of an assimilating nature: makes all the meal that is leavened to be of one and the same lump. So the Word and grace of God makes the whole soul like itself, or a whole family or nation, where it is once in truth received, the very same people, both in doctrine and conversation.

4. Leaven is of a quickening and powerful nature. So is the Word of God "both quick and powerful," Heb. iv. 12. It searcheth and operates, and quickeneth the whole soul, and all that receive it. "Thy Word hath quickened me," Psal. cxix. 50.

5. Leaven is hid in the meal which leaveneth. So the Word of God must be hid in the heart, both in the understanding, will, and affection, if the person be spiritually leavened with it. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee," Psal. cxix. 11.

It is not enough to receive it into our mouths, or to have it in our Bibles, but we must receive it (in the love thereof) into our hearts, or else Satan will steal it away, or it will not, it cannot work either upon our hearts or lives.

6. Leaven, it is observed, is of a softening nature; though the meal be crushed down hard, yet if the leaven be hid in it, it will make it soft, and mellow. So the Word of God makes the hard heart soft and tender. How soft were their hard hearts made by the Word of God that St. Peter preached to, whom he charged with murdering the Lord of life and glory? O how did

Our Lord makes use of one thing for different ends, from the different qualities thereof.

See parable of the lost piece of money.

Why the Word of God is compared to leaven.

The Word like to it.

Leaven is of a diffusive nature.

The Word, like leaven, makes meal as of one lump.

The Word like leaven is a quickening nature.

The Word, like leaven, must be hid.

The Word like leaven, of a softening nature.

Acts ii. 36.

they weep and mourn for their great sin and wickedness! Let a man be never so stout and hard-hearted, if once he is helped to receive the Word of God, he will find his heart broken, and made soft and pliable to the will of God. Sirs, "What must I do to be saved," Acts xvi. 30, saith the jailor. O now he trembles, now he is melted, who before was a hard-hearted wretch, having bitterly scourged Paul and Silas, and put them into the inward prison, and he being not contented with that neither, he made their feet fast in the stocks. But O what a change did the Word make!

7. Leaven secretly and invisibly worketh and altereth the meal, and maketh a change of it, turning it into dough. So the workings and operations of the Word of God are secret and invisible. Our Saviour alludes to this when he compares the workings of the Spirit in regeneration to the wind; and as the Word works invisibly, so, (as was hinted before,) it makes a mighty change. The Word is that incorruptible seed by which regeneration is wrought in the soul.

8. A little leaven will leaven the whole lump; so a small quantity, or but a dram of grace, or one word set home upon the heart of three thousand souls, it will leaven them all, Acts ii. 4.

9. Leaven answers a great design. It is to prepare the meal to be moulded into a loaf, and so become bread for the family.

So this spiritual leaven, the Word, is by Jesus Christ appointed for a great design; viz., even to mould and fashion poor sinners for himself, and so fit them for his own use, and that they may be meet and fit matter for his church on earth, and for the church triumphant in heaven. The whole church is by this means made one bread; "For we being many, are one bread, and one body," 1 Cor. x. 17.

APPLICATION.

Caution. Let all from hence learn rightly to distinguish between one quality and another. Of that thing our Lord refers to in symbolical and parabolical Scriptures; for from the sour quality of leaven, (and in some other respects,) false doctrine, hypocrisy, and malice (as you heard) is compared unto it.

But the Word of God hath no unpleasant nor sour quality in it; but it is the only means by which, through the Spirit, the old leaven, the leaven of malice, hypocrisy, and all false doctrine is purged out.

2. From hence we may infer, what a great difference there is between the godly and the ungodly; the one are leavened with new leaven, *i. e.*, the Word and Spirit of God; and they are assimilated into the nature thereof; and the other having the old, corrupt, and sour leaven in them of sin and hypocrisy, remain corrupt, vile, and abominable in God's sight.

3. From hence we also learn, that the Word and Spirit of God works and operates physically. Mere moral suasions can never change the sinner's heart: no the grace of the Word must be hid in the heart by Christ's hand. Leaven put into the meal, and hid there works as physic that is given to a sick person; for if it was the bare preaching of the Word that leavened sinners, why are not all quickened and changed by it? Sirs, like as a woman opens her meal, puts in her leaven, so doth the Lord Jesus open the heart of his Lydias, and puts his leaven, his Holy Spirit, into them; by which means they are renewed, changed, and moulded into the image of the Word.

4. Let us cry to God that he would send his word and holy gospel forth to leaven all the nations of the world; the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, in the latter days, as you have heard in my opening the parable of the mustard-seed; which occasions me to speak very briefly to this.

Lastly, By what hath been said, let us try and examine ourselves, and see whether we have been and are leavened throughout with this spiritual leaven, the Word and Spirit of God: You have heard what an assimilating nature it is of, and how it diffuseth itself into the whole man, and changes both heart and life.

The Word like leaven of a changing nature. John iii. 8.

1 Cor. v. 6. The Word like leaven, leaveneth the whole lump at once.

PARABLE

OF THE

NET CAST CAST INTO THE SEA.

SERMON XLII.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea, and gathereth of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew it to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. So it shall be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from the just; and shall cast the wicked into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.—Matt. xiii. 47—50.

1. THE design of our Lord in this parable, is to discover that in the church there shall be a mixture of good and bad, sincere believers and hypocrites, until the end of the world.

The scope of the parable opened.

2. To show that the gospel is appointed as an instrument to gather sinners to Jesus Christ, and into his church, by the preaching thereof.

3. That at the end of the world there will be a full and perfect separation of the righteous from the wicked; and as the one will then appear very happy, so the other will be very miserable for ever.

“The kingdom of heaven,” &c. By the kingdom of heaven I understand is meant the whole dispensation and ministration of the gospel, and so taken here by all expositors I have met with, both the grace dispensed in it, and the means of that grace how dispensed, viz., by the preaching thereof through the operations of the Spirit: the bare preaching, or the external ministration thereof, taketh some, so as to bring them into the visible church; but none are caught by Christ, but those the Spirit effectually worketh upon: “Many are called, but few chosen.”

The parts opened.

What is meant by the kingdom of heaven.

Year of his ministry ?

“Is like to a net,” &c., that is, the ministration of the gospel.

Doct. The gospel preached may be fully compared to a net.

What is meant by the net.

I. A net is a proper engine or instrument to catch or gather fish: so the gospel, or word of God preached, is a proper instrument to gather sinners out of the world into the church, both visible and invisible. “It pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,” 1 Cor. i. 2.

II. A net is contrived by the wisdom of men to take fish out of the sea or river, &c., and it is an effectual instrument to that end and purpose: so the gospel, especially by the preaching thereof, is contrived or appointed by the wisdom of God to convert the souls of men, and it is efficacious or powerful to this end, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth,” &c., Rom. i. 16, that is, by the preaching of it, through the operations of the Holy Ghost, it is a proper instrument of God’s power. “The preaching of the gospel is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God,” 1 Cor. i. 18.

III. A net is cast into the river or sea before it can take fish, so the word of gospel must be preached that sinners may be converted; the preaching of the gospel is the casting of this spiritual net, that being the ordinary way or means God hath appointed to work upon the souls of sinners. There are other ways to take fish, but none so effectual and common as that of a net, so there are other ways by which God is pleased to convert sinners, but none are so effectual and common as the preaching of the gospel may be; where one is by reading or by the rod, &c., converted, hundreds are by preaching.

IV. A net takes fish out of their proper element, where they live and love to be, so the preaching of the gospel taketh such sinners who are truly wrought upon out of that element where they naturally lived and loved to live, viz., out of their sins, their sinful practices and course of life, where once they were, "and drinketh in iniquity as this implies water," Job. xv. 16.

1. Man naturally hath a strong appetite or desire to sin. "What is man that drinketh up seeming like water?" Job xxxiv. 7. He drinks full draughts of sin, they sin as willingly as a thirsty man drinks, and as naturally as a fish drinks water.

(2.) To drink denotes pleasure and content; as a thirsty person desires. See Carry I. drink, so he is pleased with it; so sinners naturally do not only thirst after sin, or to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, but they take delight and pleasure in wickedness; this shows they are fish in their natural element, and not yet taken out of it, not changed or converted.

(3.) Naturally a man sins with ease even as a man drinks; it is no pain to a thirsty man to drink, a little matter will persuade him to drink that which he loves. So sinners need not to be entreated to commit those sins they love and are naturally inclined to.

(4.) Drinking is a frequent act; fish drink every day, y. a. continually; so a wicked man sins often, he sins continually; he cannot cease from sin: the cup of iniquity (before he is taken out of the sea of this world) is never from his mouth.

5. To drink iniquity like water, denotes sinners, abounding in sin; he sins abundantly; (some men drink till they are drunk, and their reason is gone); so sinners drink in iniquity abundantly, till they are intoxicated and deprived of all their reason and spiritual senses; nay, not only sin away their reason, but their substance, their health, and their souls also.

V. It is the proper work of fishermen to cast their net into the sea to catch fish, it belongs to them; it is their right; every man is not allowed to do it, so it is the proper work of Christ's ministers to preach the gospel: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," Matt. iv. 18, 19. It belongs to them, and them only, to cast the net of the gospel, that Jesus Christ hath made ministers or fishers of men, viz., such that he hath endowed with grace, and ministerial gifts; and hath called, and whom his church approveth of, and also hath called forth to attend upon this work and office; men cannot make ministers of Christ; many are ministers of man's making, not of Christ's making. Also human learning or knowledge of the tongues will not do it, nor can bishops do it; no, it is Christ's work only; nor may any preach that think they are gifted; for unless they are regularly called by a true church to whom they belong, they are intruders if they take upon them to preach the gospel, "How shall they preach except they are sent," "I will make you fishers of men," Rom. x. 15. Not to fish for a livelihood, or good benefice, but to catch and save the souls of men.

VI. A net takes fish (when they are caught) out of their proper element, and they die immediately, so those sinners who are indeed taken, or spiritually and savingly wrought upon by the preaching the word, are taken out of that element where they lived, and loved to live before; *i. e.*, out of a course of sin and wickedness; and such die presently to sin, and to all the vanities of the sea of this world. But as a parable does not go upon all four, so pray observe that here is a great disparity. fish are caught to be destroyed, or devoured; but the design of God, by the net of the gospel, in taking of sinners, is to save them; it is not for their hurt, but for their eternal good.

VII. A net must be cast into the sea or river with judgment, by a skilful fisherman; it requires wisdom to use it to answer the end appointed. So ministers, Christ's spiritual fishermen, ought to be men of great knowledge, skill, wisdom, and experience. "I being crafty (saith Paul) "caught you by guile," 2 Cor. xii. 16. what was this craft? Why, he made no gain of them; he laid no burden on them, or used not his liberty, but he used far greater wisdom than that to gain sinners to Christ, he being a "Steward of the mysteries of God," 1 Cor. iv. 1.

With what wisdom should ministers preach the gospel, that they may win souls to Christ? "The preacher, because he was wise, sought out acceptable words, even words of wisdom," Eccl. xii. 10.

They are to open dark and obscure texts, and wisely to unfold the deep mysteries of Christ and the gospel; they must discover the miserable condition sinners are in, the evil also of sin, and the absolute necessity of Christ, and show the way how sinners must be saved, and receive the Lord Jesus, they must not use the words of man's wisdom, but the wisdom of Christ, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God," 1 Cor. ii. 4. He acted not the part

of a philosopher or orator at Athens, but used plainness of speech, and disowned human eloquence, and checked all plausible affectations and artifices of words, which the orators of his time used; he was not for rhetorical flourishes, or persuasive oratory; not for the inductions of Plato, nor the syllogisms of Aristotle, nor the subtilties of Seneca, nor the smooth and elaborate blandishments of Cicero. No, no, he delivered the gospel freely, boldly, and plainly, without rhetorical persuasions, in the demonstration of the Spirit; and so ought all Christ's ministers.

Human eloquence condemned in preaching the gospel.

VIII. A net is cast where a fisherman hath ground to hope he may take store of fish, so a minister should preach where multitudes of people are gathered together, when an opportunity doth present; thus did our Lord, when he "saw the multitude, he sat down and opened his mouth," Matt. v. 1, and began to teach them, or to cast in his blessed net; sometimes he preached in the temple; and at the last day, the great day of the feast, when many thousands were together, "He cried with a loud voice, if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink," John vii. 27. Yet a minister is to preach to a few, when but a few will come to hear him; and may be may catch as many souls then as when he casts in his net where a thousand are assembled together.

IX. Sometimes fishermen labour all night (as Peter and John did) and take nothing: it is God that blesses their labour when they succeed well; but when they succeed not, they must not be discouraged; they may prosper well at another time.

So ministers sometimes preach month after month, and not one sinner is converted, and all the increase is of God, 1 Cor. iii. 6; also it is Christ that directs them to cast in the net on the right side of the ship; but though but few or none are caught for one season, yet they ought not to faint or be discouraged, for their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; and perhaps at another season many may be brought home to God.

X. A net takes fish of every kind, some great ones, some small ones; some good, and some bad: so the gospel net gathers of every sort, some rich some poor, some great ones, (but not many of that kind) some little ones, who are despised in the eyes of the world; and also some who are great sinners, and some more civilized and sober persons; some old, and some young, nay, some good and some bad; (we have a proverb that they are not all fish that comes to the net;) so they are not all true Christians that seem to be taken by the net of the gospel. Many prove foolish virgins, or abominable hypocrites.

XI. A fisherman's work is very hard, and he is exposed oftentimes to be tossed on the tempestuous seas; so is the work of a minister of Christ, they labour in the word and doctrine, they labour in their study, and also in the pulpit, and are frequently exposed to the storms of reproaches, temptations of the world, and to the bitter storms of persecution of wicked men; as Paul shows what storms he met withal.

XII. A fisherman sometimes encompasseth a great multitude of fish at one draught; what a multitude Peter took when his Master bade him cast in the net on the right side of the ship! But Peter caught a better draught when he became a fisher of men, even not fewer than three thousand at one time, Luke v. 4-6.

XIII. A fisherman taketh commonly more small fish than great; so a minister finds that more of the poorer sort are converted than the rich, more ignoble in the eyes of the world than noble; "the poor received the gospel," Matt. xi. 5. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called," 1 Cor. i. 26. "Have any of the Pharisees or the rulers believed on him," John vii. 48.

XIV. It is not known what fish are caught in the net, until the net be pulled up to the shore; so it is not known what sort of persons the net of the gospel hath taken, until the last day, when Jesus Christ will draw the gospel net to the eternal shore: and then those who are truly gracious, shall be received by him unto heaven; and the bad, or all hypocrites, shall be thrown into hell.

Like a net cast into the sea, which taketh of every kind. By the sea is meant the world, out of which all believers are taken by the net of the gospel: "I have chosen you out of the world."

The world is compared to the sea.

Doct. This world is, and may be, compared to the sea.

I. I shall show you in what respects it may be so compared. 2. Apply it.

1. The sea is a turbulent element, full of commotions, full of swelling and threatening waves; so this world is full of commotions; and I think never fuller than it is at this time; certainly those days are upon us, of which our Saviour spake, "the sea and the waves roaring," Luke xxi. 25. He alludes to this world, the mystical sea; and by the sea and waves roaring, doubtless is meant distress of nations, or those great and amazing

commotions that shall be in the world, and dreadful threats of the enemies of the church; but as the sea is the Lord's, and he made it, so he also alone can and doth master it; he stays its proud waves, and saith, "hitherto shalt thou come, and no further," Job xxxviii. 11. And as God sets bounds and bars to the sea, so he doth to this metaphorical sea; "Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves arise, thou stillest them," Ps. lxxxix. 9. God maketh the stormy sea calm! so did our Lord Jesus Christ, he rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm.

The winds and the sea obey him; even so the Lord can soon make the swelling sea of this world still and quiet, Matt. viii. 26, 27; "He stilleth the noise of the sea, the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people," Psal. lxxv. 7. "The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain," Psal. lxxxvi. 10.

II. The sea is sometimes so tempestuous that fishermen cannot work; so persecution ariseth sometimes so high in these figurative seas, that Christ's ministers have been tossed with the waves into prison, and taken off their work, and others have laboured in great danger both of their goods, liberties, and lives.

III. In the sea are many strange monsters, called sea-monsters; the "Sea-monsters draw out their breasts, they give suck to their young," Lam. iv. 3; so in the sea of this world are many cruel tyrants, who like strange monsters devour mankind. What strange monsters were those four beasts which Daniel saw to rise up out of the sea? The four grand monarchies of the world. But the fourth, the Roman, was the worst, Dan. vii. 3—4. What monsters have the papists been, and their evil offspring. What traitorous, what bloody, what persecuting, what profane, and what hypocritical monsters; what a strange monster is the French tyrant at this day!

IV. The sea is the proper element of fish, both great and small! so this world is the proper element for ungodly sinners of all sorts and kind, who in sin live, sport, and delight themselves.

V. There is no sailing through the sea without the compass, or having skill in navigation; nor without wind, or a fit and proper gale; so there is no sailing through this world to the regions of eternal blessedness above, without the rule or compass of God's word, nor unless we have Christ for our Pilot, and a sweet gale of the Holy Spirit to fill our sails.

VI. There are many sea pirates; so there are also in this world many deceivers, so spiritual thieves and impostors, who are the worst of pirates; and these make our passage through this troublesome ocean very dangerous; many by these deceivers, have been robbed of much treasure.

VII. There are likewise many rocks, dangerous rocks, and sands in the sea, which mariners ought to know, and strive to escape, or they may soon suffer shipwreck; so we who sail through the sea or ocean of this world, ought to know and labour to escape all those spiritual rocks, which many for want of wisdom and care are daily split upon, and perish for ever; there is the rock of presumption on the one hand, and the quicksands of desperation on the other hand, and the nature of both I have elsewhere opened, (see "Every mountain and hill brought low, and every valley exalted," at the beginning of this book.) Paul tells us of some who suffered shipwreck, 1 Tim. i. 19, 20, in his days.

VIII. A ship had need to have a strong anchor; "Hope is the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," Heb. vi. 19; and it enters within the veil, it is cast upward; the rock it must take hold of is Jesus Christ, and to strengthen it we have the promise, the covenant, and the oath of God, Heb. vi. 18. This hope is safe and firm, and secures the soul in the midst of all storms and tempests whatsoever: were it not for this anchor, when the soul like a ship, is tossed with a tempest, it would be broken to pieces. Afflictions, temptations, delusions, and persecutions, are like storms and billows in a troublesome sea.

My brethren, I prosecute this and some other parables according to the analogy of faith, though perhaps farther than the main scope will bear; which tropical writers are allowed to do. The world is in this parable compared to the sea, and our souls (though not here) are compared to a ship. Moreover, here sinners are compared to fish; and this brings me to another proper allusion.

IX. There are in the sea a multitude of fish, but yet but a very few of them comparatively, are ever taken by the fishermen's net. So in this world are a multitude of sinners, but yet very few are ever converted: "Narrow is the way, and straight is the gate, that leadeth unto life, and very few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 13.

X. Several fish that fishermen take (I told you) are not good; and so many sinners the gospel-net takes, who are brought into the church, are not sincere believers. For, as

a fisherman sometimes takes fish out of the sea, which he knows not what they are, (as I have heard;) so ministers know not what kind of persons some are which the church receives: and this is one of the chief things our Saviour signifies by this and some other precedent parable; viz., that in the church, while this world continueth, there will be a mixture of good and bad.

Quest. But are there not marks or characters whereby good and sincere Christians may be known?

1. Answ. Yea, the Holy Ghost hath left many characters how we may know ourselves and others; but many hypocrites are so much like sincere believers in many things, (as tares are like to wheat) that it is very hard infallibly to judge who are good and who are bad. Legal convictions and outward reformation of life, seem very much to resemble evangelical conversion; and common illuminations, the special illuminations of the Holy Ghost. Also what outward act of obedience may not a hypocrite perform, which is performed by a true believer? Moreover, a bad professor may not fall into such gross sins which a true and good Christian may; so that it is difficult to discern who are upright in heart, and who are not.

It is hard to know a good and sincere Christian from an hypocrite.

Yet I shall add here a few marks of a good and sincere Christian, whereby he may know himself.

1. He may know partly by the doctrine, or good principles of religion he hath received, or by that good, safe, and only foundation on which he builds all his hope, trust, comfort, and salvation, which is Christ; "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.

How a sincere Christian may be known.

He that builds his faith, his justification, his hope, and salvation, on any thing else than on Christ, on Christ's obedience, merits, and righteousness, is a false professor.

2. He may be known by the goodness of his state; I mean, by that blessed change that hath passed upon him, it being not a change of his life only, but an effectual change of his heart also.

3. He may be known by that faith and other graces he hath received: where true faith is wrought in any person, there is very grace. Moreover, where true faith is wrought, there the fruits of faith presently appear, and such operations do attend it, that all that obtain it are humble and self-denying persons; their hearts also are purged and sanctified in a gracious manner; and as to hope, he that hath a true and lively "hope, purifies himself, even as Christ is pure," 1 John iii. 3, and he that has the grace of faith and love, esteems of Christ as most precious, 1 Pet. ii. 7, he is to that soul the "Chiefest among ten thousand," Cant. v. 10; and also such dearly love all the children of God. "By this we know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 14.

Acts xv. 9.

4. He may be known to himself by that hatred he hath of all sin; not only because of the guilt of it, and as it is against his good, but also because of the filth of it, and as sin is against God. This was the cause why Joseph durst not commit folly with his mistress, and why sin makes a true child of God to go mourning all the day. O he wants a clearer likeness and conformity to the image of God, and to Jesus Christ, as holy Paul shows us in respect of himself; they would be holy as we, as happy, Phil. iii. 14.

5. They may judge of themselves by considering those principles by which they act, and by the main end they aim at in all they do in religious matters; it is that God may be glorified, and Jesus Christ magnified in their bodies, whether it is by life or death.

6. By the goodness and godliness of their whole lives and conversations, and heavenliness of their desires and affections, as also by the constancy of their course, in their universal obedience to Christ; they following him always whithersoever he goes, being the same in private, as in public, in whom no changes makes a change, though they may fall into sin, or under temptations, and not be in that good frame at one time, as at another; and may be also in a withering condition in their own apprehensions, through the prevalence of corruption, temptation, or God's hiding his face from them; yet they rise, and shall rise again, and revive as the corn. These are some of those signs of good Christians.

Quest. What do you think of them that decay all signs of grace, or marks of justified persons?

Ans. I think they are under a delusion of Satan; and such who hearken to them, for want of trying themselves, may soon, with a presumptuous faith and hope of heaven, blindfold fall down to hell: will they contemn the teachings of the Holy Ghost and the holy apostles? Are there not many signs

Such that decay signs of a justified person detected.

laid down in God's word, whereby we may and ought to try and examine ourselves ?

XI. There are some dead fish in the sea and in rivers which stink abominably ; so there are some sinners in the world who lie dead in sin to such a degree, or lie dead in the wicked one, that they stink in the nostrils of God, and in the nostrils of all holy and good men. Moreover, it is observed, that a dead fish always swims down the stream, it goes as the tide carries it ; so such men who always swim with the tide, or walk according to the course of this world, and turn as the times turn, who will be of that religion that is uppermost, it is to be feared are dead : for a living fish, it is observed, always swims against the stream ; so a living and a true spiritual Christian will swim against the stream of temptations, and opposition of what nature soever ; he will not be borne down by the stream of delusions, nor by the stream of persecution ; he never changes his course ; let what religion soever be countenanced, or set up by authority, he is still the same.

XII. The sea drowns many a man who ventures thereon ; so this world drowns and utterly destroys a multitude of sinners, by the snares of the riches, honours, pleasures, and perplexing fears and cares thereof.

XIII. Those that go to sea should look for storms ; and not only look for them, but also prepare for them. Moreover, there are many signs by which seamen perceive a storm is near ; as by the winds, the working of the sea, and by the gathering of the clouds.

So believers who are sailing through the sea of this world, should look and prepare for storms, afflictions, temptations, persecution, and amazing revolutions : " In the world you shall have tribulation," John xvi. 33.

Our Lord also hath given us warning of them that we might be ready. " These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended in me ; they shall put you out of the synagogue ; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think he doth God's service," John xvi. 1, 2. Likewise God's people perceive storms may be near by observing the signs of the times.

1. When sin, more than ordinarily, abounds.

2. When the clouds gather, and the sea begins to roar afar off : i. e., when the nations in an unusual manner, prepare for war.

3. When general deadness, security, and formality seizeth upon the people of God, all being fallen into a sleeping and slumbering condition, and love grows cold to one another, and the power of religion is much gone.

4. When divisions, animosities, strife, and contentions amongst Christians increase, this hath always been the presage of a storm.

5. When the most knowing and discerning saints and ministers of Christ are in great expectation of some amazing judgments, God hath always given some hints of his dreadful approaches to some of his people.

6. When the price of gospel seasons, gospel liberty, and gospel ordinances, is grown very low, or is but little prized, God commonly brings a storm of one kind or another, and raises the price of them.

7. When strange signs and prodigies happen in a nation, or kingdom, this hath been looked upon as the presage of approaching calamities ; and also of that great storm of God's wrath upon Babylon : and what prodigious earthquakes, and commotions, and other amazing signs, have we had in the air, waters, and on the earth, of late years ? certainly we are near some great storm, or amazing revolution.

" Which gathereth of every kind."

Every kind may refer to people of every nation where the gospel comes, and the net is cast ; as at Jerusalem, (when Peter threw his net into the sea) there were people of many nations ; the text says, " Devout men of every nation under heaven, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Phrygia, Pamphylia in Egypt, Jews, and proselytes, Cretes, and Arabians," Acts ii. 5, 9, 10, &c., and some of these might afterwards be converted, or at leastwise many of the Gentiles in divers nations were taken by the net of the gospel ; (2.) or, some of all degrees and ranks of men ; or, (3.) As I hinted, sinners of all sorts, great sinners and small, old and young. (4.) Moreover, it gathers some who prove good, and others who prove bad.

" And when it was full, they drew it to shore," Matt. xiii. 48 ; that is, when a fisherman hath taken all he concludes his net can take, he draws it to shore ; so when the gospel net hath gathered all that God intends to call, to save, and bring into Christ, then it may be said to be full ; even when the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in, and the Jews are called, and God is risen up from the mercy-seat, and the summer is ended, or

the end of the world is come, then the net of the gospel shall be drawn to shore, and never be cast into the sea any more, for time then shall go into eternity.

“And gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away; so shall it be at the end of the world, the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from the just,” ver. 49.

Our Lord hath opened this part of the parable himself; when the end of the world cometh, it shall be known what kind of professors the gospel net hath taken; that will be a discriminating day, and also a time of separation; the angels shall gather the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats, the wise virgins from the foolish, and the good fish from the bad.

The nature of this separation being showed in my opening some other parable, I shall not speak farther to it here.

“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

1. The gathering the good into vessels may denote two things: (1.) That the saints, when Christ comes, shall possess the earth, or inherit the earth; even when the wicked are cut off, this is promised to the meek; “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth,” Matt. v. 5, that is, peaceably and quietly possess the earth; “All the Kingdoms under the whole heavens shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High,” &c., Dan. vii. 27, which may refer to the thousand years’ reign of Christ and the saints upon the earth; Rev. xx. “The meek shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in abundance of peace,” Psa. xxxvii. 11. This is one vessel into which all sincere believers shall be put. (2.) It no doubt signifies their being gathered into heaven; that glorious vessel is prepared for them; “for great is your reward in heaven,” Matt. v. 12.

2. The casting of the bad into a furnace of fire, signifies their being thrown into hell, which is sometimes called a furnace of fire, and sometimes a lake of fire and brimstone; Rev. xx. 15, and very remarkable it is, that thus, or much to the same purpose, our Lord closes with several parables. The wrath of God is often compared to fire, because of the pain and anguish that such feel that are cast into a furnace of fire. “Go into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” Matt. xxv. 41. What fire can that be in which angelical nature can be tormented, but the dreadful wrath of God, who is called “a consuming fire?” Heb. xii. 29. “What fire is that (saith a reverend writer) in which the devils can be tormented? outward washings may as soon reach the conscience, Heb. ix. 9, as created fire torment an angel,”—yet, as he saith, I deny not when hell is called a furnace of fire, and a lake of fire, but that it imports a fire without, into which the matter, or persons of the wicked shall be cast: moreover, when our Lord speaketh of fire that cannot be quenched, or to a furnace of fire, and of the worm that dieth not, I apprehend he alludes both to the wrath of God within, gnawing and tormenting the conscience, and a created lake or furnace of fire to torment the body of the wicked; for they shall be in a fire, both in respect of soul and body for ever.

Dr Goodwin,
3 vol. p. 503.

See the parable
of the rich man and
Lazarus.

APPLICATION.

Let all ungodly sinners praise the holy God for the net of the gospel, and that yet it is not gathered to the shore; it is not yet full.

Christ’s fishermen have not yet done fishing; there are many of God’s elect not yet caught, not yet converted, or gathered unto Christ; and until that time comes, the gospel shall be continued to the world.

But certainly it grows towards evening time; the day is well spent, and the summer near ended; it will not be long before Christ will say, “let him that is holy be holy still, and him that is filthy be filthy still,” Rev. xxii. 11; when all means of making the good better, or the bad good, shall cease for ever.

2. Let ministers also from hence be exhorted to work hard to catch the souls of men, or to bring them to God through Jesus Christ, because we have a fair day to work in; storms may rise, and the sea of this world be so turbulent, that we may not be able to work: “I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day; the night comes when no man can work,” John ix. 4.

3. It may be of use, by way of lamentation. O how do many of us labour, and yet hardly catch anything; how few souls come into the net; it is a great discouragement to a fisherman, when he cannot get one good draught. We have laboured and toiled all night (saith Peter) and have caught nothing. And we may complain, who are spiritual fishermen, almost in the same manner. Also,

4. It may be for reproof to such ministers who labour not; some fishermen are idle, and mind not the fishing season; and so are some spiritual fishermen; they are more industrious to catch a good benefit or maintenance, a good livelihood, than to bring souls to Christ.

5. Prize the gospel, it being ordained to convert and save the souls of men, as an instrument in the hands of Christ; and look upon ministers as necessary in his hand, as fishermen are needful to cast their nets into the sea.

Moreover, cry to God to bless this fishery, and pray that he would raise up more to labour with this net, and also direct them to cast it on the right side of the ship, for as God speeds the plough of the gospel in convictions, so he doth also the net of the gospel in conversion; it is God that gives the increase.

6. Terror. Woe to them sinners who are not taken by this blessed net before the season is ended: many will say hereafter as the prophet intimates, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," Jer. viii. 20.

7. However, there is comfort to Christ's ministers who labour with this net; they may say with their Lord, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet they shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and their God shall be their strength," Isa. xlix. 5; they shall not say always, we have laboured in vain, and have spent our strength for nought; for their judgment is with the Lord and their work with their God: their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

8. To conclude, this parable looks with a terrible brow upon all hypocrites, and such who seem to be taken in this net; and yet are not sincere persons, but like bad fish, for such shall be cast into that terrible furnace of fire, where there will be wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Hell is prepared for hypocrites and unbelievers; let both fear and quake, both profane unbelievers and secret hypocrites; for as such will be surprized, so they must dwell with devouring fire, and with everlasting burning. So much as to this parable.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

SCRIBE INSTRUCTED UNTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

SERMON XLIII.

Then he said unto them, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a good householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things both new and old.
—Matt. xiii. 52.

THIS is the last parable continued in this chapter.

It is brought in by our blessed Lord, upon that answer his disciples gave to a question which he put to them in the precedent verse; "Jesus said unto them, have ye understood all these things? they said unto him, yea, Lord," Ver. 15.

The scope. Our Saviour in his preaching sought chiefly the profit and instruction of his own disciples, and to that end he opened and explained to them many parables: moreover, it appears by their answer, they did understand such parables that he put forth, which he explained not.

Ministers should labour to speak so as they may profit their hearers by this holy example of their Lord and Master.

Now they answering that they did understand all those things, he brings in this parable, viz., "Then said he unto them, every Scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," &c.

Seeing then, (as if he should say) ye know and understand all these things, communicate your knowledge of them unto others: do not know for your own profit only, but be

like a good householder, "every scribe," &c. Scribes among the Jews were not only clerks but teachers of the law unto the people, "for he taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribe," Matt. vii. 29, Ezra vii. 6. Ezra was a ready Scribe of the law of Moses, who stood upon a pulpit of wood, and read the law of God unto the people, and gave the sense of it to them; now in that Jewish teachers were called Scribes, it may, I think, clearly hold forth that they did not only study and prepare matter to deliver unto the people, but that they did also commit it to writing, or the heads of what they had so studied, which to me may serve to justify ministers who use notes, that have not the natural gift of memory. I say, I know not but that this may be gathered from hence.

Ministers
using of
notes just-
ified.

But to come to explain this parable.

1. By Scribes here our Saviour means the true ministers of the gospel, who are furnished with all divine gifts and graces proper for that sacred employment, especially pastors of churches, because compared to a good householder that hath a family to provide for, to feed, and take care of.

Ministers
called
Scribes.

2. By the kingdom of heaven, is meant (as I conceive) the dispensation of the gospel, or in a remote sense, the gospel church.

3. By an household, is (as I hinted before) intended a spiritual family, or a particular community of Christians, under the special care of a godly pastor.

4. By his treasure is doubtlessly meant his heavenly wisdom, knowledge, gifts, graces and experiences, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," 2 Cor. iv. 7; which certainly refers to that knowledge they had of Christ, and the glorious gospel; as to his bringing forth things both new and old, I shall open that in the perfection of that truth or proposition that rises from hence, which take as here followeth.

1. Doct. A good and faithful minister of the gospel ought to be like a rich householder, ever have store of spiritual provision, or have a well-freighted store-house, that he may bring forth all sorts of heavenly food, and not to have his provision to seek when his guests are come together to partake thereof.

Brethren, do not mistake me, God is the chief and proper spiritual householder, ministers and pastors of churches are but stewards of God's house. Indeed it is an high honour that is conferred upon them when Christ calls them householders; the family is not theirs, but the Lord's.

In speaking to this proposition, I shall do these things following:

1. I shall show you why pastors or ministers are compared to householders.
2. Show you why they should be well freighted, or have all sorts, and also great store of heavenly provision.
3. Show you what may be meant by their bringing forth of their treasure things both new and old.
4. Apply the whole.

Pray remember that I said before, ministers are but stewards, or deputy householders; as a king, or lord, may have and appoint a deputy householder. Now then,

First, they may be called householders in this sense, because as a deputy householder is chosen by his Lord to that office; so is every true and faithful minister, or pastor of a church, chosen and called by the Lord to that holy office and employment. Now they are not chosen by the Lord immediately, but mediately, not in an extraordinary manner, as the apostles were, but in an ordinary manner, i. e., by the election and suffrage of the church, as Christ hath directed in his word; for every church hath power, and ought to choose her own minister, or pastor, yet if such are chosen and called that Christ directeth his people to choose, they are such "which the Holy Ghost is said to make overseers," Acts xx. 28; and it is this indeed that gives them this great dignity, name, and office, of being stewards or deputy householders in a spiritual sense, according to the purport of this parable.

Why min-
isters are
called house-
holders.

Secondly, they may be called householders in respect of that great charge and trust which is committed to them; a steward or householder of a lord or noble person, has the charge of all the family committed unto him, to provide all things necessary for them out of his master's treasure.

So a pastor or minister of a particular church, hath the charge of the said church, and every member thereof, committed unto him, to provide and lay in provision for to feed them with suitable and proper food, though it is all of Christ's own charge; it is his Lord's money which he hath received, I mean all those gifts and endowments which a minister

hath, by which he is capacitated to provide for, and feed that household; he received it from Christ. No man hath any spiritual ability of his own to do it; nor would it be to the honour of Christ that he should, at his own proper charge, feed his Lord's household, their talent of bodily strength, natural, or acquired parts and improvements, as well as his talent of time, grace, and all spiritual gifts, are the Lord's; he is but a steward of all these things, and must give an account to him how he hath improved them to the end and design for which they were given to him.

Thirdly, a minister and pastor of a church of Christ may be compared to a steward or deputy householder, in respect of that faithfulness that he ought to manifest in the discharge of his great trust and office, in his minding or having a regard to his Lord's true interest.

"Moreover, it is required in a steward that a man be faithful," 1 Cor. iv. 2.

Wherein the faithful ministers consisteth.

Now the faithfulness of a steward or householder consisteth in these things following.

1. It consisteth in his seeking and preferring the honour of his blessed

Lord above all things; he is not to seek his own glory, nor his own self-interest; he is not to act so as if his knowledge, parts, and endowments, were his own, that none "may think of men above that which is written, that none of you be puffed up one against another," 1 Cor. iv. 6.

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" verse 7.

Some seem to glory in themselves, as if they fed the people and household of Christ with their own provision, being swelled with pride, or puffed up as a bladder: as if they had something which they received not of the Lord. Now this is not to be faithful to Christ, for it is no less than a robbing of him of his glory, which is that most inestimable jewel which is most prized by him of any thing in heaven and earth.

2. The faithfulness of these householders or stewards of Christ doth consist in their great care and utmost diligence, in seeking after, and minding their Lord's concerns and business in his house and family where they are set.

"Give thyself up wholly to them," 1 Tim. iv. 15. It ought to be their whole and principal business; none of them should entangle themselves with the affairs of this life. Such that will not leave their own secular affairs, (if the church is able to provide a comfortable maintenance for them,) ought to have this office conferred upon him. Would it no. tend to the shame of that steward, that a nobleman hath chosen to be his steward, to take care of his household, and hath also allowed him a sufficient maintenance to employ himself, in some other trade and calling, to enrich himself, when his place and office calls for all his time, strength, and diligence in attending upon it?

3. Their faithfulness consisteth in taking care rightly to dispense their master's goods, or to feed Christ's household with such food that he hath ordained or appointed for them, viz., with sound and wholesome doctrine, or with "the sincere milk of the word," 1 Pet. ii. 2.

Not with errors, or airy speculations, or with words of man's wisdom, to please the ears of inference. of the people, for that is to starve their souls.

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, continue in them, for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee," 1 Tim. iv. 16.

Inference. They are not to preach Moses, nor mere legal doctrine, or Jewish ordinance, nor heathenish philosophy, but Jesus Christ, "We preach Christ crucified." Christ must be the main subject of all their ministry.

They must not preach the traditions of men, or human rites and ceremonies, nor the decrees of general councils, but the holy and pure institutions of Jesus Christ.

And not only the duties of men one to another, or the simple principles of morality, but the great fundamentals of Christianity, viz., the saving knowledge of God in Christ, the holy doctrine of the blessed Trinity, the mystery of the incarnation of the second Person, or hypostatical union of the two natures of the person of Christ, the great doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, reconciliation, and of justification by the imputation of his righteousness to all that believe; or that the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, (excluding all works done by us, or righteousness wrought in us) in the matter of our justification before the holy God; to show the people, that it is Christ's obedience and righteousness only that is their title to heaven, though it is our inherent righteousness, and the sanctification of the Spirit, that tends to make us meet for it.

4. The faithfulness of a minister of Christ consisteth in his declaring the whole coun-

Faithful ministers seek Christ's honour and the glory of God in all they do.

They also mind Christ's concerns chiefly.

Faithful ministers rightly dispense the word of truth.

sel of God, and not to keep back anything, because some of their hearers (perhaps) may not approve of it; for if they do so, that is, seek to please men, they are not any longer to be accounted the servants of Christ; "For do I persuade men or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet please men I should not be the servant of Christ," Gal. i. 10. O, my brethren, how faithful was Paul upon this account? "I have shewed you all things; again he saith, wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men," Acts. xx. 35. "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," Acts xx. 26. Even the whole doctrine of faith and practice; look, saith God to Moses, "that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shewed thee in the mount," Exod. xxv. 40. They must not add to nor diminish from God's word.

Faithful ministers preach the whole counsel of God.

5. The faithfulness of a minister lies in his frequent preaching the word; for like as a good householder knows it behoveth him to provide meat in due season for the family, and not to put them off with a good meal now and then, but let them have each meal in order day by day, so a minister must provide spiritual food in season even day by day, break the bread of life unto Christ's family. "Preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine," 2 Tim. iv. 2. No time is out of season properly, but comparatively. i. e., there are sometimes, as on the Lord's day, that is more seasonable for the administration of the word; yet that should not be all, but they ought to preach the word at other times also; "Thus Paul preached publicly, and from house to house," Acts xx. 20.

They preach frequently.

The soul stands in need of spiritual food, and ought as duly to be fed as the body; he therefore is no faithful minister who neglects his care and duty herein, and preacheth the word but seldom, perhaps hardly once in the week: but much less faithful are such that preach but once in a month, or but two or three sermons in a year.

6. His faithfulness consisteth in his care of the whole family, and of every one in particular, so as to know their condition, or how it is with them, whether dead or alive, growing or decaying, weak or strong, healthful or sickly. True, if any be sick in body or mind, or under temptations or desertion, it is their duty to send to their pastor; "If any be sick, let him send for the elders of the church," James v. 14. A minister cannot be blamed if this be neglected, for he may not know his freedom in some families, where some members may dwell; besides, should he visit them this day, and find them in health, yet to-morrow some one, or more, may be taken sick, or fall under temptation. Know the state of thy flock, saith Solomon; but that cannot be, unless he doth oft visit them, or they come to him.

A faithful minister takes care of the whole flock under his charge.

7. The faithfulness of a minister consisteth in his dealing impartially with every one in particular, not preferring one before another, not visiting the rich more than the poor, or sparing the rich when in a fault, because he is rich; or the poor because he is poor: Levi was not to know his father or mother in judgment. See Paul's charge to Timothy; "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another; doing nothing by partiality," 1 Tim. v. 21. All things should be done by him without respect had to persons, rich or poor, old or young.

He also deals impartially withal.

8. In his keeping up a good and wise discipline, teaching what the duty of every member is to each other, and that they act according to the rule Christ hath left in his church, towards offenders; not to suffer that to come into the church which ought to be ended privately, or to enquire whether the offended person hath proceeded according to that rule in Matt. xviii. It is, brethren, a sign of great unfaithfulness in a pastor, should he neglect to stir up the church, to purge out such that are scandalous persons, or not set fit or proper times to do it. Certainly the work of discipline should not interfere with the public worship of God; but some more fit and proper season ought to be chosen and appointed by the church. The glory of a family lies much in the well and wise governing of it, and in keeping up a careful and strict discipline, and so, no doubt, it doth in a church of Jesus Christ.

A good discipline to be kept up in a church.

9. His faithfulness consisteth in defending the truth against opposers, and such who are seducers; therefore he ought to be one that is able by sound doctrine to convince gainsayers: for there are some always "Whose mouths must be stopped, who strive to subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not," Tit. i. 9—11. Though a minister cannot stop their mouths, or convince them, yet he ought to be able to lay down such arguments that are sufficient to do it: he must not be an ignorant person, not careless of them he hath the charge of: he must not let

A faithful minister defends the truth.

wolves come, and carry away any sheep out of the fold, if it be possible to be prevented.

Ministers ought to be humble persons. 10. A minister, or pastor of a church, like a deputy-householder, ought to be an humble person; he being but a servant, should not carry it as if he was lord of the family; will the Lord Christ endure such a steward of his house? What, shall he seek that honour which belongs to his blessed Master, not being lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples to the flock.

The dignity of the pastoral office. Fifthly, yet the office of a minister, or pastor of a church, is an office of dignity, as a steward's office or place in a lord's family or household is; for they represent Christ's person, therefore they are called ambassadors, rulers, angels, &c. Let none from hence slight or despise them; for they that despise you (saith our Saviour) despise me. If therefore any in the family, do cast contempt upon them, let such tremble. Alas! they know not what they do; "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves unto them." An householder, though he be but a servant, is to be owned as the chief ruler there under his master; and so ought a pastor of a church: and such that will not be under his just government, after due reproof, ought to be excluded and turned out of the church, as being unruly, and as contemning Christ's authority.

Ministers ought to be well-stored with all spiritual treasure. A householder, or a steward of a great family, ought to be one that is well stored or freighted, or to have much of his Lord's treasure committed to him, because he is to provide all things which the whole household needeth.

So ought a minister, who is a pastor of a church of Christ, to have much spiritual treasure in his earthen vessel, i.e., he ought to have much spiritual wisdom, or a competent measure of knowledge, and of all the graces of the Spirit, and be a man of some considerable parts and experience. As appears by those qualifications expressed, 1 Tim. iii., Tit. i., in the case of the choice of them to that office.

1. They should be such who well know or understand the riches of Christ, or the mysteries of God. "Let a man so account of us, as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," 1 Cor. iv. 1. If they are ignorant themselves of the divine mysteries of the gospel, how shall they open them unto the people? The Lord's people ought to be fed by pastors "after his own heart with knowledge and understanding," Jer. iii. 15.

2. They ought to be such men that are enriched with the image of God upon their own souls; for if they know not that by their own experience, how shall they explain and open it unto others? Can he in a right manner show what regeneration is, that never felt it in himself? "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren;" then, as if Christ should say, thou wilt be able rightly to do it; this made holy David to say, "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee," Psal. li. 12, 13.

3. They ought to be enriched with faith, love, and patience, because these graces will be tried. As to the grace of patience, let it be considered, that he that is a deputy-householder will find it a hard matter to please all the family; no doubt but some discontented persons will reproach him, as well as others that are without, therefore he will find great need of a good stock of patience, self-denial, and humility. This brings me to the next general head.

Secondly, I shall show you why a minister who is a pastor ought to be well provided with great store of spiritual riches and heavenly treasure.

Why ministers should be well stored with spiritual things. 1. Because Jesus Christ hath substituted and appointed him to hand out all spiritual provision to others: he hath not only bread to provide for his own soul, but is to provide and lay in for all the household: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me, feed my sheep," John xxi. 16.

II. Because the household which he is to take the care of, and provide for, may be large; he may have many to feed: a little bread will not serve to feed a great family; also they are King's children, and therefore mean and ordinary food will not serve their turn; they must have rich and soul-fattening food; their souls are born from above, they are nobly descended; their father allows them to eat of the best, even of his most choicest dainties.

Mere trash will serve those base-born sons of nature, or of the first birth, who are born from beneath! but these loathe such diet; they cannot digest it; it would even starve the King's children.

III. They ought to be well stored, because the wants of the household may be great.

Some being also too apt to spend and waste what they have. If the wants of one particular Christian is great, what must be the want of so many that are in some congregations? "My God, (saith Paul,) shall supply all your needs," Phil. iv. 19. And now it is by the hands of his ministers that God doth supply many of these wants; he is pleased to give unto them of his divine riches and heavenly treasure to this very purpose; though it is true there is none but God himself can supply many of the wants of believers, which he doth do by his own Spirit: they are to supply them with divine knowledge, which is one main thing poor Christians need; "I will give them pastors after my own heart, which shall feed them with knowledge and understanding," Jer. iii. 15.

Their hands are often weak, their knees feeble; their ministers therefore should "strengthen their weak hands, and confirm their feeble knees."

They want comfort also many times, and ministers are to comfort them with the same "comfort wherewith they are comforted of God," 2 Cor. i. 4. God is pleased to comfort his poor ministers, under their troubles and temptations, to the end they might be able to comfort others, that is, by the same methods, arguments, or promises, by which God comforteth them: though all support and comfort is from God, yet he makes use of his ministers to support and comfort them.

IV. They ought to be well stored with all divine and heavenly treasure and experiences, because the family needs various and variety of food, by reason of the various states and conditions they may be in; partly by reason of their different ages and standing in the house of God; some being children, some young men, and some fathers: also by reason of their various temptations they may meet with, and be exposed unto.

APPLICATION.

1. This may reprehend such churches that choose ignorant and unexperienced men to be pastors. Can such who have none, or but little, of the riches of grace, knowledge, and experiences of God, feed others? Can they bring out of their treasure things both new and old, who have it not to bring forth? First re-proof.

Be exhorted to stir up yourselves to pray for your faithful ministers; we shall speed the better, nay, fare the better, if they are well stored, or filled with divine wisdom and knowledge in the mysteries of God and of Jesus Christ. If you forget your ministers you forget yourselves: do you expect they should feed you, nay, feast your souls, and do you not cry unto God that they may come unto you in the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ? For they must receive all that spiritual food wherewith they feed you from God; if God doth not hand in to them, they cannot hand out unto you.

2ndly. Be exhorted to pity your ministers, and strengthen their hearts and hands, and not add grief to them, and lay heavy burdeus upon their souls; some pastors have been heard to say (under temptations) that if they were not in that place and station, they would not be drawn into it, and this by reason of those discouragements they meet with from some persons in the family. Many are never satisfied either full or fasting, no food will please them; let a poor minister do what he can, and study never so hard for the choicest food, either the matter is not liked, or the manner of the bringing of it forth, viz., it is not brought into them in such rare carved dishes, nor set out with artificial niceties and curiosities as they would have it; but it argues such are full fed with worse food, and are not sensible of spiritual hunger or want.

Take a few motives to stir you up to pray for, sympathize with, and pity your ministers.

1. Consider that whatsoever offence is taken against a church, or fault that is espied in it, it is commonly charged upon the pastor, though possibly it may be for such things he himself is not a little grieved at, and cannot help it.

2. Consider they are but men, and of like infirmities and weaknesses with yourselves.

3. Consider what temptations they, more than any, meet with, Satan having such implacable enmity against them, because they are the chiefest instruments in pulling down and undermining of his kingdom.

4. Consider what danger they are exposed unto above all in the church in a day of persecution: they then are singled out as the very butts of the wrath and rage of wicked men, against whom they shoot their arrows.

Thirdly, This may inform us who are true and faithful ministers; they are such who are regenerated persons, holy men, men of great light, knowledge, and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel; such "that are well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven." It is not men, but God only, that makes gospel-ministers; I mean, all ministerial gifts and

grace is given of God. It is not learning of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, nor the knowledge of philosophy, or any human arts and sciences whatsoever, that can make a man a true minister of Christ, but those spiritual gifts which are given by Jesus Christ; who, when he "ascended on high, he gave gifts to men: and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," Eph. iv. 8, 11. The first were but temporary, serving only the first age of the church, and are long since ceased; only pastors and teachers abide, and must abide in the church until the end of the world.

There are two essentials that tend to make or constitute a man a true minister.

1. The gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, whereby he is in some competent manner fitly qualified by the Spirit, according to 1 Tim. iii.

2. The probation and election of a particular church.

Yet as to pastors, they ought not only to have these two, but ought also to be orderly ordained by the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

Fourthly. This also shows what a great charge ministers have committed unto them.

1. They have the doctrine of the gospel committed to their charge, to maintain the purity of it without corruption or mixture; as I have noted.

2. The true constitution of a gospel-church, which is and ought to be only congregational, not national, not parochial. Hence the church is compared to an household or particular family.

3. The order and true discipline of the church is committed unto them, *i. e.*, to take care about it, and to instruct the people in the government thereof. I do not say a pastor hath the sole government of it in his own hand; though he is the chief ruler, yet he is not to rule without the church, or some who ought to be chosen as helps of rule and government.

4. The care and charge of the whole church, and every member thereof, is committed to him, as one that must give an account to Christ, the great Shepherd, at the last day.

5. The ordinances of the gospel are committed to every true gospel-minister, which he is bound to see duly administered. Yet some do not say that none but an ordained pastor ought to administer baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Because the first of these was delivered to Christ's disciples as teachers or ministers, not as apostles, or pastors of particular churches; he that is approved teacher they say may baptize by the virtue of the commission, Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20; yet if there is a pastor in the church, it only concerns him to administer all ordinances.

But so much at this time.

SERMON XLIV.

Then said he unto them, every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder, &c.—Matt. xiii. 52.

Sermon 2. THE parts of this parable I opened unto you the last time, and took notice of
Nov. 4. this one proposition: *viz.*
1693.

Doct. That a minister of the gospel is and may be compared to an householder that is well stored with all rich and choice provisions.

1. Why they are compared, and ought to be well stored, we have showed.

2. I shall now proceed further to show why they are compared to an housekeeper or householder, that brings out of his treasure things both new and old.

3. Show you what is meant by things new and old.

I showed you in four respects, why they ought to be well stored.

Christ hath made plentiful provision for his family or household.

V. They ought to be well provided, because Jesus Christ hath made plentiful provision for his spiritual family, which blessed food he hath committed to them to distribute to his household, children, and servants:—his storehouse is always full, which is the holy Scriptures, from whence a minister is to fetch all his provision with which he is to feed God's church.

Christ is a noble householder.

VI. Because their Master is a great King, and all his children are nobly descended; they are sons and daughters of the mighty God of heaven and earth. Shall the children of such a Father, of such a Prince, live, and be fed as poor peasants, or as the baser sort, or like unto mean cottagers?

"In my Father's house (said the prodigal) is bread enough and to spare." He (as if he

should say) is no mean person; he is one that keeps a good house, he hath plenty of provision; "Wisdom hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, she hath furnished her table," Prov. ix. 2.

VII. Because of the preciousness of the souls which they are to feed; certainly this is sufficient to convince all, that ministers ought to be well stored with all sorts of spiritual provisions.

1. Brethren, Jesus Christ saw so great a worth in the soul, that he gave his own life to redeem it; every one that dwells in Christ's family, that are his children or servants, was purchased with his own blood: this was the argument Paul laid before the ministers and elders of the church at Ephesus.

"Take care unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

O what care ought to be taken that such a family be well fed, that were purchased by him, who is God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father! What is the nature of the soul, if such be the ransom of it? And,

2. The soul is so precious a thing, that as Jesus Christ gave himself for it, so he likewise gives his own flesh and blood to feed it: without feeding upon his flesh, and drinking of his blood, the soul cannot live, John vi. 55.

3. Jesus Christ also gives his own righteousness to clothe the soul; a righteousness which he wrought out in the days of his flesh by his holy life, in conformity to the holy law of God, and his death on purpose to put upon the soul.

4. The souls of believers, my brethren, do partake of the divine nature; the image of God is formed in them; therefore most dear unto him: they that touch them touch the apple of his eye: no tender beloved babe can be more dear to an earthly prince, than the saints are to Jesus Christ, therefore ministers should see that they are nobly fed, even with kingly food; they are not to be fed with the trash of human inventions, nor with gaudy and flesh-pleasing notions or airy speculations: it is not the head that is to be fed, but the heart; not the ear, but the understanding: it is not the bodies of believers ministers are to feed, but their precious souls.

VIII. Because believers are the members of Christ's mystical body, they are "Flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone." The church, beloved, is the spouse and wife of Jesus Christ. I am afraid some ministers do not think upon this as they ought; surely the Lord Christ will take it very ill from such stewards, who instead of providing rich and choice food for his beloved consort, put her off with anything, even with that that comes next to hand, they not giving themselves up to the study of the word; so that every one might have his portion of right and proper food, as well as in due season.

IX. Ministers ought to be well stored with all divine treasure or spiritual provision, because they are to bring out of their treasure things both new and old.

Whatever they have it is the church's, both themselves and their gifts; "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all are yours," 1 Cor. iii. 22. Be they things new or old, all things are given for the sake of the church; as the riches and outward wealth some members have, it is put into their hands, and they made stewards of it to give forth to the use of the church, and to the poor thereof; so are all the spiritual riches, gifts, and grace, which ministers have received: gifted men, fitted by the Lord to preach the gospel, may not preach, or forbear at their pleasure; no, no, they must administer, they must preach: "As every one hath received the gift, so let him administer one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," 1 Pet. iv. 10. God hath not only set pastors in his churches, but teachers, also; there are variety of gifts, that so the churches might have variety of food.

Quest. What is that a good householder is to bring forth out of his treasure? I mean, what it is that a faithful minister is to bring forth.

Ans. By the way this implies, that they have treasure; ministers should be rich in spiritual things, though many of them may be poor in temporals; "as poor, yet making many rich."

1. They should be rich in divine knowledge, because they are to feed the people with knowledge and understanding, Jer. iii. 15.

1. They must feed them with the knowledge of God, with the knowledge of the holiness and purity of his nature, and with the knowledge of all the other glorious attributes and perfections of his blessed majesty, particularly, that he is most just, as he is most gracious and merciful: from whence rises that absolute necessity of a complete satisfaction to his divine justice through the merits of his Son Jesus Christ.

A minister should be rich in spiritual things, though poor in the world.

With what fool ministers should feed the souls of their people.

2. With the knowledge of the holy law of God, that being a transcript or impression of God's holy nature, always and unchangeably the same, so that without we are found clothed with a righteousness every way comports with that righteousness, we can never be justified in his sight: God neither will nor can make void, violate, or relax the purity or severity of his own law, to save one soul, to the impeachment of his truth, justice, and holiness.

3. With the knowledge of the woful state of mankind, by the fall of our first parents: Also, what the state of man is by grace, and in the state of glory.

4. With the knowledge of sin, both original and actual, knowing the evil of it; and that it is the plague of all plagues, even worse than the devil or hell itself; and that none but one that is truly God, as well as man, can make a full atonement to divine justice for the evil that is in it.

5. With the knowledge of Jesus Christ, *i. e.*, the necessity and excellency of Christ, in his person and offices, and to understand the purpose and nature of his incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession.

They should understand or have a true and saving knowledge of the doctrine of justification by Jesus Christ; the grace of God being the original and efficient cause or spirit of it; the death of Christ being the meritorious cause, and the righteousness of Christ, in his perfect active obedience and suffering, the meritorious cause thereof; not that his merits and righteousness purchased or procured such favour and grace, that our inherent righteousness, and sincere faith and obedience, should, with his merits, justify us; but that all our own righteousness, faith, and obedience, is utterly excluded in point of justification before God, or at the bar of his justice; and that it is Christ's obedience to the preceptory and penal part of the law, which is the matter or material cause of our justification only: for "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," Rom. v. 19. Christ's active obedience or righteousness being our only title to heaven, and his bearing the pangs of hell for us, and in our stead, that only which delivers us from hell and eternal wrath; also that the imputation of the righteousness of Christ is the formal cause of our justification; and the glory of God, in all his holy attributes, and our eternal happiness the final cause thereof.

6. They ought to know, that every man by nature is alike miserable, even the elect themselves, being all dead in sin, and are by nature the children of wrath as well as others, Eph. ii. 3. They being not actually justified, but contrariwise condemned, until they do believe in Christ, or are transplanted by the Spirit of God out of the first Adam into the second Adam: though all that shall be saved were decretively justified from everlasting and virtually when Christ rose again from the dead, yet they were no more actually justified from eternity, than they were actually glorified from eternity, which was only decretively, or according to God's decree and purpose; nor no more actually justified when Christ rose from the dead, than they actually ascended unto heaven, when Jesus Christ, as our head, representative, and forerunner, ascended to heaven.

7. They ought to have the clear, full, and saving knowledge of regeneration in themselves, else how can they by experience tell others what it is, or in a right manner feed them with the knowledge thereof; moreover, they ought to know the nature of true grace in its effects and operations of it on their own souls.

8. With the knowledge of Satan, in his power, policy, malice, and unwearied assaults and temptations.

9. With the knowledge of this world, in the vanities, snares, and allurements thereof.

10. With the knowledge of the covenant of grace; and how made with Christ for us from everlasting as our covenanting head: and how and when we actually are brought into the bonds of it; and the nature and stability thereof; with all the precepts, promises, and threatenings contained therein.

11. With the knowledge of the true church; I mean, a visible church; the constitution, the order, government, discipline, dignity, and privileges of it.

Secondly, Ministers or stewards of Christ's house must feed them with the holy sacraments.

1. They must show what their duty is; or what is required of all those that are the fit and proper subjects of those holy ordinances, *viz.*, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

2. The end and usefulness of them.

3. The danger of such that do neglect them, or partake of them, without having those previous qualifications, that are required of all that come unto them.

Thirdly, they should feed Christ's household with their own experiences, or be able to teach others, by telling them what God hath done for their own souls; "Come unto me all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul," Psa. lxxvi. 16. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us," 1 John. i. 3. They are to "comfort others with the same comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God," 2 Cor. i. 3. 4.

Query, what is meant by their bringing out of their treasure things both old and new?

1. Answer. By old things may be meant all such truths that were from the beginning; viz., all truths that are purely moral in their own nature, or principles of natural religion; such as love to God and to our neighbour; or God to be worshipped, and none else, with divine worship or spiritual adoration.

What is meant by bringing out of our treasures things new and old.

As also that God alone is man's only and chiefest happiness, and that salvation alone is by the seed of the woman; these were old things, or truths taught from the beginning, held forth by promise and prophecies in the Old Testament.

Not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to covet our neighbour's wife, servants, goods, &c., also prayer, praising, and singing of God's praises, are old truths.

Moreover, fasting-days, and days of thanksgiving; all these things, and some others, they bring out of their treasure.

2dly, They bring out also things that are new.

What is meant by things new.

1. As the actual incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, of our Lord Jesus Christ: as likewise the ratification, establishment, or confirmation of the new covenant, and a new order, constitution, and government of God's church being new things, the Jewish church, state, rites, ceremonies, priests, and priesthood, being changed and gone, with many other of old things which were under the law, all things being now become new, 2 Cor. v. 17, 18.

Also new ordinances, as baptism, and the Lord's Supper; and new church membership; none being to be admitted into the gospel church, but believers only: the gospel temple being only built up with living or lively stones, 1 Pet. ii. 5, 6.

2. By old truths may be meant such truths which a minister brought forth formerly; yet he may put them in remembrance of them again. And thus our blessed Saviour did himself, who, when he first entered upon his ministry, (Luke iii.) preached repentance, and the doctrine of faith; and he afterwards brought forth the same doctrine, Luke xiii. 3, 5, Mark xvi. 16. This gives ministers authority to bring out, or preach the same truths, the same doctrine, nay, the same sermon again which they preached formerly.

What is meant by things new and old, may be meant. Truths formerly delivered. Ministers may preach the same sermon again.

3. By things new and old, may be meant new and old experiences which they have had of God; they, for the comfort of the believers, tell them what God did for them in former times, when under troubles and temptations; when they were under darkness and becloudings; and were persecuted, reproached, and distressed: "I have been young, saith David, but now am old, yet I never saw the righteous forsaken." &c. 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. Paul also takes notice of old things, or of former experiences he had of God's presence with him; "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge; notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion;" hence David saith, "that he would remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

By things both new and old may be old and new experiences.

Then also they bring out things new, *i. e.*, they declare what of late, or at this present time, God had done and doth do for them; they bring out old promises, and new promises, old wine of consolation, and new wine to refresh the souls of God's people. Brethren, I have told you what choice experiences I had of the love of Jesus Christ unto my own soul; when first in my youthful days he manifested himself unto me; I was so raised and consoled with sweet tastes of God's love to me, that by the strength of those cordials I have been supported unto this very day; and doth not the apostle bring out of his treasure old things, when he tells the saints that "Fourteen years ago he knew a man in Christ," 2 Cor. xii. 2. Wonderfully refreshed and transported with what he saw, and heard; yet what store of new things after that did he bring forth.

APPLICATION.

1. We infer from hence, that the Lord Christ hath a family or a household to take care of in this world; true, all the earth is the Lord's, and all creatures are fed and sus-

tained by him ; there is a common providence over all ; he is the Saviour of all men : but he hath a special love to, and care of his church ; others are not fed as his own people ; he hath not purchased spiritual food for all men on earth ; no, no, he laid down his life for his sheep, for his elect, for his church, and procured all good things for them. " If he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?" Rom. viii. 32.

2. We also infer, that Jesus Christ keeps a good house ; he doth not spare of his divine treasure ; as he is very rich, so he feeds his people richly, plentifully, and nobly : he allows them to eat the fat and drink the sweet of his house ; " Eat, O friends, drink, drink abundantly, O beloved," Cant. v. 1. Christ doth not only feed, but feasts his friends ; " Eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," Isa. lv. 2.

3. I also infer from hence, that it is no small favour and blessing to dwell among the saints in God's house, or to be one of his family ; " I will abundantly bless the provision of my house, and satisfy my poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout for joy," Psal. cxxxii. 15, 16. This made the prodigal to think of his Father's house, and to desire to return home. God " will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." If believers did truly and rightly consider of their high and choice privilege, in that they have a place in Christ's house, it would not a little affect and raise their hearts ; " Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God : they shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing ; to show that the Lord is upright ; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him," Psal. xcii. 13, 14, 15.

4. It also informs us of the great love of God to his people, in choosing such stewards of his household that are faithful men, men of integrity, who will not suffer any in the family to want so far forth as they have ability to help them ; they having freely received they freely give. They will not make a prey of the flock, not eat the fat, and clothe themselves with the wool, (like some of the shepherds of old) but will feed the flock ; they will strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and heal those that are sick, and succour such who are tempted, like their great Lord and Master.

5. It may, moreover, inform us of our duties who are of Christ's household, or members of this or that particular church, that we are to abide in our places and station where we are set, and expect to be fed there, and not to wander abroad to seek food elsewhere ; but to consider here is our food in this house which Christ hath provided for us, upon which we may expect a blessing. What account can a steward give of such who make a breach in the family, and will not come where and when he is bound and obliged to hand out to every one their portion of meat in due season ?

Would it not be a dishonour to an householder to find some of his family go to his neighbour's house for bread, as if there was not sufficient for them in his house ? Brethren, doth not this greatly tend to the rebuke of such ? Pray, sirs, you that are good housekeepers, would you not be troubled to see some of your children or servants desert your families, not liking your provision, but go to seek their food at some other house ? Would you not look upon it a great reproach to you ?

6. It also may serve to inform us that ministers should study to provide variety of food for all that they are intrusted to feed ; they are not only to bring out of their treasures continually old things, or the same over and over again, but to make some new discoveries of the same blessed gospel truths ; I do not say they should bring forth any new and strange doctrine ; no, God forbid : by things new that is not meant ; there is nothing new (in one sense) but old ; even the same which we heard from the beginning : all provision is to be fetched out of the word of God ; that only is Christ's great store-house.

2. It may reprove such who dwell in Christ's family, and are daily fed with good and wholesome food ; who are not content with it, but murmur and complain against the steward of Christ's household, like as the Israelites did against Moses, saying, the manna was light bread ; and yet others find much sweetness, strength, and comfort in it.

This argues, that such who thus murmur are diseased and distempered persons ; the full stomach loathes the honey-comb. They are more anxious to feed their heads than their hearts ; many in this age are grown wanton, and know not what they would have, make waste and despise most precious provision.

3. Ministers may learn from hence to see to the nature of that spiritual food with which they feed Christ's family. as to the matter of the provision, it must be Christ ; he is only the bread of life ; it is Christ he must preach ; Christ must be the subject of all

his preaching, "we preach Christ, and him crucified." Christ is a believer's all, and should be the all of gospel-administration; all is provided and purchased by Christ; all is enjoyed in Christ; nothing will do us any good without Christ; the word and ordinances are but dry bread if we do not meet with Christ in them; all is to set forth the honour and glory of Christ.

4. Ministers should see that what they bring forth be hot: cold meat is not so refreshing and sweet as that which is hot; a minister must preach with life, and holy fervency of spirit; cold and lifeless preaching, makes cold hearing; the Lord Christ "preached as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."

5. Ministers may also from hence know that it is their indispensable duty to give out food to God's people always, even day by day; for like as a household must daily have provision prepared and set before them, so must the Lord's people have spiritual food continually. It is not enough to provide one meal in a week for a family, certainly that is the way to starve them, and doth not the soul need to be as often fed? Or doth it stand consistent with the good, profit, and edification of the household of faith, if this be not done? "Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears," Acts. xx. 31. Why doth he bid the elders of this church remember what his practice had been, but that they should follow his example in frequent preaching? Though trouble arises, or persecution, because of the word, yet ministers must not cease preaching; if they cannot preach publicly, they must preach in private families, and so from house to house. "He that withholdeth corn the people will curse him; but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it," Prov. xi. 26. Certainly it is as great a sin to withhold the food of the word in a time of scarcity, as it is to withhold external food in a time of famine.

6thly, and lastly, this may serve to provoke or stir up all such churches, who have faithful and able pastors and teachers, to bless and praise God they are fed, when perhaps others are almost starved, or pine away for want of such soul-strengthening, refreshing, and feeding doctrine, which is necessary for them; and this thankfulness of theirs should also be showed by their great love to, and care of their painful pastors, in providing cheerfully a comfortable maintenance for them and their families; what a shame would it be that such ministers should spend their whole time and strength in providing food for Christ's household, that they should be exposed to want the necessary things of this life for themselves and families, when the church is in a capacity, or able to do it? "Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not the milk of the flock," 1 Cor. ix. 7.

Do you not know that "they that wait at the altar are partakers with the altar," ver. 13.

Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. God may justly blast and not bless churches, who will content themselves with mean and inexperienced teachers, rather than be at the charge of maintaining of an able and profitable ministry, when they are able to do it; seeing God has ordained that ministers should live of the gospel, and not by the labour of their hands, by going to plow and cart, or by buying and selling, or following of this or that trade. So much as to this parable.

PARABLE

OF THE

RICH MAN WHOSE GROUND BROUGHT FORTH
PLENTIFULLY.

SERMON XLV.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, the ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, and he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? and he said, this will I do, I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my goods.—Luke xii. 16—18.

The year of
Christ's life,
32.

The year of
Christ's min-
istry, 3.

The occasion
of this para-
ble.

Look but a little back, and you may see the reason why our Saviour spake this parable, and so see the occasion thereof.

“And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me,” ver. 13.

“And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?” ver. 14.

“And he said unto them, take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,” ver. 15.

“And he spake a parable,” &c. I might (by the way) note from hence, that ministers should not undertake the work of arbitrators, to terminate matters of evil right and justice: for our Lord refused to do it, and so ought we, it may but expose a minister to reproach, though he act never so justly: but to proceed:

The design
and scope of
it.

1. Our Lord spake this parable, that all persons might take heed to avoid covetousness, and be admonished of the danger thereof.

2. To discover how uncertain the riches of the world are, and that they tend to entice to sinful mirth and luxury. “Eat, drink, and be merry.”

3. To make known the folly that attends such whose hearts are set upon worldly riches.

4. To let all men know, that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of what he possesseth, i. e., the comfort and happiness of a man's life.

1. But to proceed, I shall speak to the several parts hereof by way of paraphrase.

2. Observe one or two propositions, &c.

“The ground of a certain rich man.”

Rich men have ground, they possess much land; poor men have none, they travel to and fro, but tread upon other men's ground; yet nevertheless, in a little time the poor shall have as much ground as the rich: for though a rich man glories of his vast fields, and abundance of land he hath, yet when he dies he will have no more than will bury him; and so much is not denied the poor.

“Brought forth plentifully,” Psal. lxxiii. 7. The rich thrive in the world; their riches increase, “their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish.” This, for a short time, laid the Psalmist under a temptation, “Behold these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning,” ver. xii 13, 14.

But he recovered himself by considering the end and design of God therein.

“When I went into the sanctuary of God, then I understood their end—how are they brought into desolation in a moment? they are utterly consumed with terrors; as a dream when one awaketh,” &c., ver. 17, 19, 20.

Their seeming happiness is like that when a man dreams, he is a king or a great man, and this pleaseth him, transports him; but when he wakes, he finds himself deceived, it

was but a dream ; so this rich man did but dream he was happy, and that he should possess what he had for many years. My brethren, God gives some wicked men a great portion in this world ; but it is all they are like to have ; they have their good things, their portion, their consolation in this life, " he thought within himself," Psal xvii. 14. Note.

Worldly men, earthly men, are filled with thoughts, but not of God, no, " God is not in all his thoughts," Psal. x. 4, (nay, as some read it) all his thoughts are, there is no God, or, no such God as concerns himself with the affairs of this world : he is (saith one) a deist, he owns a God in words, but denies his providence.

" He thought within himself." A wise man (as one notes) would have consulted God. Men should ponder well their thoughts before they resolve what to do, " in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," Prov. iii. 6 ; this man by that means might have foreseen it was better for him to have had thoughts of death ; for it appears he had not twenty-four hours to live.

" What shall I do ?" It is not what shall I do to be saved ? No, but what shall I do with my goods ? The difference betwixt a beggar and a rich man is but this ; both are saying, what shall I do ? The beggar saith, What shall I do to get bread, to get a little money ? The other saith, what shall I do now I have it ? Where shall I lay it ? And how shall I keep it ? Both are in perplexity, riches and poverty have sad snares attending them.

" Because I have no room." Yea, (saith one) enough and to spare : therefore montiture, as Suella tells him, he lies, the poor man's belly, is the rich man's barn : had he thought of that, he might have found barns enough without building any more barns.

" This will I do." Wicked men soon come to a resolution what to do to secure their goods ; but he shows him a graceless wretch ; he does not say this will I do, if God permit, or if God will ; no, I will do it, though he knew not whether he should live till harvest came or not.

" I will pull down my barns." It is wisdom (saith one) to think how to build ; this fool talks of pulling down his barns, when God was about to pull down the barn in which his soul was housed. When wicked men should think how to build their souls upon Christ, or get a place of security for their souls, they are thinking of building greater barns for their fruits, and warehouses for their merchandizes.

" There will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. What, spare none for the poor ?" must all be laid up, and none laid out ? the greatest increase is by laying out, than by laying up, " he that gives to the poor, lends to the Lord," Prov. xix. 17. But not one thought of giving any thing to the poor was in this man's heart, nor one word of any such matter in his mouth ; he designs to keep all for himself.

" My goods." Rich men of the world account their gold, silver, and lands, wares and fruits, their goods ; that which they have to their hurt and ruin of their souls, they esteem their good, nay their chief good ; indeed they know nothing better than what they possess of the things of this world ; therefore they call those things their goods ; and no marvel, because they are their God.

Yet earthly things God calls good things : they are good things under a threefold consideration.

1. In reference to the judgment of worldly men, they so account them ; nay, the best good.
2. The things of this world are good things, as they are the creatures of God, and come from him.
3. In respect of the use of them ; they suit with men's outward necessities ; and being rightly used, they are good things, and a great blessing to them that have them.

It is only the abuse of them which makes them evil and hurtful things ; as when men place their chiefest happiness in them, or set their hearts inordinately upon them, and their whole time is spent about getting, care in keeping, and fear of losing them ; some use not their good things ; though they have them, they have no heart to use them ; and these may be as great fools as they who over-use or abuse them ; yet there is more evil attends the having these good things, than there is good in them, though the temptations of the devil and corruptions of men's hearts : though they are good things in themselves ; yet there are better things, they are not the best good things.

And they that esteem them to be the best good, make them their God, and cast contempt upon God, valuing the creature above the Creator.

" And I will say to my soul, soul, thou hast goods laid up," &c.

A lie ! and a loud one too ; his soul had nothing laid up but horror, wrath, and vengeance.

The poor and rich cry woe shall we die.

Annotator.

See Mr. Livesey's the greatest loss. Eman. see in loc.

Riches are a wicked man's chiefest good.

Earthly things good things in three respects.

Earthly things are not the best good things.

What he had in his barns was not good for his soul. But we may see what opinion wicked men have of their souls. They think that which suits the body, feeds, clothes, and delights, that will feed, clothe, and delight the soul; as if they had nothing but a sensual soul, a brutish soul. The precious, immortal, and rational soul is forgot: *Bonum corporis animus bonum Deus*, saith one. Sirs, though outward good things satisfy the outward man, yet none but God himself can satisfy the soul or inward man; but the souls of the wicked are forgot and starved, whilst their bodies are fed and feasted.

"Laid up." No, his soul had another portion laid up, even a great heap of wrath against the day of wrath. "Ye have heaped treasure together for the last day," James v. 3. So that he lied again, his soul had not good, but evil laid up; and that not for many years only, but for an endless eternity. Whilst wicked men heap up riches, or the good things of the world for the bodies, they heap up wrath and evil things for their souls. But see how cruel these men are to their souls; for, if their souls cannot live upon that on which their bodies live, they shall starve and perish for ever. But should they feed their cows and sheep with carrion, as they feed their dogs, all would say, they were either fools or mad.

See the parable of the prodigal opened.

Alas! cows may be fed with carrion, and live on that, grow fat with that, as soon as the precious souls can be fed with earthly good things.

"Goods laid up for many years."

O the blindness (saith Austin) of this wretch! *Una nox nonet supererat*. He had not one night to live, and yet projects as if he should never die. Wicked men reckon of living long here; they count of a long time on earth, but forget the length of eternity. Sirs, a thousand years is not a moment compared with eternity.

"Take thine ease," &c.

A guilty, wounded, and condemned soul, cannot have true ease and comfort.

If he speaks to his soul (as it appears he does) he speaks like a fool as he was; for how could his soul have ease, that was under God's wrath, and sentenced to hell flames? Can a graceless soul, a Christless soul, a guilty and condemned soul, a naked, and a wounded, and a starved soul, have any ease? He flattered, and wofully deceived his poor soul.

"Eat, drink, and be merry." What! merry, and just falling into hell! This man is set up as a monument of folly, being branded by the blessed Jesus for a fool, and in this it appeared. Who can eat, drink, and be merry, but he whose sins are pardoned, or who hath an interest in God, a discharge from hell, and a title to heaven? Can a man that is going to die, or to be executed, and so to pass into endless torments, eat, drink, and be merry? The prodigal, when he was returned home to his father, when he was clothed with the best robe, and had a ring put on his hand, and shoes on his feet, was bid to eat, drink, and be merry; and he had cause so to do. But this wretch had more reason to say to his soul mourn, weep, and howl, for thou art undone for ever, and this night thy soul will be in hell.

"But God said unto him." Note, That an ungodly person says one thing, and God says another: he says he is happy, but God says he is miserable; he says he is blessed, but God says he is cursed; he says he shall have peace, but God says his wrath shall smoke against him; he says he shall live many years, but God says he shall not live above one day longer;

he says and thinks he is wise, "But God said unto him, thou fool." Better all the men in the world call us fools, reproach and contemn us, than to have God say, thou fool; that man is a fool indeed that God so esteems and calls.

"This night thy soul shall be required of thee." The man talked of many years, but God says, no, not one year, not one month, not one week, not twenty-four hours, for this night thou shalt die; for that is meant by requiring of his soul. Wicked men are undone by reckoning wrong; they do not keep their accounts well; they put the evil day

Men may think of living long when they have not twenty-four hours to live.

far off; they measure their days not by the king's standard, or by just rules and measures. Perhaps they reckon by their present health, their present strength, or by the lives of their progenitors. Their father and grandfather lived to a great age, and so they measure their days accordingly, and conclude they shall live long. But none of these rules are allowed, they are false

measures of our days. God sends us to the morning dew, the weaver's shuttle, to the shadow, vapour, a swift post, and to the flower of the field, that to-day is, and to-morrow is burned in the oven.

"Thy soul shall be required of thee."

Ungodly men must give an account of their souls, and when death comes, they must give that account. Note also, The soul of man is not so his own, but he must give an account to God of it. Moreover, some men are unexpectedly called to God's bar to give this account, or to give a sudden account,

At death men's souls are required of them.

even before they are prepared, or are ready to give up this account; they are at God's call, at his summons, and when he calls all must obey. Likewise God sometimes calls men away without giving them notice or warning of it; and when death comes, all shall know how matters go, and shall go with them in the other world, and to eternity.

“Then whose shall these things be that thou hast provided?”

A rich man when dead, knows not who shall possess his estate, who shall enjoy what he left behind him, or what he got with the loss of his own soul; he may think his wife, his children, or his heirs, or executors, administrators, or assigns, shall have it; but they may be cheated of it, or may die soon after him, and such may have it to whom he would not have given a shilling of what he had whilst he lived: or if his son hath it, he knows not whether his son shall be a wise man or a fool.

No man knows who shall enjoy estate after him.

As earthly riches are uncertain, so is the life of him that possesseth them.

“So is every one that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.”

So what is that? He is a fool, for it was that which God said unto him; but God said to him, thou fool.

“So is every man that layeth up treasure,” &c. That is, every covetous man, or earthly worldling, who prefers the riches of this world above spiritual riches, and is not rich in grace, rich in faith, nor rich in good works. He is a fool. There is only one point of doctrine I shall observe from hence.

Every covetous man is a fool.

Doct. That he (let him be whosoever he will) that labours for, or strives more to lay up riches in this world than to be rich towards God, is a fool.

In speaking briefly to this truth, I shall endeavour,

1. To show who they are (or how they may be known,) that strive more to lay up earthly riches than to be rich towards God.

2. Show how it appears that they are fools.

1. Such are fools, or men of no true wisdom, that choose a base, a low, and ignoble end, above the chiefest, choicest, and most noble end which man is, able, and ought to choose and prefer. Now some men seek themselves, and prefer earthly things above God, the glory of God, and eternal happiness: and this is the greatest folly any can be guilty of, and such are therefore fools; for it is far greater folly thus to do, than for a man to choose a brass counter before a pearl of inconceivable worth and value.

They who labour most for earthly things; and are therefore fools.

2. He that chooses the greatest evil before the chiefest and greatest good, or in the choosing the one rejects the other, is a fool, the greatest fool in the world: but such that choose sin, and reject God, do thus.

How often in the scriptures, upon this very consideration, are wicked men called fools, particularly by wise Solomon: folly is written in the foreheads of all wicked men, if sin be the greatest folly, then sinners are the greatest fools. Now covetousness is one of the greatest sins in the world; and hence it is called idolatry: it is as bad as to adore a graven image. The voice of the heart of an earthly worldling is, that there is more good, more happiness in possessing and enjoying the riches of this world, than to have a portion in God and interest in God, or to have the love and favour of God. Now these men are known many ways.

1. They so pursue the world, that they seldom think of God; God is not in all their thoughts, or rather in none of their thoughts; they desire not to think of God, but the thoughts of God are grievous to them.

How a man is known to be a fool.

2. Nay, from the great abundance which they possess of the things of this world, and love to them; they say to God, to depart from us, “their bull gendereth, their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf—they spend their days in wealth, therefore they say to God, “depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,” Job xxi. 14. They like not to approach near God, nor that he by disquieting their consciences should draw near to them.

3. They show God is none of their choice, in that they utterly refuse the means afforded them in order to the finding and enjoying of him, “Wherefore is there a prize in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?” Prov. xvii. 16.

No pains is too much with these men to get and increase their earthly riches; all opportunities and advantages that are in their hands in order to it, are taken hold of, and improved; but a little time cannot be spared to meet with God, or to advance his glory, or the good of his people.

4. Such are fools who prefer the good of their bodies for a short time in this world above the good of their souls and bodies to eternity; should a man only take care to live

well for one day, and take no care or regard what becomes of him, or how he lives, all the days of his life after that one day is ended, all would say he is a fool; alas! should a man live an hundred years, that is not as one day when compared to eternity, no, not one hour, not one moment; and yet these men's care is only to live well, and enjoy earthly good for this one moment or while here, but regard not what becomes of their souls and bodies when this life is ended for evermore.

III. Such are fools who esteem the world above the word, nay, reject and set light by the word out of love to the world: "They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" Jer. viii. 9. True wisdom is to walk by a right rule, to a right end; but these men reject the true rule; gain is their rule, and self is their end.

IV. They that let their chiefest thoughts run out after the world, whose chiefest love is set upon their riches, or on earthly things, and whose greatest care and pains is to obtain, and their chiefest fear is of losing them, certainly are fools; for it shows they are blind and ignorant persons, even such that know not what is good, the chiefest good, but weary themselves for very vanity.

V. Such that prefer the world above Christ, and will leave Christ to embrace this present world, are the fools our Lord here speaks of; such a fool was "the young man that came running to Christ," Matt. xix. 22; who when he heard of parting with what he had if he would be saved, left the Lord Jesus, "and went away very sorrowful; for he had great possessions." Also Demas was another of them, who cast off the Lord Jesus Christ and embraced this present evil world.

VI. Such that prefer sinful gain above the peace of their own consciences, are fools. I mean, such, who to increase their riches, deal unjustly, deceive, defraud, and cheat their neighbours. O what is more precious than inward peace, or than a good conscience? and what is worse than a gnawing, a guilty, and an accusing conscience? Is not he a fool that wounds himself or seeks to set himself at war and variance against himself; and also thereby fights against his Maker, and murders his own soul? If this man is not a fool, there is none in the world.

VII. He is a fool that prefers corruptible and uncertain riches before those riches that are incorruptible, inconceivable in their worth, and are also eternal.

VIII. He that will let the commonwealth sink, and do that which may ruin and undo a whole kingdom, his children, and posterity, nay, let the church of God sink, and the poor perish, to enrich himself, or rather than he will part with his substance, is a fool, and the mark of a fool is written in legible characters upon his forehead. Many such fools I fear we have now in England. Ah, poor, miserable England! What monsters hast thou brought forth and nourished in thy borders and bowels?

Secondly, How doth it appear that earthly and covetous persons are fools?

How it appears wicked men are fools.

1. By considering the nature of those things they refuse and slight.
2. By considering the nature of the things they choose and set their hearts upon.

What worldly men refuse, which proves they are fools.

1. The things which they refuse are of inconceivable value, the very best things of heaven and earth; things did I say? consider what is comprehended in them, viz., God the chief good to be their God, and Jesus Christ; they refuse him, an interest in him; they see nothing in him to desire him; they refuse God to be their Father, their Friend, and their Portion and Inheritance, and reject the person of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the love and riches of Jesus Christ. Moreover, they refuse to adhere to the leadings, the guidance and conduct of the Holy Spirit, which strives to renew the image of God in them, and to put the righteousness of Christ upon them, and be an earnest of eternal life and glory to them; and now doth not this show them fools? They know not what is good, know not how to choose, they discern not a precious pearl from a worthless pebble.

2. They refuse incorruptible things, such riches that are durable treasure that moth nor rust can corrupt.

3. They refuse (though they are ready to perish with hunger) that which is bread, nay, Bread of Life, most rare, sweet, delicious, and soul-nourishing, fattening and satisfying Bread, and all things else that is good and proper food for their souls; which except they eat of they must die and perish for ever; and doth not this show they are fools?

4. They count those things not worth one serious thought or regard, which all that were truly wise esteemed above all the treasures, riches, and glory of the whole world; nay, more worth than ten thousand worlds.

5. Though they are blind, they refuse eye-salve that would certainly cause them to

see ; and though they are wounded to death, they refuse that balm that would (if applied) infallibly cure them ; and though they are naked, yet they refuse a glorious garment (or a rich robe) to clothe them ; and though they be condemned and sentenced to die, (a grievous death) yet they refuse a pardon ; and though poor, yet they refuse great riches ; and though in slavery, and bound with fetters and cruel chains, yet they refuse liberty, and freedom from bondage and slavery for ever ; and though they are under contempt, and disgrace, and are ignoble persons, yet they refuse to be raised to the greatest honour ; nay, they refuse a crown of glory, and a kingdom that abideth for ever, and are they not fools ? Doth not this show and prove they are fools ?

Secondly, Let us consider what things they are which worldly men choose, and the nature of them, instead of those things, or before those things which they refuse.

1. They choose things unlawful, or such things that are forbidden, and in their choice incur the wrath and displeasure of God, and are thereby proclaimed enemies and rebels, and such that God's soul abhors, for by an inordinate love of riches they are idolators : and the covetous God abhorreth.

The things wicked men choose shows they are fools.

2. They choose such things that are the portion of reprobates. My brethren, God gives the riches of this world to his enemies, and to such who have their portion in this life, to whom he denies his choicest and chiefest blessings and favours.

Psa. xxii.

3. They are corruptible things, things which perish in the using, things also that are uncertain. Riches of this world are called uncertain riches ; " Charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God," 1 Tim. vi. 17. He that possesseth them to-day, may lose them to-morrow ; they are things that are not : " Wilt thou set thine heart on that which is not ? For riches certainly take themselves wings, and fly away, as an eagle towards heaven," Prov. xxiii. 5. Would a man count himself rich should a great flock of doves settle upon his land, which on a sudden fly away ? But men count themselves rich and happy that have abundance of earthly treasure, though it flies away on a sudden, therefore they are fools.

4. They choose the riches, pleasures, and grandeur of this world, which ruin the souls of all that trust in them, or set their hearts upon them. The world, in its riches, is a cruel enemy to poor mortals, and such who over-prize them do but hug a viper or serpent in their bosoms, and is not this one article of our faith, that the world (as well as the flesh and the devil) is a mortal enemy to the soul ? What harbour a thief, a treacherous and cruel murderer, in our house, who will soon, if not overcome, lay all the family in their blood, and dead at his foot ! what folly greater than this ! Ah ! how many thousands are now in hell, that the love of this world sent thither, or brought eternal ruin upon.

5. The things wicked rich men choose are but mere vanity or a shadow. " Vanity of vanity, all things are vanity," Eccl. i. 2 ; not vain, but vanity in the abstract, the worst of vanities, and therefore no folly greater than to esteem the riches of this world as a man's best and chiefest happiness ; they weary themselves for very vanity ; should you see a man pursue, or run after, and strive to catch or take hold of a shadow, would you not say he was a lunatic, or a natural, or mere fool ? Such fools are the rich men of this world. Moreover, empty things that cannot satisfy, gold and silver can satisfy no man : " He that coveteth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase, this is also vanity," Eccl. v. 10. This shows his folly ; he hath abundance, and yet desires more as if he had nothing, and is never content and satisfied with what he hath, and yet counts these things the best of all good ; which shows he is a fool.

6. The love of riches is the root of all evil ; and such " that will be rich fall into temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi. 9. Now if such are the nature and dreadful effects that attend riches, what fools are they that set their hearts upon them ? They do but " Heap up treasure against the last day," James v. 3, or treasure up wrath and divine vengeance. Such that love the world, the love of the Father is not in them ; nay, they are " Adulterers, and adulteresses, the friendship of the world is enmity with God ; whosoever will be a friend of the world, is an enemy of God," James iv. 4. Riches alienate the heart from God, and cause the sinner to war against his Maker : besides, it is hard for any that are rich to enter into the kingdom of heaven ; and therefore rich men, who pursue the world, are fools.

U S E.

Infer. 1. I infer from hence, that the world is full of folly and madness, what a multi-

tude of fools are everywhere. "When he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him: he saith to every one that he is a fool," Eccl. x. 3. He that walketh in a covetous way, in a way of eager pursuit after the world, his wisdom faileth him. He saith to every one that observeth him, that he is a fool; his practice says, though he thinks he is wise.

Infer. 2. We may infer also, that most great men, noblemen, are fools. "Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low places," Eccl. x. 6. Wicked princes, and such that they advance, are fools; who pride it in their riches, and vain honour: such that are truly rich, rich indeed, rich in their souls, are in low places: they are neglected, and despised, and counted fools, because poor in this world.

Infer 3. Righteous men only are wise men; such that contemn the world, or are dead to the world, that see the vanity of the world, that desire not riches, these men only are wise.

Infer. 4. That God counts not as man counts; he looks not as men look; they judge the rich and great ones of the earth (though they are wicked) to be wise; but God says they are fools. See the folly and ignorance of man.

Exhort. Secondly, Be exhorted to pursue more after grace than after gold, and to tread the world under your feet, instead of laying it in your hearts; and never esteem rich men to be wise men, if they are ungodly or graceless.

2. Bless God that gives you neither poverty nor riches, for snares attend both. Agur was a wise man in his prayer, and let us all learn of him; but O how few pray against riches! but it shows their folly, they do not run thus.

3. Fear the danger of riches; do not rejoice if your riches increase, considering the evils which attend them, and what kind of men do commonly possess them.

Thirdly, This may be matter of comfort to the poor of this world, who are rich in faith. God hath made you rich indeed, blessed you indeed; others are seemingly rich, but really poor, seemingly wise, but really foolish; seemingly happy, but really miserable: but you are seemingly poor, but really rich; and seemingly miserable, but are really happy; and counted fools by men, but wise in God's esteem. This should therefore satisfy you who have little in possession, but great things in reversion; for though you seem to have nothing, yet you have all things. Moreover, they who now seem to be rich, and seem to be full, shall be poor and have nothing; when you, as kings and princes, shall reign in riches, honour, and renown for evermore. You have made the best choice, and shall be known one day to be only wise persons, and all wicked rich men to have been fools, and without true understanding.

THE

SIMILITUDE

OF

LITTLE CHILDREN SITTING IN THE MARKET-PLACE.

SERMON XLVI.

And the Lord said, whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto little children sitting in the market-place, saying, we have piped, and ye have not danced; we have mourned, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine, and ye say, he hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and ye say, behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.—Luke vii. 31—34.

THE design of this simile was to reprove the froward and base-spirited Scribes and Pharisees, &c. Our Lord discovering hereby, that nothing would touch their hearts, no, not any

different means used ; but that they quarrelled at God's messengers, whatsoever methods they took, or behaviours appeared in.

They were not pleased full nor fasting.

“ They are like unto little children.”

1. Our Saviour compared the people of that generation, viz., the Scribes and Pharisees, and other people, to little children, even to froward children, who are neither pleased with a pleasant nor a mournful noise ; (i. e.) Neither with music nor mourning. Whereby he discovers and detects, (1.) Their ignorance, or weakness in understanding ; for children are weak that way. (2.) Their peevish and quarrelsome temper.

2. He compares his own disciples also to children, who called upon the other, saying, “ We have piped to you, and you have not danced, we have mourned, and ye have not lamented.”

Our Lord compares his disciples to little children elsewhere, in respect of their innocency or harmlessness, “ Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God,” Matt. xviii. 3. And among these children our Lord comprehendeth himself also, who indeed was free from all malice, and of a holy, meek, and harmless spirit.

By the children said here to call upon their fellows, I understand himself and his disciples (together with Johu Baptist) are meant.

“ Sitting in the market-place,” our Saviour (as expositors intimate, and also our annotators) refers to a wonted custom of children in those times among the Jews, who having learned the art of music, and being pleasantly disposed, would sit, and play, or “ pipe in the market-place,” to stir up other children (who had not that skill in music, which some other among them had) to mirth and daucing ; but some being sullen and peevish children, would not regard their music ; and then those pretty children would fall a mourning, or make great lamentation, to see if they could move them to weep ; there was, my brethren, among the Jews, mourning women, viz., such who had the way to make dismal lamentation, enough almost to break the hearts of people ; and perhaps these children might have learned of them to make great lamentation, but they being froward and ill-natured, regarded not their music any more than their mourning and doleful lamentation ; and to those peevish, froward children our Lord compared the Scribes and Pharisees, and other people of that generation, who neither minded that sweet music he and his disciples made in their ears, (when they preached to them the sweet doctrine of peace and reconciliation, enough to charm their ears and their hearts—with God,) nor when they thundered out against them for their sin and unbelief, wrath, and divine vengeance, which might be sufficient to move them to weeping, and bitter lamentation.

—There were mourning women among the Jews.

“ We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced.”

By piping, our Saviour, as I conceive, alludes to the sweet and pleasant way and method of his own and his disciples' preaching, together with the soul-raising doctrine they sometimes did preach to them, it being full of alluring expressions, and gracious promises, making use of such a way that might win, affect, and work upon their hearts, as music affects the ears of some people.

From hence note,

Doct. 1. That the preaching the gospel of peace and reconciliation to sinners, may fitly be compared to sweet and soul-ravishing music.

This I shall but very briefly open.

First, Music is taking to the ear, and it is that which many people are greatly affected with, nay, poor animals ; I mean the beasts of the field are seen to be affected with it. Shepherds in old times, in some countries used music, and would play to their flocks, and perhaps by some shepherds it may be used among us in this nation. So the sweet doctrine of the gospel of God's free grace draws the attention, and wonderfully affects the hearts of all believers who are Christ's sheep.

The doctrine of the gospel is sweet music to some.

That the voice of Christ and his ministers may be compared to music, appears by what is said by God himself concerning the preaching of the prophet.

The doctrine of free grace wonderfully affects the hearts of believers.

“ And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song, of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument : they hear thy word,” &c., Ezek. xxxiii. 32. But the Jews and Pharisees, yet our Lord's preachings, and his disciples also, was much more like a lovely song, and they had a more pleasant voice than that of the prophets, or made sweeter music ; yet they regarded it not, or were not affected therewith,

or charmed thereby, though it is said of our Saviour, that "never man spake like this man," John vii. 46. But yet they would not dance after his music, that is, they would not attend upon his word, nor were affected with his soul-ravishing doctrine.

Secondly, music hath its distinct notes, and that makes it melodious, so ministers should preach distinctly, not confusedly, for that makes no music. "If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare to the battle?" 1 Cor. xiv. 8. It is intelligible and distinct preaching that makes the music, together with the sweetness of the matter uttered.

3. Some that pretend to music, and undertake to play on an instrument, are unskilful, and they make very sorry music; many that hear it, cry, away with it; what a squeaking and an unpleasant noise is this? So some men who pretend to be preachers, make no sweet music; there are too sorts of preachers whose preaching is not musical.

1. Such who seldom or never preach Jesus Christ, for the sum of their ministry is either morality, or the law, or duties of religion; who tell not the poor people what Christ hath done, nor of that peace and reconciliation he hath made by his obedience, and not how, or which way they must be saved, but only press duties and a holy life upon them; and this, too, without showing them the necessity of a changed heart; now these men make but very sorry music.

2. Such who though they may preach Christ, yet it is without such distinctions and a good method which is necessary; but preach confusedly, jumbling things together, confounding justification with sanctification, or Christ's merits; and the believer's inherent righteousness, or grace, and works together; these also make but very sorry music.

Thirdly, he that would make sweet music, must not harp too much upon one string, or have only one distinct note. So a preacher that would make right gospel-music, must not always preach upon one particular gospel truth, but he must touch melodiously upon every string; not preach justification always, as if there was nothing else to instruct the people in, but must insist upon sanctification also; the first as our title to heaven, and the other as our meetness for heaven; nor must a minister, who would make true gospel music, preach only on the promises, but also on the precepts; not of what Christ hath done for us, but also what he wrought in us, and must also be done by us, &c.

Fourthly, it is a curious art to attain to the clear knowledge of music, and to be very skilful, or play well upon an instrument. So it is a most blessed spiritual art, to know how to preach the gospel with all true spiritual wisdom; for as music is a mystery, so is the gospel a great mystery. "We are stewards of the mysteries of God, we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery," 1 Cor. ii. 7. How should this deter men from preaching the gospel, who are ignorant of the gospel? What music can such persons make in the ears of men, that know not the mysteries of God, Christ, and the gospel?

Fifthly, some musicians make sweeter music than others, though all may have some skill in it; so some ministers make more sweet gospel music than others, who may be true gospel preachers; some may have clearer light, and more knowledge, and greater gifts and parts than others.

Sixthly, some people, though they hear sweet music, yet know not how to dance after it; and others, though they perhaps do know how, yet will not. So some ignorant people understand not the doctrine of the gospel, though it be clearly preached to them; and others understand more of it than they will receive or practice, will not cry to God for help to believe; and if they do believe, yet are more ready to dance after the promises, than after the precepts.

Seventhly, a skilful dancer with his feet and body strikes (or imitates) the music very exactly; so true believers can dance so well after gospel music, that they strike every distinct note, or imitate it exactly in their hearts and lives. With the feet of their souls, saith an experienced saint, sir, I could follow you in every thing you have said this day; I find it is true, and experienced it, and live the word; these are sweet dancers indeed; others hear the music, but cannot dance in this spiritual manner.

Eightly, music elevates the hearts of some people wonderfully; so the doctrine of the gospel tends to raise, nay, to ravish the hearts of gracious persons, when they hear of the nature of God's love, Christ's love, and also of the glory and excellency of Christ's person, and what he hath done, and hear what the nature of that peace is which Christ hath made; and hear the covenant of grace, and the promises of God opened unto them.

Ninthly, but though music is sweet to some, others love it not, but cry away with it, it

Music is a curious art, so is it truly to know, and rightly to preach the gospel.

Some know not music, others know it, but will not dance after it.

Who they are that dance we after gospel music.

The doctrine of free-grace like sweet music.

makes our hearts sad, &c. So the Jews and Pharisees of old, like many now, love not this gospel music; they did not (and many now do not) love the doctrine of free grace, no, nor to hear a minister's voice, or his music, but cry in their hearts away with it, the thoughts of these things you speak of (say they) tends to make our hearts sad; they love not to hear of the new birth, nor of death and judgment, but cry prophesy to us smooth "things of wine and strong drink," Micah ii. 11.

"We have mourned, and ye have not wept," Matt. xi. 17. John Baptist used a most severe way of preaching, as it is said, he came not eating nor drinking, (because he lived upon locusts and wild honey, and lived a retired life) so he most severely reprov'd the Jews and Pharisees for their abominable sins and unbelief; his preaching was as one that mourned, or that lamentation, his voice was that of one crying in the wilderness, and his doctrine, as it was foretold, burned as an oven. Some think that Malachi speaks of the day of judgment, when he says, "the day cometh that shall burn as an oven." But as reverend Cotton well observed, that prophet there refers to the ministry of John Baptist, that day shall leave them neither root nor branch.

What meant by these words, we have mourned to you.

Cotton on the covenant pag. 21, 22.

The first is, saith he, the root of Abraham's covenant, which John laid the axe at, so that all the confidence they had in Abraham's covenant, temple, and tabernacle, was burned up, and so they had no root left them.

Secondly, saith he, there is something more in it, for with the spirit of burning, the Lord doth cut us off from any power of our natural or spiritual gifts, whereby to lay hold of Christ, and we are cut off from all confidence that we have in our own sufficiency. The Lord also hath cut us off from the righteousness of our parents, &c.

Again he saith, the ministry of John Baptist, which burned as an oven, left the Jews neither the root of Abraham's covenant, nor the branches of their own good works. So cutting them off from the root, he leaveth them no ground to trust to. O what a son of thunder was John! Repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, or you shall be cut down. "Now the axe is laid at the root of the trees, and therefore every tree, (every man) that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire." If ye receive not my great Master, down you must go to hell, and know that you, and your church-state, church-membership, suddenly shall be cut down, and rise no more for ever: thus John mourned to them, but they lamented not. Moreover, our Lord himself might sometimes be said to mourn, or preach, or sing a mournful song, as when he said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3, 5. Yet then they did not lament, as the people would not be allured or drawn with the sweet music of his heavenly and soul-raising doctrine of free grace. So neither were they driven by the soul-terrifying threats of God's wrath and divine vengeance, but cried, John had a devil; perhaps they said he had a melancholy devil, he living in the desert. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a devil," Matt. xi. 18.

John Baptist's severe doctrine to the Jews.

The doctrine of Christ and of John was the same, but their temper and converse greatly differed. John was a stern and morose man, and our Lord was of a more free and affable spirit and conversation, but these Jews and Pharisees would not give one nor the other a good word.

"The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold, a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners," verse 19.

"But wisdom is justified of her children,"

As their doctrine differed, (one seeming like a lofty song, the other as a mournful song, or like one making great lamentation) so their behaviours and carriage differed much also; our Lord was, I say, of a more pleasant temper, more free in his conversation, so that they could not say that he shunned the people's company who were sinners, yet they sought all occasions against him, and called him a gluttonous person and a wine-bibber, &c. Though as free from gluttony and drunkenness as John, but though they could not say he was a morose man, yet they blasphemed him, and charged him as bad as they charged the other.

The different tempers of Jesus Christ and John Baptist.

From hence note,

Doct. 2. That though the ministers of Christ do what they can, or study what ways and methods they can, and live never so circumspectly, yet their persons nor their ministry shall be accepted of some peevish and froward people.

If neither our Lord, nor his servant John, nor the disciples of our Lord, could get esteem amongst the people (though they appeared different in their temper, carriage, and deportment, yet all harmless, serious, and pious) it is no

No ministers can please all people.

marvel if ministers now cannot give content to their congregations, or to those ill-natured and peevish-spirited people amongst us, nor be free from reproach and infamy; for what minister is not more or less vilified in these evil days we live in?

The sad
events of
those days. 1. For if some live a retired, or a reserved kind of life, and hardly will keep company or converse with people, or very seldom are out of their own houses; then they are charged to be proud, and condemn the conversation of their brethren and neighbours.

2. If others are more free and affable, and have a free and open converse, and are frequently amongst people; and perhaps now and then to cheer their spirits, and strengthen nature, may drink a little wine; then they are charged to waste their time, and spend their money, and, like their Master, are counted wine-bibbers, though their souls abhor it and give no just occasion for any to abuse them.

3. If they preach upon the threatenings of God, or press men to duties of religion and sanctification, or practical holiness, then they are censured to be legal preachers; and if they preach much upon the doctrine of free grace, free justification, or justification without works, and insist much upon the promises, then they are accused to preach a licentious doctrine, are Antinomians; so that neither their music nor their mourning will please the people of this generation, no more than it would please that formerly.

APPLICATION.

1. We infer from hence, what hard measure Christ's poor ministers meet withal, and what need they have of the prayers of all that love Christ and them, that so they may bear up, and not be discouraged; and that it is the duty of all Christians not to add to their burden; but to vindicate them wherein they know they are abused.

2. We infer that no minister can expect to go free of hard censures from evil men, and false brethren; but though they meet with undue and unjust usage, yet they ought not to be ever troubled or cast down. "For if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, can they of his house go free? And if they have done these things to the green tree, what will they do to the dry?" Luke xxiii. 31.

3. This may also serve to reprove wicked men, who falsely accuse the servants of Christ, charging some to be morose and melancholy persons, if they lead a reserved life; and others who have more freeness in their conversation, then they are drunkards, and what not; but let such know (that it is to be feared) had they lived in the days of our Saviour (when he was on the earth) they would have reproached him after the same manner, for they are under the same influences, and of the same spirit.

4. We may infer, that such who are so ready to find fault, and accense the faithful ministers of Christ, are led by a diabolical spirit; and being guilty of the same sins with the Jews and Pharisees of old, they may expect the like woful end they met withal.

5. We infer, that such that no ministers can please, or who will not dance after, or kindly accept of the gospel, and delight in it as sweet music, when the doctrine of free grace is preached; nor tremble and mourn when the threats of God's wrath are thundered out against them, are in a fearful condition; for such that mercy, and infinite love and goodness, will not draw, nor judgments drive, are certainly like to perish eternally.

6. We infer, that the doctrine of the gospel is sweet to all those who truly believe. O what sweet music is it to them to hear of God's eternal love, and how the wrath of God is over for ever in Christ, and that they are for ever justified and pardoned, that God is their Father, their portion, and that Christ hath espoused, nay, married them to himself for ever.

7. Moreover, ministers may learn from hence, to study all manner of ways to move upon the hearts of sinners, even to preach terror from mount Sinai sometimes, as well as grace and love from mount Zion, or not only to preach on the promises, but on the threatenings, or of hell, wrath, and judgment to come, that such that will not dance may mourn.

"But wisdom is justified of her children."

(1.) The plain sense of these words (saith one) is this, viz. It is a proverbial speech, sometimes like that art, *non habet inimicum præter ignorantem*, learning hath no enemies, but the ignorant.

(2.) Grace is justified of all that partake of it.

(3.) Certainly this may also be meant hereby, i.e., that the children of wisdom will justify God in his wise council, in his making use of men of different tempers. God might foresee some might sooner be affected with one, and others with another, &c. Some are for a learned man, who is well acquainted with the tongues, and others for such that only

have their gifts and abilities more immediately from God, who know no other language than their own mother tongue, as the disciples of Christ did not, until they were miraculously endowed from on high.

Such that are wise, will not magnify learned men, because they are learned; nor despise others because they are not learned; but will justify God in making use of both the learned and the unlearned. And from hence.

8. Let all be exhorted to have an esteem for all Christ's ministers, though they are not of their judgment in some things. I remember the disciples said, "Lord, we saw one casting out of devils in thy name, who followeth not with us," Luke ix. 49, 50; but what said our Saviour, "forbid him not, for they that are not against us, are for us." What, though this and that minister follows not us in some things, yet he may be Christ's faithful minister; do you see in some things more than others? why others in some other things may see more than you.

Lastly, learn to show yourselves the children of wisdom, and see whether the doctrine of the gospel is music in your ears, and that thou find it so fixed in your hearts, that you spiritually can dance after it, or find all the distinct notes thereof, and live in a holy and exact conformity to it, that all may say you dance well after such that can play well on this blessed instrument; or so live as to bring glory to God, and honour to your sacred religion and profession, and so shall you not only find joy and gladness on earth, but sing and triumph in endless joys in heaven.

AN
E X P O S I T I O N
OF THE
PARABLES AND SIMILITUDES
OF OUR
LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

BOOK II.

SERMON I.

For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if salt hath lost its saltness, wherewith shall it be salted? have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.—Mark ix. 49, 50.

It is always necessary, as in parables, so in such dark texts as this is, to consider, and well observe the scope and coherence thereof.

First, This I shall do, and so proceed in my usual method.

Secondly, Open or explain all the terms and parts contained herein.

Thirdly, Observe those points of doctrine that lie most clear in the words.

Fourthly, Apply the whole.

The scope of the words opened. First, To understand the main scope of this place of scripture, we need not look farther back than to the 42nd verse, "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me," &c. By these little ones, are intended, or held forth, humble Christians, or such that are little in their own eyes. And so our annotators on Matt. xviii. 10. The disciples were ready to be lifted up with pride, striving who should be the greatest among them. And the grand design of our blessed Lord, in speaking what we have, ver. 43, to the 48th, seems to be twofold.

1. To teach his disciples humility.

2. To show the necessity of mortification of sin; the lust of which he doth, by showing, that a right hand, or foot, which offends, must be cut off, and a right eye, that offends, must be pulled out. He doth not, cannot mean the members of the natural body: for so to take it is to render our Saviour to encourage self-murder, which is abominable once to imagine. But by a right hand, foot, and eye, he either means the members of the old man, the body of sin, or else such members that offend in the visible body or church of God: but I conclude he intends chiefly the members of the body of sin, which if not mortified, would expose both the soul and body of such they offend, to eternal flames, Rom. vii. 24. Observe, that the old man, or corrupt nature, is elsewhere compared to the natural body: and every particular sin as a member thereof; see Coloss. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members that are upon the earth:" what these members are he tells us, viz., fornication, uncleanness, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Quest. But what sins are those which are signified by a right hand, a right foot, and a right eye?

Answ. All beloved sins, whether lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, or the pride of life. What is a right-hand sin.

1. Such sins that seem profitable may be meant by right-hand sins.

2. And all such sins that tend to sensual pleasure, may be meant by right eye sins. Now it is better to part with these evil lusts, by which the sinner offends God, though they may seem never so profitable to enrich him in this world; and also better part with such lusts that seem sweet for pleasure, and so dismember the body of sin, than to "be cast into hell fire." Our Saviour, it is to be observed, repeats these words six or seven times, i. e., "Of being cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And this no doubt is to confirm the certainty of eternal torments. Many people, he foresaw would hardly be brought to believe, that God will so severely deal with ungodly persons, for living in sin, they being ignorant of that horrid and infinite evil that is in it.

(1.) But did they contemplate upon that fearful anguish or torment our Lord Jesus Christ felt and endured in his soul and body for sin, when he stood in our law-place, as our great and blessed Head and Representative; they might easily be convinced of their folly and grand ignorance herein.

2. Especially considering the great dignity, and infinite worth of his person, he being God, co-eternal, co-essential, and co-equal with the Father. The sufferings of our blessed Lord, my brethren, were a thousand times more than if the whole lump of mankind had been cast into hell, to endure eternal flames of divine vengeance. Alas, what is sorry man, even but as a toad in the sight of God, when once compared to the beloved, eternal Son of God? Therefore to awaken all men that live in sin, and will not part with them, he repeats these words so often, viz., "Then to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." So much as to the scope of the words.

"For every one shall be salted with fire," [for] is a relative, and refers to what precedes, i. e., every one that will not cut off a right hand lust, a right-foot lust, or pull out a right-eye lust, and so be salted with the spirit, shall be salted with hell-fire, or be preserved in those flames to endure eternal torments.

Quest. How may we know a right-hand sin?

How to know a right-hand sin.

Answ. 1. A right-hand sin is that sin which doth so easily beset the sinner; they yield as readily to it as they use their right hand.

2. The right hand is the working hand, that cuts, the purse, that seals the wedge of gold, and takes the unlawful gain in trading; so that is a right-hand sin that tends in an unlawful manner to get riches, or to increase a man's substance.

3. The right hand is held up to keep off the blow that is struck at the body, to defend the body; so that is the right-hand sin, which for love to, the sinner defends and strives to keep off the blow, when the Spirit of God strikes to destroy the whole body of sin; and he that labours to extenuate sin, or that makes excuses about it, uses his right-hand sin.

4. You know the right hand feeds the body; so that is a right-hand sin, which feeds the body of sin; and such use this cursed right hand, that make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

5. The right is the beloved hand, that hand which a man is most unwilling to part with; it is the hand he concludes he shall most need the use of. So a right-hand sin is that sin which a man has his heart chiefly set upon, and is most unwilling to part with; it is that lust which he thinks will be as great a loss to him as his right hand. Some men think, if in their trading they should deal justly, and honestly, and not exact upon any person, they shall be starved, or be brought to want, as a man that hath lost his right hand.

6. The right hand is a principal member of the natural body: so a right-hand sin is a principal member of the body of sin.

Quest. What is a right-eye sin?

Answ. 1. A right eye is greatly prized; what do men value above their right eye? So any sin that an ungodly person loves, or greatly delights in, is his right-eye sin. What is a right-eye sin.

2. A right eye is, at all times of danger, defended; how is the hand up to preserve the eyes, especially the right eye? So a right-eye sin, when it is struck at by the hammer of God's word, how doth the sinner strive to preserve it and plead for it? he is as ready to defend it as a right eye.

3. The eye is that member that sees the evil object that draws the man into sin. So a right-eye sin is that which is the occasion of committing sin that allures and draws him into sin and folly.

4. The right eye delights the body, by beholding such objects and things that please

the sensual part. So a right-eye sin delights the carnal heart, or fills it with carnal pleasure; so fornication, uncleanness, wantonness, adultery, and the like, are right-eye sins.

Quest. Well, but what if sinners will not part with these sins?

Ans. Why then every such a one must go where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Some would have every one salted with fire, and every sacrifice salted with salt, to mean the same persons, which I believe not. There is a two-fold fire, and all men must be salted with one or the other of them.

(1.) The Spirit of God, that is compared to fire.

(1.) Hell-fire.

First. The Spirit is compared to fire. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire." "Quench not the Spirit," Acts ii. 2.

Take the words thus, then the sense is this, viz., every one that is not salted with the Spirit, shall be salted with hell-fire.

That the Spirit is, and may be compared to fire, appears by these particulars following.

1. Fire gives light, so the Holy Spirit gives light, or illuminates the understanding.

2. Fire puts such to pain who feel its scorching heat; so the Holy Spirit, in convictions, puts the soul to great pain, and makes the poor sinner to cry out, as those did Peter preached to, who cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37.

3. Fire hath a purging, cleansing, and purifying nature, even so the Holy Spirit purgeth out sin, and purifies, and sanctifies the soul of a believer.

4. Fire burns up all those things which are combustible, so as soon as a man hath received the Holy Spirit, it presently burns up all sinful and sensual pleasures, even all filth, and combustible things of the flesh, world, and devil. Sin, and the corruptions of the heart, are like wood, chaff, and stubble, which when the Holy Spirit takes hold of, it consumes and burns it up.

5. Fire causeth heat, and tends to warm and revive a person who is chilled with cold, or benumbed therewith. So the Holy Spirit causeth spiritual heat and warmth; and such who are in a spiritual sense cold to God, and cold to the things of God, are greatly revived by its sweet influences. "Did not our heart burn within us?" Luke xxiv. 32. How was this, but by the reviving operations of the Spirit upon their hearts? Zeal is like fire which is the product of the Spirit. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," saith David. O how hot and fervent was he (through the influences of the Spirit) in his soul!

6. Fire is of a trying and a refining nature, it tries and refines gold and silver, and makes it more precious. We read of gold seven times refined in the fire. So also the Holy Spirit refines the sons of men. "He is like the refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi." Mal. iii. 2, 3. The Holy Ghost consumes the dross, and makes the souls of God's people more holy, and also refines all the graces of the Spirit. "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 7. True afflictions are said to do this, but it is not simply afflictions, but the Spirit of God, in and by afflictions which does it.

7. Fire is of an ascending nature; contrary to other elements, it moves upwards. So the Holy Spirit causeth all that feel its influences and operations, to ascend in their love, desires, and affections towards God, or heavenward.

8. Fire is of a penetrating nature. So the Spirit of God pierces and penetrateth. "The Spirit searcheth all things," &c. 1 Cor. ii. 10.

2dly. Every one that is not salted with this fire, must be salted with hell-fire, which will torment both soul and body for ever.

Quest. What is the nature of hell-fire, and why is hell called a furnace of fire? It is said, that "the wicked shall be cast into a furnace of fire, there shall be wailing, and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xiii. 42.

Ans. 1. A furnace of fire (like that which the king of Babylon did heat for the three worthy servants of God) is very terrible. O it is an amazing thing to think of being cast into such a furnace of fire! and is it not more terrible and amazing to think of being cast into that furnace which divine vengeance hath prepared and heated for all ungodly persons, and unbelievers, who slight and reject Jesus Christ.

2. Fire is a very tormenting thing to such who are cast into it, although but endured

one hour, nay a few minutes. Now divines tell us, that the least tortures in hell exceed the greatest that can be devised by men on earth, because the punishment of hell is to satisfy infinite justice. "As is thy fear, so is thy wrath." Fear of hell is not worse than the sorrows and pains feared.

3. Such is the dreadful nature of the fire of hell (as it is tormenting) that it cannot be quenched. How many times doth our Saviour assert this in this very chapter, *i. e.*, as the worm of conscience dies not, so the fire is not quenched. All the tears, yea, Mark ix. 2. floods of tears cannot quench the fire of hell, hence called eternal life. It is not external but eternal fire. There will be no end of the pains and torments of the damned, neither of men or devils.

4. Such is the nature of this fire, that it will torment both the body and soul too. Elementary fire may torment the body, but cannot touch the soul, to hurt or torment that; but the torments of hell will extend to both. Not only shall internal wrath be let out by the accusations of conscience; but no doubt those eternal flames will also torment the whole soul. See the simile of the fan in Christ's hand.

5. It seems also as if this fire will be a dark fire; whereas external, elementary fire gives light.

(1.) Hell is called "utter darkness," Matt. viii. 12.

(2.) And it is also called the blackness of darkness. "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever," Jude 13. Were it not of this nature, it might seem as if there was some degree of comfort in hell, because light is sweet and comfortable.

Quest. But why is the fire of hell compared to salt?

Ans. 1. Because salt, when applied to a sore or wound in the body, causeth great smart and anguish. So will this fire to a wounded conscience in hell.

2. Because salt is of a preserving nature, so will this fire be like salt to preserve the damned in a state of life. Other fire destroys life, and so puts an end to the torments of such who are burned to ashes in it. But God hath put a different quality into this fire, it shall preserve the objects of divine vengeance from dying, or from being annihilated.

So much as to the first part of the 49th verse.

"And every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."

Some would have every one, and every sacrifice to mean the same persons, as I said before; but I do not believe that our Lord does mean "by every one that shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt" one and the same person.

Pray mind the connexion of the text with what precedes, ver. 47, 48. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now mark, "For every one shall be salted with fire." Every one, that is, every ungodly one, (who parts with the Spirit) or will not part with his beloved lusts, shall burn in hell, or be salted with hell fire. "And every sacrifice shall be salted with salt," every one that sacrifices up his lusts, or every saint of God, shall be salted with salt.

Now therefore, by every sacrifice I understand is meant every believer only, and not the ungodly, though the wicked are called God's sacrifice, yet I humbly conceive they are not intended by sacrifices here.

Evident it is, that believers are, and may upon several respects be called a sacrifice.

1. They offer up to God a broken heart. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise," Psal. li. 17.

2. They offer up themselves, both body and soul, as a sacrifice to God. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1.

3. All the services of believers are called sacrifices. "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. ii. 5.

Hence praises are called sacrifices. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually," Heb. xiii. 15.

Moreover distributing to the poor saints is called a sacrifice. "To do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

4. Because the saints offer up, or sacrifice every sin and lust to the glory of God; the whole body of sin, and every member thereof, they offer up to be mortified by the Spirit, Rom. viii. 13.

5. Because also sometimes they offer up their lives, or their mortal bodies, as a sacrifice unto God, in the flames, in martyrdom, when called to it. "We are all the day long accounted as sheep for the slaughter," Rom. viii. 36.

So much for the 49th. verse.

"Salt is good, but if it hath lost its saltness, wherewith will ye shall season it?" Ver. 50.

Saints compared to salt. Salt here refers unto the saint; particularly, whom our Lord calls the salt of the earth, "Ye are the salt of the earth," Matt. v. 13. Believers, especially Christ's faithful ministers, are called, or compared to salt.

1. In respect of that holy and savoury doctrine which they preach, and blessed truths by them professed; by this means they season the earth, which otherwise would be corrupted with the filth of false doctrine, loathsome, pernicious, and poisonous errors, and destructive heresies.

2. In respect of their savoury words: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt,"

3. In respect of their most wholesome and savoury lives and conversations, and good examples they show unto all. Thus they salt and season the earth.

4. Salt preserves things from perishing, so also do the saints and people of God; were it not for them, the world would stink, and be so loathsome in the nostrils of God, that he would soon destroy it, and tread it down under his feet: "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah," Isa. i. 9. Thus the saints, like salt, are of great use and profit to the earth. Salt is good.

5. Salt will not, cannot season all sorts of meat: some is so far gone, being decayed to such a degree, that it stinks like carrion, and is utterly past recovery.

So the saints and people of God cannot, either by their doctrine, or holy conversation, or holy example, season some ungodly ones: they are so vile, filthy, and abominable, that God hath left them, and given them up to their own heart's lust; and the Spirit will strive with them no more, and they are past all hopes of recovery, and must perish in their sins for ever.

But if salt hath lost its saltness, &c., but if you, my disciples, lose your gracious frame of spirit, or should apostatize from your holy doctrine and principles, or grow carnal and earthly, how, or which way, shall you salt and season others?

What is meant by salt losing its saltness. This denotes two things.

1. That gracious persons, or such as are true Christians, and true ministers, may decay in knowledge, zeal, and holiness, by which means they may render themselves incapable to season others with the knowledge and love of the truth.

2. That all such who seem to be true Christians, or appear savoury like salt for a short time, may notwithstanding utterly decay, and fall away (their hearts being never right with God) and so become good for nothing, but like unsavoury salt prove the very worst of men, as such commonly do, who fall into total apostacy, like Julian the apostate, "But it were better for such they had never known the way of righteousness," 2 Pet. ii. 21. They knew the way of righteousness, had some knowledge of it, and professed themselves to be godly persons for a while; this text therefore doth not in the least intimate, that sincere Christians may, or can totally and finally fall away; no, it is impossible for the elect to be deceived, or perish in apostacy. "We are not of them that draw back to perdition," Heb. x. 39. Such as have real union with Christ, and are members of his mystical body, are not of them, or of that sort which draw back to perdition; we are not sons of defection, but God's elect ones: "Christ's sheep shall never perish; they cannot be like salt which hath utterly lost its saltness, and is become good for nothing," John x. 28.

"Have salt in yourselves."

By salt, in these words, our Saviour no doubt means the true and saving grace of God. Have grace, much grace in your own hearts. Grace is compared to salt.

"And be at peace one with another."

Labour after union, love, and concord one with another; do not seek or strive who shall be greatest; seek not the pre-eminence, but be of a sweet, humble, and condescending frame of heart. "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another."

Having thus explained every part of this dark place of Scripture according to that light and knowledge God hath given me, I shall proceed to the observations. There are only two points of doctrine that I shall take notice of, and prosecute from hence.

The doc- raised. Doct. 1. That it ought to be the special care of every professor, to have salt in himself, or much saving grace in his heart.

Doct. 2. That it is the indispensable duty of the disciples of Christ, to labour to live in peace one with another.

To both these I purpose to speak in order, but at present shall conclude with a word of application.

APPLICATION.

Infer. 1. We may from hence infer, that it is a most dangerous thing for any to live in sin, and harbour base and abominable lusts in their bosoms. Sin may seem sweet in the committing of it, but it will be bitterness in the end.

2. We also infer, that it is no easy thing to be a true Christian, it is as hard as it is to cut off a right hand, or to pull out a right eye: and some men will as soon do the one as the other; they are like that wretched man, who being told by his physician, he must leave off all his evil courses, and reform his debauched life, or he would utterly lose the sight of his eyes, answered and said, then farewell my sweet eyes. He was resolved to keep his lusts, though he lost his sight. There are too many of these, they will not leave their abominable lusts, and beloved sins, though they lose their souls and bodies too, and perish for ever in hell.

3. See how Satan hath deceived miserable mortals: sin is not in vain called deceitful lusts, it is that by which Satan baits his hook, and subtly ensnares the souls of men: the devil is compared to a fowler, and to a cunning hunter, by whose policy many thousands are taken, and devoured, Prov. vi. 5.

4. We also infer from hence, that the future state of the wicked will be very lamentable: who can dwell with unquenchable fire, or in everlasting burnings? Certainly but very few of the ungodly world do indeed believe or give credit to the truth of God's word, nor to what the lip of truth itself has declared; why else should our Lord so often repeat those words, viz., "Shall be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched?"

But let them believe it, or not believe it, they will one day, to their sorrow, find the truth thereof.

5. How just will the damnation of the wicked be, who choose rather to cleave to their evil lusts, either for the sake of unlawful gain, or pleasure, though they perish, than to embrace Jesus Christ and part with them. Brethren, in the great day men will not be condemned for not doing those things which they had no power to do, but for refusing or neglecting to do that which they might have done; not because they had not new hearts, or the image of Christ formed in them, but because they would not believe or give credit to the veracity of God's word, they having equal power to believe in that manner, as to believe any human approved history; but they will not exercise a human faith. It will be, because they refuse to hear the word of God, or to attend upon the means of grace; in a word, this is the "Condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," John iii. 19. They will not leave their profane cursing and swearing, their lying and cheating, their drunkenness and uncleanness, nor their covetousness and abominable pride, malice, envy, backbiting, and slandering the innocent: no, they love these dark ways rather than the light; and others love themselves, their own works and inherent righteousness, and will trust to that, and not come to Christ that they may have life.

6. We infer also from hence, that there is a necessity of the Holy Spirit in convictions; the Spirit of God is a Spirit of burning, before it is a Spirit of consolation. All those who are not salted with this divine fire, shall perish one day in the fire of hell. And how much better is it for wretched sinners to bear the smart of this fire in mortification, than to be salted in hell, under eternal damnation?

7. From what you have heard, we may also infer, how savoury it behoveth all believers to walk in the whole course of their conversations, and to handle their ministry and holy doctrine so, since thereby they are to season the world, and to prevent them from horrid corruptions and pollutions, that they may not become as filthy and stinking carrion.

8. Moreover, we may see the necessity, and transcendent excellency of divine salt. Sinners, you must be salted with the Spirit, or perish for ever.

Remember eternity is written upon the gates of the broad way, as well as it is on the narrow way; you must come under the power of God's word and Spirit.

Lastly. One word to you that are believers, and I have done; have you found that you are salted with fire, i.e., with the Holy Spirit? All must be salted that are a sacrifice for God: as under the law, "Every oblation, and every burnt-offering was to be

salted with salt," Lev. ii. 13. And so also were their meat-offerings. Happy are you, if you are well salted.

SERMON II.

Have salt in yourselves—Mark ix. 50.

I HAVE opened this, and the preceding verse, and have proposed to speak to two points of doctrine.

First Doctr. Doct. 1. That it ought to be the special care of every professor, to see he hath salt in himself, namely, true and saving grace in his heart.

In speaking to this proposition,

First. I shall shew you, why saving grace is compared to salt.

Secondly, shew you why every professor should see to have salt in himself.

Thirdly, shew who they are, that are well salted.

Fourthly, apply it.

First, I shall shew you, why saving grace is compared to salt.

Why grace
is compared
to salt.

1. Salt (as you have heard) causeth great pain and smart, if it be applied to a green wound, &c.,

So the saving grace of the Spirit doth cause a wounded spirit to smart, or put the soul to great pain. It was a sign that David had grace, or was salted, who cried out in pain, in the sense of his sins, "I am sore pained, I roar because of the disquietness of my heart," Psal. xxxviii. 8. Also how did those cry out in pain, that Peter preached to, being pricked in their hearts, under the convictions of the Spirit, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 36. Such who were never wounded under the sense of sin, never felt the smart of this spiritual salt, this pain is very sore. The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?

2. Salt is of a diffusive and searching nature; if it be applied to meat, or laid on flesh, it will diffuse itself into every part, and search it to the very bone.

So saving grace is of a diffusive and searching nature, it will diffuse itself into every faculty of the soul. "The Spirit searcheth all things," 1 Cor. ii. 10.

(1.) Grace diffuseth itself into the understanding, and enlighteneth that. "The entrance of thy word giveth light," Psal. cxix. 130. Ye that were sometimes in darkness, are now light in the Lord. "That the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," Eph. i. 18. Common grace gives some light. We read of hypocrites, who were once enlightened: but special grace gives great light, it enlightens the eyes to see him that is invisible, to see the evil of sin, and the want and worth of Christ, and the vanity of this world.

(2.) Grace diffuseth itself also into the will, it bends the will, and fixes a divine principle there, yea a prevailing, ruling, and reigning principle, so as to receive Jesus Christ, and to make an universal opposition against sin, though it cannot get a total conquest over it.

(3.) Likewise it pierceth into the affections, stirring up an ardent desire after God, and to see that Jesus Christ is the chiefest of ten thousand, and causes the soul to long after a likeness unto him in holiness, meekness, and in humility, &c.

(4.) Grace also diffuseth itself into the conscience, it makes that tender, rightly informing and guiding the conscience by the light and rule of the word.

(5.) Nay it searcheth out every sin, even that sin which is hid, it searcheth every corner of the heart; it is the candle of the Lord, which searcheth the inward part of the belly.

(6.) It also searcheth out the ends, aims, thoughts, and intentions of a man; and if hypocrisy be there, it will discover it. Thus is grace like salt, of a searching nature.

(3.) Salt is of a purging nature, it will cleanse and purge out that filth and corrupt blood which is in the flesh, as is well known to all.

So saving grace cleanseth and purgeth out sin, whether it be in the heart or life, and by this quality saving grace is discerned.

(1.) If we speak of the grace of faith, this is the nature of it. "He puts no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith," Acts xv. 9.

(2.) If we speak of the grace of hope, this is the nature of it: "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as he is pure," 1 Johu iii. 3.

(3.) Or if we speak of the grace of love, it is said, that "ye that love the Lord hate evil," and also, "that perfect love casteth out fear:" that is, slavish fear, love purges out this, like as salt purges out corrupt blood that is in the flesh, to which it is applied.

Some men say that they have faith and hope in Christ, and love to Christ, but are as vile, as filthy, and as unholy as ever may be, swearers, liars, drunkards, proud, or covetous persons. Now this shews, they were never salted, they never had true and saving grace; for grace purges and cleaves the soul, as you have now heard, like as salt purges flesh.

(4.) Salt is of a preserving nature, it preserveth things from corruption and putrefaction: what would become of flesh, and many other things, were it not for salt? even in a very short time it would stink like carrion, and be good for nothing.

So saving grace preserves a man from sin, and all spiritual filthiness, both of the flesh and spirit.

What was it that preserved Joseph from the sin of uncleanness? O he was well salted, he had salt in himself, or saving grace in his heart, which made him say, how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? So what was it which preserved good Nehemiah from the sin of covetousness, and from oppressing of the people, as the former governors had done? why, he had salt in himself, grace in his heart, therefore, saith he, so did not I, because of the fear of the Lord.

5. Some things must be salted quickly, or it may be too late, they may be so soon corrupted.

Some things must be salted quickly.

So ought young men and women to be soon, or quickly salted, or seasoned with grace, or they may be so corrupted, and hardened in sin, that God may give them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they become so abominable, that they may be past all hopes of recovery. 'Tis dangerous to delay the salting of flesh, and some other things; so it is very dangerous to delay looking out for grace; youth is the proper time, now while it is called to-day. "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. Now every soul should see that they are salted with this spiritual salt, before God treats them down as carrion, or as mire of the streets.

6. Sometimes flesh, and other things which are not salted, corrupt presently, the air being corrupt and sultry. So in such a time as this is, persons had need be salted presently, we have very corrupt air, an infectious air, our climate and days are dangerous dwelling in, it is a perilous time, no man can go out of doors, or fall into almost any company, but he may soon be corrupted, either with false doctrine, errors, and heresies, or else with evil and pernicious practices, except he be well salted with grace and saving knowledge.

Things not salted corrupt.

7. Flesh needeth to be salted, and salted again and again, it is not sufficient that a little salt be scattered upon it: so ought every Christian to be salted often, for a little grace will not do, such is the quality of our nature, and the infectiousness of the air, and the days we live in that we ought to have much grace. "It is good that the heart be established with grace," Heb. xiii. 9. To preserve them from sin, and all manner of corruption.

8. Salt also seasons all things, causing that which is unsavoury to become pleasant and wholesome, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt," Job. vi. 6.

Now, brethren, grace makes many things to relish and savour well to a child of God.

1st. It makes spiritual things to savour and taste most sweet to the soul.

What things grace salts.

For although spiritual things are not unsavoury in themselves, yet an unsanctified or graceless heart cannot relish any sweetness in them, their souls being out of taste, they only savour the things of the flesh.

(1) Grace makes the word of God to taste sweet: it made David to say, thy word is sweeter to me than honey, or the honey-comb: and holy Job, to prefer it above his necessary food. "Thy word, saith the prophet, was found, and I did eat it, and thy word was the joy and rejoicing of my heart," Jer. xv. 19. But though it be thus with gracious hearts, yet such who are ungodly, and without grace can taste no good nor sweetness in it. My brethren, how sweet do the promises taste to a man that hath faith! but what good or spiritual sweetness can a person find in it, who believes not, or that is destitute of faith? can such feed upon the promises, or taste the sweetness of the word? no, no.

(2.) Grace makes prayer sweet to a true believer, which hath no taste or savour in it to graceless persons: can they find any sweetness in calling upon God? is it not unpleasant, nay a burden, and very grievous to them? without grace, prayer hath no divine relish in it.

(3.) How sweet, pleasant, and savoury is meditation on God, and Jesus Christ, to one that hath much grace? "My meditation of him shall be sweet in the night-watches," *Psal. civ. 34.*

(4.) How sweet also is spiritual conference, and Christian converse one with another, to gracious persons. "Did not our heart burn within us, whilst he talked with us, and opened the scriptures?" *Luke xxiv. 32.*

(5.) How sweet is the holy supper of our Lord to a Christian, who by faith feedeth on it, or is salted with much grace, much faith, and love to Jesus Christ?

2dly. Grace makes afflictions to be savoury, and to relish well to a true believer, which to graceless persons, to such who have no salt in themselves, are very bitter and irksome; "It was good for me, that I have been afflicted."

3dly. Grace doth not only cause spiritual things to be sweet and savoury to all godly persons, but it maketh them to be most savoury also.

I say, grace, like salt, makes every true Christian to be savoury.

1. In his words; grace seasons the tongue. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt," *Col. iv. 6.* It is said of our blessed Saviour, that "they admired the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, because he was full of grace," *Luke. iv. 22.* Solomon saith, "The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; but the heart of the wicked is of little worth," *Prov. x. 20*; because not salted with this spiritual salt.

2. Grace maketh believers savoury in their behaviour, deportment, and carriage towards all they are in company with, or converse with: but how light, loose, and wanton are graceless persons in their words, carriage, and behaviour, for want of this salt?

3. Grace makes holy and gracious persons savoury in their garbs and dresses. As you may know the lightness, wantonness, and unsavouriness of graceless persons by their words, deportments, and behaviour; so you may also by their garbs and dresses. Like as a bush hung out, shows that wine is sold within; so by the vain and fantastical dresses some persons wear, you may know that there is a vain, wanton, and graceless heart within. But if ye see women dressed in sober garbs, or in modest apparel, as becoming such who profess godliness, it may show the graciousness of their hearts; though it is true, some carnal persons may go in modest dresses, like as many professors appear to be that which they are not.

4. Grace maketh Christians to be savoury in their tradings and commerce with all they trade with; how full of words are some persons, and how will they commend their goods above what they know they ought, may be, tell a company of lies to deceive the buyer. It is easy to discern a holy and gracious person in his dealing and trading in the world, provided he be a man of right principles, and acts to a right end: though it is true, many have got the art to counterfeit a true Christian this way also. In a word, grace makes all true believers savoury unto God, savoury to the saints, and savoury to the world, and also unto themselves.

9. Salt (as Pliny, and other Naturalists observe) is very good to destroy worms that breed in the body of men, women, and children. and also that it is good against the sting of serpents.

Grace is a most sovereign remedy against all sin, which is the sting of the old serpent. Whosoever looks unto Christ by faith, though never so severely stung (as those were in the wilderness by fiery serpents) are all immediately cured; and indeed to this end is he held up in the gospel, *Joh. iii. 14.* Also grace, saving grace is the only remedy to kill and destroy the worm of conscience, which breeds out of that filth or corruption that is in the soul, which I understand is that worm (which our Saviour saith in hell, dieth not) it begins to gnaw here in this world, whilst the sinner is alive in the body; and the pricking and griping pain thereof is sometimes very grievous and tormenting, even according to the degree and nature of that sin or sins which lie upon the conscience, and according to that light which is in the understanding, especially when God lets out conscience to torment the soul.

Quest. Why is conscience compared to a worm?

What is meant by the worm that dies not. **Ans.** 1. Because as worms that breed in the body, are bred out of that corrupt matter, or undigested food that nature cannot carry off, either in the stomach, or in the belly; so the worm of conscience is bred out of the filth of sin and corruption in the soul: for from the greatness of that filth, horrid guilt arises, which the natural powers of the soul cannot purge or cast out

2. Because as worms in the body are the cause of many sad and mortal diseases: so from this worm of conscience many dangerous diseases of the soul do also arise, as un-

belief, melancholy, frenzy, and desperation : what fearful distempers (by this means) took hold of Spira, and poor Mr. Child!

3. Because as worms bred in the body are very tormenting: so is the pain and anguish which is occasioned by the worm of conscience. No man is able to express what sorrow, pain, and torment those two miserable persons felt and endured, from the guilt of their accusing and condemning consciences.

4. Because as the body in respect of all its natural powers is not able to cure the person, or cast off the pain that rises, or is occasioned by those worms: so all the natural powers of the soul cannot cure a man, or free him of those dolorous pains which rise from the worm of conscience; no, no, it must be done by the application of some powerful medicines or means made use of, and nothing but the Spirit of Christ, and the graces thereof; especially the grace of faith can do it, by which the blood of Christ is applied unto the conscience.

5. Because as a person who is sorely afflicted, and tormented with worms, without speedy cure must die (for many thousands it is thought do daily die of worms) so except a poor sinner hath not speedy cure of the worm of conscience, he must die, or perish eternally. But such is the excellent nature of this salt, I mean, the grace of faith, which applies the only remedy, that no sooner does a poor sinner believe, but he hath ease, and this worm is destroyed, and he perfectly cured, and to such a degree, that as before his conscience did most sorely torment him, now his conscience (that worm being killed) gives him most sweet joy and peace.

6. Yet as many persons who have worms, and are at times greatly distressed thereby, by taking some medicines, which though they cannot cure them, yet give them some ease for a while; so by false remedies many sinners have some ease from their tormenting consciences, but soon their pain returns again (unless God suffers their consciences to be seared) and terrifies them more than ever.

10. Salt causes great thirst (as all by experience find) even so the saving grace of God cansteth a mighty drought or thirst in the soul after Jesus Christ, the water of life. "As the hart thirsteth after the water-brooks, so my soul thirsteth after thee, O God," Psal. xlii. 1, 2. It is true, some say, that thirsting after Jesus Christ is a previous qualification for Christ, or as a preparation to grace, but certainly they are mistaken; for it is grace itself that causes this vehement thirst and desire in the soul, by its convictions discovering the sad estate in which naturally it is; and also by opening of the eyes of the understanding, to see the great necessity and excellency of Jesus Christ. The Spirit (as I told you) being first a Spirit of burning, before it is a Spirit of consolation. God by the Spirit first wounds the soul, and then heals it: and though it is true, the law may convince of sin, yet those legal convictions only torment, and can give no sight of the only cure and remedy which a poor sinner needeth; but the Spirit of God doth not only convince of sin, but of righteousness also; doth not only show the soul its disease, but the only cure and remedy also which is by Christ alone, and his perfect righteousness, John xvi. 8, 9.

11. Salt was made use of under the law (as I told you before in the explication) in sacrifices. "Every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt." Again, "In all thy offerings thou shalt use salt," Lev. ii. 13. Which no doubt signified or typified, that we in all God's service must act from a principle of grace, or must be salted with this spiritual salt. "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear," Heb. xii. 28. The Hebrew doctors held, that that which was not salted was abominable; so those duties which are not performed from a principle of grace, i.e., from a principle of faith and love to God, are abominable in God's sight. Hence the scripture saith, that "the sacrifice of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xv. 8, xxi. 27.

So much for the first thing.

Secondly, why should every professor be salted with grace, or have much grace in themselves?

1. Because there is much corruption, and inward filth in the hearts of the best of saints, which grace, and nothing else, can purge out: possibly some filth may be hid, there may be some sin that a believer hath not yet discovered; but if he obtain a little more of this salt, it will search it out, and purge it forth also. Alas, a little salt will not search and season much flesh, no, but much must be applied to it: so a little grace (as you have heard) is not enough, it is not sufficient to mortify and overcome all those corruptions that are in some men's hearts;

Why every believer should be salted with grace.

many Christians are naturally of such a perverse and crooked disposition, so passionate, so peevish, so subject to malice, envy, pride, and covetousness, that they may need, perhaps, ten times more grace than another godly person, who is naturally of a mild and sweet disposition or temper.

2. Every professor hath need to be well salted, or to have much knowledge and grace, because they lie open to so many temptations in these evil and dangerous times, where sin, and all manner of abominations do so abound; we live in a bad air, a bad climate: so that if men and women be not well salted, they will soon be corrupted, and defiled with the sins of these evil days. How was blessed Joseph corrupted by dwelling in Pharaoh's court, he had learned to swear the court oath, by the life of Pharaoh. "Ye shall not go forth hence, except your younger brother come hither," Gen. xlii. 15. A godly man may abhor one sin, and not be overcome thereby; but for want of a greater measure of grace, and by dwelling in a wicked place or family, he may be overtaken with another; like as the children of Israel, when they came into the land of Canaan, and many of the Amorites, &c., dwelling amongst them, they soon learned their evil ways, and served their gods.

3. Because of the great danger all professors are in, to be tainted or corrupted with false and poisonous errors, and pernicious heresies: and now much of this salt of saving grace and knowledge will be a most sovereign preservative against all the danger they are in upon this account. Hence it is the apostle saith, "It is good to have the heart established with grace, and not with meats," Heb. xiii. 9. As they were in danger of being corrupted or tainted with Judaism and Gentilism, &c., so are the saints now with Socinianism, Quakerism, Baxterianism, &c. Alas, how many are sadly corrupted and tainted by some of these errors already, for want of the salt of saving grace and knowledge.

Professors of the gospel lie open to many temptations that are very subject to corrupt them in doctrine, as well as in immoralities; and it is grace only, like unto salt, which must preserve them from evil principles, as well as from evil practices. "Who can touch pitch, and not be defiled? with the froward we soon learn frowardness," Psal. cxix. 11. Sin is of an infectious nature; therefore holy David hid God's word in his heart, lest he should sin against him.

3. All Christians should have much salt in themselves, because they are too subject to decay in holiness and true piety. It is grace only that preserves them in a lively and spiritual frame. "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40. Grace is put here for fear; whosoever decays in grace, decays in godly fear, and declines in his faith, love, patience, temperance, humility, brotherly-kindness, and charity (I mean in the exercise of all these particular graces,) if there be but a little sap in the branches, there will be but little fruit.

4. Because according to that degree of grace a person hath, will his peace and comfort be. What is the reason some Christians are so full of doubts and fears, and discomforted, going drooping all the day long? Alas, it is for the want of faith. Grace, much grace, fortifies the soul against fear, and despairing thoughts. Job having a strong faith could say, though God slay him, yet he would trust in him. What was the cause that the disciples were afraid? Why, our blessed Lord told them, it was because they had no more faith. "O ye of little faith, wherefore do you doubt?" Mat. xiv. 31. Their fears and doubts arose from the want of faith. Therefore we should have much grace in ourselves.

5. Because it is by the power and virtue of grace in ourselves that we must perform all our duties. O how heavily do we discharge religious duties! And how cold, and flat are we, if we are not influenced, quickened, and stirred up by the grace of God in our hearts! no service indeed is accepted which we perform, unless it be done by the power and assistance of grace. "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence, and godly fear," Heb. xii. 28. How did David cry, that God would quicken him in his ways, which he knew must be done by the Spirit and grace of God in his soul.

6. Because it is by having much grace in ourselves, that we are enabled to bear afflictions, reproaches, and manifold trials which we daily do, or may expect to meet withal. Abraham having much grace, much faith, was enabled to bear up under the greatest trial, even that of sacrificing of his only son Isaac whom he loved. "He staggered not through unbelief, but being strong in faith, he gave glory unto God." Rom. iv. 20. Certainly another child of God, who had not so great a degree of faith, would have fainted at such a

trial, or not have been able to have acted as Abraham did. We know not what trials we may meet with, and therefore we are directed, to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 16. A weak person is hard put to it, to get up a very high hill, when a man that is strong goes up with much ease.

7. Because grace sweetens the soul, and that not only unto the person himself, but also it renders a man savoury to God, and to all good men. Such who are well salted are a savoury sacrifice unto God; and the more grace we have, the more sweet and savoury are we in all respects. Indeed it is this that commends religion to the unsavoury world, it makes their hearts, their lips, and their life to be savoury, as you have heard, and therefore we should have much of this spiritual salt in ourselves.

8. Because it is grace that purgeth out that inward filth and corruption that is in the souls of believers, out of which the worm of conscience breeds. My brethren, the soul needs a purge, nay to be purged often, as well the body. We are subject to many diseases, especially to the worm of conscience; if sin be not purged out, conscience will pinch and gripe the soul most bitterly, like as it did Joseph's brethren. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Conscience may lie asleep for a while, but a time will come when it will awake and terrify the soul most sorely. But by having much grace, this may be prevented, it will both preserve from, and purge out filth and corruption, by which means a man need not fear he ever shall be afflicted with the worm of conscience.

9. Because the saints are to season others. "Ye are the salt of the earth," Matt. v. 13. Now how should they do this, if they are not well salted themselves? unsavoury professors make an unsavoury world. It is no marvel if the world stink, and is corrupted, if those that should salt it lose their saltness. Therefore should all that profess the gospel have much salt in themselves.

Thirdly, who are they that are savoury Christians, or that have much salt in themselves?

Who they
are that are
well salted.

I answer, such that are well cleansed and purged from all the inward filth and corruptions of their hearts, or cleansed from their secret faults, and not only from fleshly, but also from spiritual filthiness, 2 Cor. vii. 1. The Pharisees strove to make clean the outside of the cup and platter; they laboured after external holiness, or to appear to men to be righteous, but inwardly they were as a filthy sepulchre, full of pride, uncleanness, and hypocrisy. But a Christian that is well salted with grace, is cleansed from inward uncleanness. Hence they are said to be pure in heart. "The pure in heart shall see God," Matt. v. 8. They are the sincere ones. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord," Ps. cxix. 1. All that they do is done in uprightness, they allow of no sin, they have no Delilah, no beloved lusts, sin doth not reign nor predominate in them; grace hath so fully sanctified their souls, there is nothing that they love, and long after, more than heart purity.

Secondly. Such who have a savoury tongue, that watch their words, and keep the door of their lips. Brethren, an unsavoury tongue discovers an unsavoury heart.

1. As a prating tongue, whose tongue runs at random, hardly ever lies still. "In the multitude of words, there wants not sin," Prov. x. 19. This tongue is not salted, it is not seasoned with grace. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips," Prov. xvi. 23. A fool is known by his much speaking.

Now this salt prevents this evil, he knows when to speak, and when to keep silence; he keeps his tongue as with a bridle.

2. He hath no jesting tongue; idle talking and jesting is loathed by him; whosoever are given to vain jesting, and idle talking, have an unsavoury tongue. But grace heals this evil also.

3. They have no bragging and proud boasting tongue. His own lips do not praise himself. How will some glory, and boast of their knowledge, of their parts, of their learning! "The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things," James iii. v. The apostle speaks of an unsavoury tongue, a tongue that is not tamed, or not salted with grace. But he that is well seasoned, speaks soberly of himself, he is little in his own eyes, and so speaketh, "To me, who am less than the least saint, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph. ii. 8. This shows he was well seasoned with grace.

4. He hath not a lying tongue; no, he abhors lying, and speaks the truth to his neighbour in his heart, he dares not equivocate, as many do.

5. He hath not a back-biting tongue, a detracting tongue. Before a backbiter is not

salted, he wants grace, for this is one of the greatest evils a man can be guilty of. Such shall not ascend God's holy hill; for this is the character of such, "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour," Psal. xv. 3. An unsalted backbiting tongue God abhorreth. "An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is a burning fire," Prov. xvi. 27. How will he search and dig to find out the faults of his brother out of malice and envy, to reproach him! This was one of those evils the Gentiles were given up unto.

6. Not a flattering tongue, a dissembling tongue, a fawning tongue. Some will speak smoothly to their neighbour, when deceit is in their hearts; but a gracious tongue, a tongue seasoned with this salt will flatter no man, but deal faithfully with all.

7. A seasoned and well salted Christian, hath no railing nor scolding tongue. He that 1 Cor. v. 5. is guilty of railing, ought to be cast out of the church.

3rdly. You may know savoury Christians by their savoury discourse, and savoury behaviour. With what modesty, sobriety, and gravity do they behave themselves!

4thly. They are such that are preserved from those vile and abominable evils, and corruptions of the world, in the days in which they live, both in point of doctrine and practice.

5thly. They have a savoury and gracious spirit. "But my servant Caleb had another spirit with him," Numb. xiv. 24. These persons have a heavenly, a serious, an humble, an established, a generous, a patient, and a sincere spirit; and all this is through the nature of this spiritual salt, with which they are seasoned.

6thly. Such perform all their duties acceptably to God, in faith, love, and humility, and with much zeal and fervency of spirit. Grace makes them hot and lively. They do all they do, in God's holy worship with much affection unto God. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

7thly. They can bear the great heat of persecution and temptation, when others are fly-blown, like fresh meat in the heat of summer, they in such a time decay and corrupt, and quickly stink in the nostrils of God, and all good men; when a well salted Christian endures and corrupts not, because he is well salted.

APPLICATION.

1. We may infer from hence, that saving grace is the principal thing, as all know salt is. What can we do if we have no salt? It is so excellent and so needful a thing; and O what can a poor creature do, that has no saving grace in his heart? O what will become of him in the end? He will certainly, like stinking flesh, be cast into the kennel of God's wrath.

2. We may also infer from what has been said, that the cause of all those abominable evils which abound in the world, is, because men are not salted, they have not the grace of God in them.

3. Moreover it informs us, wherefore it is that some professors are more savoury than others, they are better salted, they have more salt or grace in themselves. O what a multitude of proud, carnal, earthly, and envious professors are there in these evil days; but the cause is, they are not salted. And hence it is they are so ready to corrupt others, as tainted flesh is subject to taint that which may be sweet that lies by it.

4. Sinners be exhorted to get salt, provide yourselves salt before it be too late, you may in a short time be past all recovery. Salt will not renew you when God hath left you to your own hearts' lusts.

You must know whither you must go for this salt, it is laid up in Christ, he is "full of grace and truth;" John. i. 11. You must go to him for it, buy it of him, you may have it on easy terms, even "without money, and without price," Isa. lv. 1. Yet know, the market-day may be soon over.

MOTIVES.

1. There is no corruption, no sin, or abominable filth, but this salt will purge it out.
2. Being once well salted, you need never fear a total defection, such shall not ever perish. Not that the grace a person hath received will preserve him; no, but God will continually add more salt, give more grace to such,
3. This salt will preserve you in all times, in all company, in all temptations.
4. It hath one or two properties that common salt hath not, viz.,
 - (1.) It will recover such persons that stink, and are abominable in God's sight.
 - (2.) Such is the nature of this spiritual salt, that it will never loose its saltiness.
 - (3.) You cannot be over salted, no man can have too much grace.

Lastly, It will render you and all your duties most acceptable unto God, even as a sweet smelling savour.

3rdly. Examine yourselves, you that are professors, have you salt in yourselves? are you of a sweet, peaceable, and loving temper, ready to forgive, being meek and lowly in heart, being holy and heavenly, both in heart and life? if so, what comfort may this doctrine administer to you: it is a sign you are those God loved from everlasting, and shall be saved, for grace is the seed of glory.

SERMON III.

And have peace one with another.—Mark ix. 50.

Doct. That it is the indispensable duty of the saints, disciples, and members of the church of Christ, to have peace one with another, or to maintain love, union, and sweet concord among themselves.

There are two parts in our text.

1st. A duty enjoined.

2ndly. An excellent virtue commanded, "peace one with another."

1. The person exhorting to this duty, is Jesus Christ.

2. The persons exhorted are his disciples.

In speaking to this great proposition,

First, I shall prove it is the indispensable duty of the saints and members of Christ, to have peace one with another.

Secondly, Give you the reasons of it, or show you wherefore.

Thirdly, Give some directions how to attain, and maintain peace one with another.

Fourthly, Apply it.

First, I shall prove that it is the indispensable duty of the saints and people of God, to live in peace one with another. See what the holy apostle saith, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph. iv. 3. Endeavouring, this word denotes not only the duty, but the difficulty in reaching or attaining unto it, and also in maintaining of peace and union. Beloved, Satan and the flesh are great enemies to peace. "The spirit that dwelleth in us, lusteth to envy," James iv. 5. Again, saith Paul, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind." To which I might add what he says in another place, "Be at peace among yourselves," 1 Thess. v. 13.

It is the duty of saints to have peace among themselves.

Thus having proved, that this is the indispensable duty of believers, I shall,

Secondly, Give you the reasons why they should be at peace one with another.

1. Because it is a holy precept of our blessed Lord, therefore a great sin not to endeavour after it, or not to live in love and peace. You dread lying, swearing, stealing, drunkenness, &c., because these are abominable sins, hateful to God, and breaches of his holy law. Why, brethren, so it is not to have peace, or not to live in love and peace one with another. "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another." It is the will of God, as the apostle speaks in another case, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification;" so I may say, this is the will of God, even that you have peace one with another.

2. Because peace, love, and union, God exceedingly delights in, and also commends in his word, as good and pleasant in his sight; "Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity," Psa. cxxxiii. 1. Shall we not do that which God thus commends and takes delight in. As he saith, "O do not this abominable thing that I hate;" so let me say, O do this thing that he loves, and delighteth in.

3. This is agreeable to the principles of religion, and true piety, and design of the gospel, and it is also the effect of true grace.

When our blessed Lord was born, the angel proclaimed, "glory to God on high, and on earth peace." Not only peace with God, but also peace one with another. Brethren, hath Christ made our peace with God by his own blood, and shall we not be at peace one with another? God forbid.

This was one design and end of Christ's coming, viz., "He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers," Mal. iv. 6.

that is, to make all the saints to live in love and peace, and not in strife, contention, and divisions.

4. Moreover, this will be one of the principal blessings of the reign of Jesus Christ in his visible kingdom, there shall be sweet peace and concord among all the saints: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, &c. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," &c., Isa. xi. 6—9. There shall be then no lion-like nor wolfish nature among men any more.

But the saints shall all serve the Lord with oneness of heart, or with one consent. God is now about "gathering the nations, and assembling the kingdoms, to pour upon them his indignation, even all his fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of his jealousy," Zeph. iii. 8. Well, but what will be the effect of all this, what will immediately follow? even the peaceable kingdom of Jesus Christ: observe the very next words, "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent," verse 9. Certainly the kingdom of Christ is not yet begun, for our days do not look like to such a time which the prophet speaks of, but it shews what our duty is; and if the kingdom of Christ be come with power on our souls, this will be one effect thereof, namely power on our sweet, loving, and peaceable spirit, and temper of heart.

5. My brethren, God is the God of peace, and Jesus Christ is the Prince of peace, and the Holy Spirit is the bond of peace, and the Gospel is called the Gospel of peace, therefore the saints and children of God should labour to have peace one with another; how else will it appear they are related to such a Father, and are the subjects of such a Prince, and are led and guided by such a Spirit, and feel the divine power of such a Gospel on their own souls? It is said, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and one soul," Acts. iv. 32. Moreover, is said of the saints in the succeeding age after the apostles, that the unity and peace of Christians was so famous, that they had this name or character, viz., "A people that agreed amongst themselves." I am sure this cannot be said to be the character of God's people in this present age, the more to be lamented. O how are we divided! what animosities, envyings, and confusions are among us?

6. Love, peace, and concord, is the property of the new heart; "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you," Ezek. xi. 19. &c. A faithful heart, an honest and sincere heart, a heart not divided between God and idols, not a Greenhall heart drawing back or revolting from God, yea and a heart united to each other, a loving and peaceable heart; as they have all one God, one Saviour, one faith, so they shall have sweet communion together; they shall be united, or have much love, and mutual agreement between themselves, they shall have one heart.

Unum est ens indivisum in se; unius quidditas, est essendi indivisibilitas.

Scaliger's
Exercit. 65.
Num. 2.
Suarez in
Metaph.

Others say, that is one which is *indivisum a se, & divisum ab omni alio*. Such a heart they shall have, a heart undivided in itself, and divided from all things heterogeneal, and of a dividing nature. This oneness of heart may be considered,

(1.) Respecting themselves, and so first, as it includes the judgment and affections, they shall not dissent and cross one another; but when truth is in their understanding, the affections shall close with it.

(2.) It denotes also that the will and conscience shall not be divided, or oppose one and the other, as it doth in hypocrites,

(3.) In respect of God; they shall all look at God as the only and adequate object of their hearts, they shall be content with him alone.

(4.) Moreover, in respect to God's worship, they shall not be for human mixtures in divine worship; "In that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one," Zech. xiv. 9, Jer. xxxii. 39. By name expositors understand worship, and that shall be one.

(5.) In respect of the saints.

(1.) Their judgment shall be one, *i. e.*, they shall agree in all fundamental, and substantial points of faith.

(2.) One in love and affections: though in some circumstantial things or matters of less moment they may differ, yet they shall all own one another as brethren, and love each other. Now if this be the property of the new heart, how doth it behove us to labour for love, peace, and oneness of heart, and spirit?

7. Because believers are brethren, this is a great argument why we should live in love and peace together: we may say with Abraham to his kinsman Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, betwixt thee and me, for we are brethren," Gen. xiii. 8. Discord among brethren is abominable, not only to God, but it is hateful in the sight of all men: we have all one Father, one Lord Jesus Christ, one faith, one baptism;" Eph. iv. 3; and are all of us members of one and the same body: the relation we stand one to another, should stir up to strive after love and peace. Dear children will not quarrel with one another, because it would grieve the heart (should they so do) of their tender, gracious Father, and expose him and his family to reproach.

8. Because hereby we shall answer the blessed purport of the Lord's supper: "For we being many, are one bread, and one body; for we all partake of that one bread," 1 Cor. x. 17. One loaf is made up of many corns of wheat: so we who are but one body, or members of the same church, should demonstrate this sacred union, by living in love and peace. What, shall we eat of one and the same bread, and not be of one heart, or not be united together in love? this is to contradict the purport of this holy ordinance.

9. Because this peace and union tends to make our communion most sweet and comfortable to each other. "How can two walk together, except they are agreed?" Amos iii. 3. Can we have communion with God, unless we are in a state of mystical union with him? And as this cannot be, so here also, *i. e.*, we cannot have fellowship and communion one with another, unless our hearts are united to each other. Or can our seeming communion be acceptable to God, if our hearts are not united in sincere love and affections? Moreover, where this is wanting, how are the ways of God, and people of God, exposed to the reproach, and to the contempt of an ungodly world? But, on the contrary, what saith our blessed Lord, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

10. Because this will prevent all those grievous evils, which commonly attend the want of love, *viz.*, strife, contention, and divisions, &c.

(1.) Peace among ourselves prevents Satan in his design, whose work it is to sow discord, and to alienate the hearts of Christians from one another. My brethren, this is the way to counterwork the devil, and to hinder him in one grand design of his.

(2.) It will also prevent the loss of much precious time in making up breaches, or to unite such who were at discord one with another.

(3.) It will also prevent the troubles which arise in the church, through that discord, strife, and contention which may be between one member and another; for, were care taken to maintain love and peace, and things that tend to peace and holiness, we should have but little to do in days of discipline, which often grieve and stumble the weak, and tends to hinder the increase of the churches.

(4.) Moreover, it would prevent those obstructions, of doing much good; for experience shows, that when the bond of love and peace is broken between one member and another, such things that tend to public good are greatly obstructed; because all do not draw together, like the horses in Pharaoh's chariot, but heavy burdens are laid upon some whilst others, through offences given, withdraw their hands, and will do but little or nothing.

(5.) It would prevent also the public reproach and scandal, which divisions, and want of love and peace cast upon the ways and people of God; for thus they without are ready to say, *viz.*, they are full of envy and hatred to each other, or they do not love one another; can these be the people of God? "Woe to the world because of offences."

11. It is the indispensable duty of believers, to have love and peace among themselves, because this is that which makes, or tends to make the church formidable, and "terrible as an army with banners," Cant. vi. 10, or like a sheaf of arrows bound up together, which cannot be broken. It was an old proverb, Divide them, and destroy them. "A city divided (saith our Saviour) against itself cannot stand." You have perhaps heard of that aged man, who having many sons whom he called to him on his death-bed, he bid them bring a sheaf of arrows to him, which was done; and he gave it to his eldest son, and bid him break that sheaf of arrows, which he strove to do, but could not; then he gave it to his next son to break, but he could not; then he bid his eldest son take out one single arrow, which he did: said the father to him, break it, and so he presently, and with much ease did: upon which thus spoke the old man, Children, while you abide together in love as one man, you will be like a sheaf of arrows, that cannot, by your enemies be broken; but if you are divided and alienated from each other, you will be easily broken into pieces.

12. This farther appears, because by this means mutual prayer will not be hindered. Evident it is, that if discord be between a man and his wife, their prayers are thereby

hindered: hence the apostle advises such that are married not to defraud one another, that their prayers be not obstructed: it is said, Acts iv. 24, "That they lifted up their voice with one accord."

Divisions in a family hinder mutual prayer in that family: can we join in our hearts together, if we are not at peace one with another?

13. Because this provokes to sympathy: what then is the joy of one, will be the joy of all; and what is the grief and sorrow of one, will be the grief and sorrow of all; and so hereby we shall be capable to answer that holy precept, "Rejoice with them that rejoice, and mourn with them that mourn." How doth the tender husband sympathize with his dear wife, and the tender wife sympathize with the dear husband in his troubles and afflictions, or the tender parents sympathize with their distressed and afflicted children?

Did believers look upon each other, as being bone of the same bone, and flesh of the same flesh; how would they love and sympathize with one another, and help and relieve each other in all their wants and necessities?

Thirdly, I shall give you some directions, in order to attain and maintain peace, love, and concord with one another.

Directions to
peace one
with another.

1. Labour after meekness and humbleness of mind: this is a great advancement of peace. "Only of pride cometh contention," Prov. xiii. 10.

Were men of a humble, meek, and quiet spirit, and not proud and conceited, they would not make such trouble, or cause and stir up strife and contention, as many times they do. "Let nothing be done through strife and vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves," Phil. ii. 3. "An humble person will be a peaceable person.

2. Speak well of all your brethren who hold the head, or are sound in the faith, in respect of all fundamental principles, though not in every thing of your opinion in some points of religion: for peace among ourselves ought not to be restrained only to the members of that church we belong unto, but to all the saints, let them be Presbyterians, Independents, or Baptists. I do not mean that it is your duty to hold church-communion with all; no, that cannot be, unless all were of one judgment in all the essentials of church-constitution: for mutual love is not to be the rule of our church-communion and fellowship, but the word of Christ. But though we cannot as yet be all of one judgment in this case, yet we ought not to censure one another but own each other for brethren, and be all united in love and affections. How unchristian-like is it to render them that differ from us odious, as if they were not members of the mystical body of Christ, or belonged not to the universal church? "Speak evil of no man," no, nor speak of the evils of any, except the evil or sin they are guilty of be public, and notorious; and that not then out of an ill purpose, to expose the person out of spite and revenge; for that is most hateful and abominable in the sight of God, and tends to strife and discord. "As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," but much more with all the saints and people of God.

3. If you would have peace one with another, avoid all secret whisperings and back-bitings; for indeed nothing more tends to break the bonds of peace, than such unlawful and sinful practice. "A wrathful man stirreth up strife, but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife," Prov. xv. 18. "A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends," Prov. xvi. 28. Now to avoid this evil, be sure you discountenance, nay, sharply rebuke the backbiter; for such who do it not are really guilty, as the proverb is, "The receiver is as bad as the thief."

4. Seek the temporal as well as the spiritual good of all your brethren, especially they that are of the same church or community with you. "Let no man seek his own, but every one his brother's wealth," 1 Cor. x. 24. Do they do so that will not trade with their brother, nor help him in his necessity, when it is in the power of his hands? what, not lend five pounds to thy poor brother, or more or less, which might be of great advantage to him, though thou hast perhaps hundreds lying by thee.

I cannot see how love and peace can be maintained, where those duties of charity, sympathy, and brotherly-kindness are neglected: thou wilt not buy what thou needest of thy brother, but rather of strangers; though by this neglect of thine, and others, it tends to his undoing: and if thou and other friends did trade with him, he might live comfortably. How doth this evil create hard thoughts in one brother against another, and break the bonds of love and peace? They call me a brother, saith the poor man, but I see no brotherly love to be in them. "I seek not mine own profit (saith Paul) but the profit of many," 1 Cor. x. 33. But it will be hard for a man to believe you seek the good and profit of his soul when you do not seek the profit of his body, or external good of his family.

5. If you would have peace one with another, see that you deal with your offending brother according to that rule our blessed Lord hath laid down, Matt. 18.

(1.) Tell him his fault between thee and him alone, but do it gently, sweetly, and not in a rough and angry manner, and labour again and again to convince him of evil; but if thou canst not prevail,

(2.) Then take one or two more with thee, and see what you and they can do, but with all mildness; but do not think that their speaking to him is enough, or doth answer the rule: no, no, but you and they must labour to bring him to a sight and sense of his sin; and be sure all this while discover his fault to no other: at first you should take heed that you conceal his evil, and divulge it to none till you have privately done your duty. But if you alone, nor one, or two more cannot win him, then bring it to the church. Now this rule carefully observed, will greatly tend to peace, order, and concord.

6. If you would have peace among yourselves, make it matter of conscience always to attend the public worship of God in the church to which you belong, and do not hear at such times anywhere else. What though your neighbours feed in a richer pasture than yours is? will you break the hedge to feed in that pasture which is none of your own? I must tell you, it is but stolen bread, and it tends to disorder and confusion; for by the same reason that you go and hear where you please, every member may, and what then will become of that particular church to which you belong? O what grief and offence is this to your pastor and fellow-brethren! If this be not prevented, you cannot expect peace one with another. "They went to their own company," Acts iv. 23. I tell you that such actions are a breach of that precept; "Forsake not the assembling yourselves together, as the manner of some is," Heb. x. 23; you must assemble together, not with others that are not of your community.

7. Be sure be impartial in judgment in the discipline of the church; let none be connived at out of favour, nor others dealt severely with, out of prejudice. Levi was not to know his father nor his mother in judgment.

8. Let no one part of the church meet together as dissatisfied persons, to consult church matters, without the knowledge of the pastor, or consent and appointment of the church: for where this is done, the bond of love and peace is broken.

9. Let no members be received into the church, without general satisfaction taken of their faith and godly conversation; neither be careless or remiss in receiving of persons, lest such get in among you, who by their turbulent spirits, or ill lives, disturb or disquiet the peace of the church. What sad examples are there in some churches arising from hence, viz., by loose persons getting in among them!

10. Avoid the reception of any persons from other orderly churches sound in the faith, without the consent of that church to whom they belong; for that is to destroy the just authority and power of Christ in each particular congregation; nor is it to do as you would be done unto: therefore that church and pastor that is guilty of this evil ought to be discontinued as violators of the rules of order and peace amongst the churches of the saints.

11. Let no feuds arise, no strife nor dissension upon differing sentiments that may be in some members minds from others about circumstantial matters, either in respect of faith, practice, or discipline; because all have not attained to the same degree of light and knowledge, in all such cases one member must bear with another, Jude 10. Jam. iii. 14, 16.

12. Let every member avoid the believing a report or charge against any brother or sister, before they know the truth of the matter; for perhaps such reports may be spread abroad of one member or another, through the envy or malice of some or another that gives way to the devil, and so become like him, viz., false accusers of the brethren; how was Paul reproached by false brethren, and false apostles; and also holy Jeremiaah, "report, say they, and we will report," Jer. xx. 10.

13. Labour after patience and mutual forbearance one of another, forgiving one another; if you would have peace among yourselves, see the advice of the apostle, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 31, 32. O what patience and forbearance doth God exercise towards us, and what a multitude of faults does he pass by and forgive us! Brethren, we should be like unto him; "Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful." Can you expect peace one with another if this be wanting? and if we do not forgive our brother, neither will God forgive us.

14. If you would maintain peace one with another, take care constantly to visit each other; the neglect of this tends to break the bonds of love, and alienate one member from

another: what, wilt thou not visit thy brother and sister, that lives near thee, to know how he and she doth? this I must tell thee argues but little love in thy heart to them; such that we dearly love we will see often.

15. Report nothing of the private concerns or matters of the church to strangers, or to carnal persons, especially any thing that is done on days of discipline; the church in this case (as well as in others) is "as a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." Cant. iv. 12. This too often disturbs the peace of the church, and breaks the bonds of love. Is it not a shame to any, to divulge the secrets of the family where he dwells? but far greater shame and reproach do these persons expose themselves unto.

16. Do not withdraw thy communion from the church upon private offences, or upon small trifling cases, lest you are found such that slight communion with Christ, as well as grieve thy brethren, and spoil their peace. Is thy meeting with Christ at his table no more valued by thee? therefore until thou hast done thy duty to thy brother, and the church hath dealt with him and excluded him, thou canst not, must not presume to do it. Wilt thou assume the power of the keys, or church authority? beware of this pernicious evil, if you would have peace one with another.

17. Give due encouragement to the exercise of such gifts that are amongst you: first, if you apprehend any brother hath received some competent ministerial gifts; let him freely exercise those gifts privately, and being in time approved, let the church call him forth to preach more publicly; else how shall the church be provided with ministers in future times? or how shall an approved ministry be continued in the church? "As every man hath received the gift, even so let him administer the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," 1 Pet. iv. 10.

18. Labour to keep up the reputation and honour of your pastor, and do not "receive an accusation against him, under two or three witnesses," 1 Tim. v. 19. Also observe such, who out of prejudice may suggest or insinuate into the minds of unwary members, evil against your minister; for Satan hates no men more, than such who preach the gospel, and have the charge of souls, and of the churches of Je-sus Christ; therefore he will not be wanting to render them useless, or to obstruct them in their work; and thereby also disquiet the whole congregation, and put them into confusion. "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." Yet do not wulk or connive at any gross enormity in him, for that may soon tear you to pieces. Pious persons be sure will not endure it; for no men more expose the name of God to reproach, and hinder the peace and increase of the church, than scandalous ministers; yet let the rule of the gospel be carefully observed in your dealing with him.

19. Look more at that good that is in thy brother, and speak more of that behind his back, than of those infirmities thou mayest espy in him; let the bright side of the cloud be in your sight, and not the dark. The apostle John commends those virtues that were in the fathers, young men, and children, but not a word of their faults and infirmities; no doubt they had their buts and imperfections, as well as excellent graces. Nay, God himself commends David as a man after his own heart; though he had many weaknesses and infirmities, yet the Lord overlooked all them, and passed them all by; nothing is mentioned save his great wickedness in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah.

20. Get much love one to another; this is Paul's counsel. "Let brotherly love continue," Heb. xiii. 1. This is a blessed way to preserve peace one with another. "Love beareth all things, it endureth all things, it will think no evil."

"Charity suffereth long, is kind; charity envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up," &c., 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

O what an excellent grace is the grace of love and charity! "Above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness," Col. iii. 14. No Christian is so complete, as he that is full of love and charity; nor can anything tend more to peace and union among brethren. Therefore "above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover a multitude of sins," 1 Pet. iv. 8. God out of love, covers a multitude of sin and faults in us; and had we much love and charity towards one another, we should cover all the common weakness and infirmities also, which we see in each other.

Lastly, eye the glory of God, and credit of religion in all things you do, and strive to set God always before your eyes; he takes notice of our carriages and behaviour one to another. O labour to see thy own fault, thine own infirmities, be much at home, and see the beam that is in thine own eye: so wilt thou not be ready to spy the mote that is in thy brother's eye. Grudge not at one another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door," Jam. v. 9. As he always beholds us all, so he will soon come to judge us all. So much as to the doctrinal part.

APPLICATION.

1. From hence we may infer, that the want of peace one with another, may arise from want of grace in our own hearts: "have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." No man can have peace with God, peace in his own conscience, that hath not saving grace in his heart; nor will such who want it be long in peace with their brethren: however the way to have peace with one another, is to get grace or salt in ourselves. Pray remember, that no peace is like that which flows from, or is the product of grace.

2. Be exhorted to labour after peace, love, and union, among yourselves. "Pursue after it: follow after peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

For motives to this.

1. Consider the devils can agree to dwell together, even whole legions of them in one man; and shall not the saints of God agree to dwell together in unity? Luke viii. 30.

2. Wicked men also can agree together in wickedness, and to uphold the devil's kingdom: the papists glory in the unity of their church, and the Mahometans agree in their idolatry: and shall not Christians, true believers, and faithful disciples of Christ, agree together in love and peace?

3. Consider that Jesus Christ hath taken our nature upon him, and as it was to unite God and man together, so also to unite man and man together in himself, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 28. "He hath made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 6. This should move us to live in love, and to be at peace one with another.

4. Where there is not love and peace, it will not be long (it may be feared) before there are divisions.

5. To preserve peace, is the way to disappoint Satan, who is the grand make-bate and disturber of the peace of the saints and churches of Christ.

6. Consider how dangerous a thing it is to offend any of Christ's little ones, or to judge our brethren: professors may offend Christ's little ones, as well as the profane, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he was cast into the sea," Matt. xviii. 6. O how heinous a sin is this!

7. Love and peace renders the church militant like to the church triumphant; O what sweet peace and concord is there in heaven!

8. Consider what a multitude of enemies we have, that strive to divide us and ruin us all, this should caution us to take heed we do not seek to ruin and destroy one another.

Lastly, consider the motives that Paul uses to press this duty, with which, I shall conclude: "If therefore there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind," Phil. ii. 1, 2.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

MAN THAT FELL AMONG THIEVES.

SERMON IV.

And Jesus answered and said, a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, &c.—Luke x. 30.

Our late annotators upon the holy bible, take but little notice of this parable, more than to show the design of our Lord herein, which is to show who is our neighbour, viz., he that shows us the most favour, pity, and compassion:

The occasion and scope of the parable.

and thereby he clearly shows, that he himself is the only neighbour and friend of our souls: for doubtless this must be comprehended here, as our Lord's grand design in bringing of it in. We have in ver. 20, a lawyer standing up, with great confidence, pleading his justification by the law, thinking himself a righteous person, that stood in need of nothing. This seems to be the occasion of this parable. Also hereby our Lord strives to convince us of the wretched state and condition of all men by nature, and of the evil of sin, which I conceive was one design of it also; likewise to show, that neither the law, nor Levite priest, nor legal sacrifices, could relieve or help any one miserable and undone sinner.

2. I shall endeavour (by God's assistance) to open all the parts and terms contained herein.

The parts opened.

First, by the man that went from Jerusalem to Jericho, I understand is meant fallen man, who originally in the first Adam went from God, viz., from a state of peace signified by Jerusalem, that blessed city of peace and safety, where God's habitation was: and not only originally did man go thus from God, but also actually by their abominable practices, and wicked deeds of darkness.

What is meant by thieves.

2. By "falling among thieves," may be meant that mischief and misery which hath befallen man by sin, Satan, and others enemies of the soul.

What is meant by being stripped.

3. By "stripping him of his raiment," may be meant all our first or original righteousness. Righteousness being often compared to raiment, or to a garment.

What by being wounded.

4. By "wounding him," may be intended that sad and fearful privation of the soul in every faculty thereof by sin.

What by being half dead.

5. By "leaving him half dead," may be meant the spiritual death of the soul, which is half, nay the better half of the man. Man consisteth of two parts, and though a poor sinner be alive in the body, yet he is dead spiritually in his soul, and therefore may be said to be half dead: not but that the whole man is dead, or wounded unto death by original and actual sin. The sentence of death and condemnation is gone forth against all mankind in the first Adam, all are under the sentence of eternal death, and must perish eternally, unless the good Samaritan pours in his oil and wine. If this be not meant, then it shows that all men are only desperately wounded by sin naturally; but God's word shows, man is not only wounded, but dead in sins and trespasses.

6. By "the priest passing that way, and going on one side," may be meant, the law or priesthood of Aaron; by the Levite may be meant legal sacrifices, and by their both passing by, and not pitying or helping this poor distressed man, may signify that there is no help, no cure, no salvation by the law, nor sacrifices of the law, for undone sinners.

The Samaritan is Jesus Christ.

7. By "the Samaritan," I understand is meant our Lord Jesus Christ, who is said to pass by and see us in our blood, "Now as I passed by, I looked upon thee, and saw thee polluted in thy own blood," Ezek. xvi. 6, 8. This was a blessed look indeed, a look of pity and compassion, "when he saw him, he had compassion on him," The Son of God saw us from eternity (he being God) fallen by these thieves, wounded, and in our blood. "And he went to him,"

Which may refer to two things.

(1.) To Christ's coming into the world to assume our nature. And thus he came where the sinner was, and put himself in our law place.

(2.) It may refer also to his gracious coming to a wounded sinner by his word and Spirit, in helping him to apply the virtue of his own precious blood to his wounded soul.

What is meant by binding up his wounds.

8. Binding up his wounds, and pouring in oil and wine, may be meant, Christ infusing of his Spirit and precious grace into his soul; grace, as well as the Holy Spirit being compared to oil. "The wise virgins took their lamps, and oil in their vessels," Matt. xxv. 4, that is, they had saving grace in their hearts. And that the Holy Spirit is compared to oil, is evident, our Lord is said "to be anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows," Heb. i. 9. And as the Spirit and grace is compared to wine, which is not only of a healing, but of a cheering, reviving, and strengthening nature also.

What is meant by setting him on his own beast.

9. By "setting him upon his own beast," may be intended, or meant, Christ's own doctrine of free-grace. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is good that the heart be established with grace," &c. Heb. xiii. 9. When a man has received the true grace of God, and is by Jesus Christ established in his holy faith and doctrine, that will carry him like a beast to the

inn where he is to take up his abode; as a false doctrine carries a man from it. But more of this hereafter.

10. By bringing to an inn, I apprehend is meant a church of Christ, to which the doctrine of Christ carrieth such who subject or yield obedience thereunto, and that the church may be compared to an inn, I shall show you before I have done.

What is meant by the inn.

11. By the host, that had the charge given to take care of this poor man, may be meant the minister or pastor of the church, to whom the care of all the members of the said church is committed.

What is meant by the host.

12. By the two-pence given to the host may be meant, as I judge,

(1.) The gifts and graces of the Spirit, which the Lord Christ bestows upon all his ministers.

(2.) Or as some think, the Old and New Testament.

(3.) Others, spiritual and temporal supplies, which are given and allowed by the Lord Jesus to all his faithful ministers, who have the care of a spiritual inn, and of the souls of men and women committed to them.

13. "And when I come again I will repay thee." This no doubt refers to Christ's second coming at the last day; and by repaying the host at his return may signify that glorious reward all true ministers shall receive (when Christ appeareth) in the way of free-grace.

What is meant by his coming again.

Thus I have briefly opened every part of this parable. Neither do I see any just cause any have to object against this exposition.

I shall in the next place take notice of several propositions or points of doctrine that arise, or may be deduced from the parts thereof, and so give a larger exposition of the whole parable.

Doct. 1. That mankind who are gone from God, are fallen among thieves, viz., Sin and Satan, who have wounded and robbed them, and left them in a sad and lamentable state and condition.

In the prosecution of this, I shall,

First, show you in what respects sin and Satan may be compared to thieves.

Secondly, show you that they are the worst of thieves.

Thirdly, apply it.

I. I shall show you in what respects sin and Satan may be compared to thieves.

Sin and Satan are thieves.

1. Thieves are enemies to honest men, and of which they are in danger continually. So sin and the devil are enemies to all men, and such enemies that all good men fear, and continually know they are in great danger of being overcome by.

2. Thieves oftentimes in a secret and felonious manner, have taken away all that men had in their possession, leaving them in a very poor and distressed condition, who were very rich before.

So sin and Satan have robbed mankind of all they possessed in the first Adam, which were great riches. God at first invested man with a very great estate, he had abundance of all good things in his possession. He had God to be his God, he had union and communion with God, nay, and the holy image of God stamped upon his noble soul, and blessed peace; besides all the riches of the earthly paradise. But sin and Satan robbed him and all his posterity of all those riches which originally he possessed.

And though believers are restored and enriched by Jesus Christ, yet sin and the devil strive to rob them again, and would do it, was not their treasure put into the hands of a faithful trustee, who keeps a great stock to hand it out to them as their need requires.

3. Thieves many times lead poor travellers out of the king's high-way, into some blind or secret place, and there bind them hand and foot, as well as take away all they have. So sin and Satan have led man out of God's way, and have also bound him with cruel bonds. As,

(1.) With the bond of ignorance.

(2.) With the bond of a hard heart. And,

(3.) With the bond of unbelief. "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," Acts viii. 23. As well as robbed him of all that choice treasure which God was pleased to enrich him with in the first Adam.

Mankind led by sin and Satan out of the way, and bound in strong cords.

4. Thieves are a great terror to honest men, and they strive to avoid them as much as they can, and also to defend themselves against them with their utmost power and skill.

Thieves a terror to honest men.

So sin, the flesh, the world, and the devil, are a great terror to all God's people, who also endeavour to avoid the danger they are hereby in, and continually arm themselves, or rather are armed by the Lord Jesus with spiritual armour, wisdom, and courage, to resist them.

Thieves wait a fit opportunity.

5. Thieves wait a fit opportunity to come upon a person or family, even when they are most secure, or asleep in their beds.

So Satan and other spiritual enemies, watch a fit time when a child of God is most secure, or in a sleepy, or slothful condition. And hence we are so oft exhorted to diligence and spiritual watchfulness. "Watch and pray always, that ye enter not into temptations," Luke xxi. 36.

Sin and the devil the worst of thieves.

II. I shall show, that sin and the devil, &c., are the worst of thieves.

1. They are the worst of thieves, because they are soul thieves, and seek to rob us of our choice and chiefest treasure, as they served our first parents, and all in them. What could excel original righteousness, the image of God, his love and favour, nay, God himself, whom we lost by these thieves, together with the glory of the earthly paradise?

They are bloody thieves.

2. Because they are such cruel and bloody thieves, murdering thieves; this poor man, it is said, was wounded and half dead.

They murdered his precious soul, and put out his eyes, and stabbed him at his very heart, mangling every faculty in a bloody and most cruel manner. And as his soul was wounded to death, so these thieves gave his body its mortal wound also, bringing all filthy and tormenting diseases upon that, some of which issue in death at last.

None have escaped these thieves, therefore they are the worst of thieves.

3. They are the worst thieves, because none have escaped them.

Pray note, I told you by this man, is meant lost mankind. O what thieves and murderers are these! Should a company of thieves rob and murder all the people in a great city, or in a vast kingdom, what thieves would they be thought to be? But lo, these thieves have robbed and murdered, both originally and actually, not only all the people in one city, or in one kingdom, but all in every city and kingdom throughout the whole world, not one escaped, and every particular soul, in the state of nature, lies dead at their feet.

Sin and the devil murdered the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Nay, and they have not only murdered the whole world of ungodly sinners, but they have also wickedly slain and murdered the Lord Jesus Christ. It was our sins that murdered him, sin was the spear that wounded and pierced his very heart. "He being made sin for us." We could not live again except he bore our sins upon his own body, and human soul, and died a bloody sacrifice for us.

"Besides, was by wicked hands that he was delivered up, and was crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23. It was by these thieves, i. e., by the devil and sin, or sinful men, men influenced by sin and the devil; though it is true, he freely gave himself up into their hands in love to us; for otherwise it would have been impossible for them to have touched one hair of his head.

Sin and the devil old thieves.

5. Sin and the devil, &c., are the worst of thieves, because they are old thieves and murderers. "The devil was a murderer from the beginning," John viii. 44. He is an old and experienced thief and murderer. And as

they began to steal, murder, and destroy betimes, so they have continued in his hellish practice near six thousand years, and still are as bloody, cruel, and merciless as ever, sparing no sex nor degrees of men, neither young nor old, making fearful slaughter by wars, blood, and massacres and devastations in all lands and nations throughout the whole world, to this very day.

They are crafty thieves.

6. They are the worst of thieves, considering their great subtilty, policy, and craftiness. Sin and the devil have many wiles to deceive, rob, and murder poor sinners, too tedious here to reckon up. Sin indeed is the worst deceiver of the two, for it deceived the angels, and turned them that fell into devils. Also

these thieves rob, kill, and murder in the day-time; nay, when the clearest light of the gospel shines forth, they are bold, as well as cunning; they have perhaps a thousand ways subtilly to deceive, beguile, and destroy the souls and bodies of poor sinners; they commonly assault and set upon unwary sinners under a disguise. "Satan can transform himself into an angel of light," 2 Cor. xi. 14, and pretend to piety, purity, or seeming holiness, and this way he robs and murders multitudes by damnable heresies and false doctrines, putting men to trust in a false Christ, or to rest upon, or trust to their own righteousness for justification and eternal life. Satan is no enemy to counterfeit godliness, nor to a sober life, if he can but persuade men to trust in that, or build all their hopes of hea-

ven on that. And lust is as deceitful as the devil: how often do people change its name, being (as it were) willing to be deceived? covetousness they call industry, thriftiness, and good husbandry, nay sin, as it goes under the name of covetousness, some think it is (almost) impossible to find it out. Pride also, though so abominable a thing in the sight of God, is looked upon a decency or a comely dress, because forsooth it is the fashion. Moreover, these thieves, deceivers, and murderers, suit their bait or temptation according to the natural inclination, constitution, and disposition of the sinner's heart, some by sinful pleasures, some by sinful profits, and others by sinful honours; nay, these thieves are so subtle, that they entice and persuade sinners (who readily yield to them) to open their doors, and willingly let them in, they pretending themselves to be their greatest friends in all the world, and that there is no other way to become rich, great, and to have their lives to be sweet and comfortable to them, but by their adhering to those cursed suggestions which they dart into their evil hearts. Moreover, they labour to put religion and true godliness into a base disguise, rendering it hateful to men, as if it tended only to make their lives burdensome to them, and destroy them with melancholy thoughts, causing them to be mere mums, and to hang down their heads like bulrushes, to fold their arms, and to spend their days in tears and sighing, if not to go beside themselves. These thieves smile in the sinner's face, while they secretly cut his throat, and murder his precious soul; promising them future time to repent, though before that time comes, their souls perhaps are in hell.

True godliness rendered hateful.

7. They are the worst of thieves in respect of their power and great strength. Who is a match for them? what mortal is able to subdue sin, and the power of the devil in his own heart? what great and brave heroes have they conquered? who perhaps were clothed with greater strength than any saint of God hath in these days; as Noah, Lot, Moses, David, Solomon, Peter, and many more: nay, none but God and the Almighty Jesus can conquer these thieves. Satan is that strong man armed, of whom our Saviour speaketh, "How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house," Matt. xii. 29. And this must be one stronger than he, which none is but the Lord Jesus Christ, and none but he is able to vanquish and destroy these thieves and murderers.

Sin and the devil are powerful thieves.

You may raise all the town, country, nay the whole land, and yet they cannot save one soul from these thieves; but the Lord Jesus "hath made an end of sin, and utterly spoiled principalities and powers," Dan. ix. 24, Col. ii. 15. He hath and will finally destroy both sin and Satan.

APPLICATION.

1. If these enemies are such thieves and bloody murderers, what folly and madness is in those, who so readily, and willingly entertain them in their houses, nay, let them have the chiefest room in their hearts? O how blind are sinners naturally!

2. This shows their folly also who hide their sin, hide their cruel robber and bloody murderer, nay, and have many devices to conceal and cover it, and also make provision for the murderer, or "for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." O how is this thief fed and cherished day by day, and delighted in, and hugged in their bosoms!

3. Also what infinite love and mercy hath God showed towards us, in sending so great and mighty a Saviour, to vanquish and destroy these thieves and murderers, the whole world had otherwise been lost for ever. Moreover, we may from hence infer, that were not Jesus Christ God, the true Almighty God, he could not have saved us from these thieves. Is a mere man a match for Satan and all the powers of hell and darkness? the strong man armed keeps all he hath in safety, till a stronger than he comes to lay hold upon him, and binds him. "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8.

4. If sin and the devil are such thieves and murderers, let a hue and cry go out to apprehend them, and let all take care upon their utmost peril, that they hide and conceal them not, nor show them the least favour.

A hue and cry ought to go forth after these thieves.

And that all mortals may yet further be more incensed against them, consider what mischief they have done, which in part you have heard.

(1.) These thieves have caused mankind to cast off the holy God, and to contemn him in their hearts, and to reject his authority over them.

(2.) They have also assumed the very throne of God, (i. e.,) the heart, and there they reign, rule, and bear sway.

What mischief these thieves have done.

(3.) They have (you heard) put the Lord of life and glory to death, our sins were

charged upon him; had not we sinned, Jesus Christ had not suffered; our entertaining sin and Satan cost our blessed Lord dear.

2ndly. These thieves you have heard, (1.) Have robbed all mankind, and stripped them of their raiment, marring the image of God that was originally formed in us, and have stolen from us jewels of an inestimable value. (2.) They have caused man to become a traitor, and cursed rebel against God, filling their hearts naturally full of rage and en-

Enmity in man's heart naturally against God.

mity against their Maker; and God hereby they caused to become an enemy to mankind. (3.) They have corrupted our whole nature, both body and soul, bringing nothing but rottenness, and abominable filth upon the precious soul, causing it to become loathsome in the sight of God, wounding every part and faculty, and loading the body with filthy diseases, and tormenting them with gnawing and fearful

Sin a plague to the whole creation.

Rom. viii. 20. 21.

pain. (4.) They brought a curse upon the creature, nay, upon the whole creation, causing the innocent beast, nay the whole creation to groan and be subject to vanity. (5.) They have caused God to prepare a lake or furnace of fire to cast all into it, who show favour, love to, or entertain these thieves: so

hateful are all they who so do, in the sight of God. (6.) These thieves have put all the world into confusion, filling all nations with war and blood, causing one man to kill another.

"From whence comes war and fightings? come they not from hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?" Jam. iv. 1. (7.) All the plagues, injustice, cruelty, and miseries in the world, are caused by them. (8.) They have caused mankind to violate all the good laws of God, nature, and nations. (9.) The craftiness of these thieves lies in

Sin causes sinners to act like fools or madmen.

their blinding the eyes of men, causing them to believe things contrary to reason, as to think they may reap wheat, though they sowed nothing but

tares, nay, though they sow not at all, yet may have a great and good crop at harvest: yea, they have so bewitched silly mortals, as to consent to run knives into their own souls, and let out their own hearts' blood, and to persuade them that the pleasure of their sins and lusts is better than all the good that is in God himself, and in his dear love and favour; nay, to prefer sin, pleasure, and profits here, above a crown of glory in heaven hereafter. Is it not strange that mankind should be so blinded by these thieves, that like the vain Freuchman prefer, as it were, a part in Paris above all the riches and pleasures of paradise. "They say to God, depart from us," Job. xxi, they value the husks that swine eat, above God, and Jesus Christ: they prize sinful profit above peace of conscience, their own filthy rags before Christ's righteousness; they rob sinners of the power of godliness, by setting their hearts more upon morality, or on the base external form of godliness, or on human rites and ceremonies, and many to prize the cabinet, above the jewel; they promise sinners salvation, though they live wicked and ungodly lives, and sinners are so deceived, that they hardly doubt about it. They tell young people it is too soon to mind heavenly things; and when any are grown old, they tell them it is too late.

5. If sin be such a thief, what cause of grief is there to see so many to play and sport with it? "Fools make a mock at sin," Prov. xiv. 9. "They say, are we not in sport?" Prov. xxvi. 19. But it is bad to sport with such secret, treacherous, and bloody enemies.

6. Sinners, fly to Jesus Christ, get faith in him, who only can save you from these thieves. O get under his wings, "He that is born of God, hath overcome the wicked one." O what compassion is in Jesus Christ, this good and gracious Samaritan! He sees you wounded, and is come to pour in his oil, and wine, and bind up your wounds, labour to do, as an honest man who is afraid of thieves. Are you hard beset, and in danger by sin and Satan? cry to Christ for help, cry out, thieves, thieves, Lord help me, save me,

What doors should be shut against these thieves.

or I perish, they are too stroug for me.

8. Keep the doors shut against these thieves, that neither sin nor Satan may be let in.

(1.) The doors of your eyes, sin sometimes is let in at those doors. Achan saw a "Babylonish garment, and wedge of gold, and he coveted them." Take heed you behold no object with any undue and wanton glance.

(2.) Keep the door of your ears; do not hear a backbiting or detracting tongue, but show your abhorrence of such; neither suffer yourselves to be praised to your face by flatterers, much less let not thy ears hear thy own tongue praise thee, but above all things keep the door of thy heart; watch this door. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," Prov. iv. 23.

1st. Keep thy heart from vain thoughts, or for thinking evil. "Let not vain thoughts lodge in thee." Are evil thoughts grievous to thee, dost thou not approve of them? canst thou say with David, "I hate all vain thoughts?" Have they no ruling

and reigning power over thee? dost thou cry out against them, and mourn under them?

2ndly. Keep thy heart from all unchaste thoughts, all unbelieving, murmuring, distrustful, discontented, distracting and vain-glorious thoughts, lest these thieves get in; it is easier to keep thieves out of the house, than it is to get them out when they are got in. The heart is deceitful above all things, and oftentimes lets these thieves in: an enemy within, is worse than an enemy without.

(3.) Keep the door of thy lips, watch thy tongue, keep it as with a bit and bridle, (as the apostle James shows) "The tongue no man can tame, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison," James iii. 8. Therefore cry to God for help, or else at this door these thieves will get in.

9. Strive to know the advices and craftiness of those thieves. Satan is a serpent for subtilty, a lion for strength, and a dragon for cruelty. And sin also is not in vain called deceitful lusts. The apostle cautions the saints, "Lest any of them be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. Those are wise Christians, who have studied Satan's politics: we are not ignorant of his devices.

10. You that are believers, bless God that he hath saved and delivered you from the power of these thieves. O what a mercy it is, that Jesus Christ, the good Samaritan, hath taken compassion of you; he came where you were, and hath healed your wounds.

Lastly, what comfort and consolation is here for you, that you are out of the reach of those bloody enemies; you are put into Christ's hands, and are kept by his power, and shall be unto salvation. "Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world, he will bruise Satan under your feet shortly," 1 John iv. 4. "Through Jesus Christ, we are more than conquerors," Rom. viii. 37.

O let us love this good and gracious Samaritan, this blessed Jesus, and live to his praise and glory all our days; who hath done such wonderful things for us; who hath bound up our wounds, and poured into them oil and wine; who hath loved our souls with an everlasting love, and hath spread the mantle of his love over us, that we may be rescued from eternal misery.

SERMON V.

And Jesus answered and said, a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, &c.—Luke x. 30.

I HAVE, my brethren, opened all the parts contained in this parable according to that light and understanding received, and have noted one proposition from them. I have showed what kind of thieves those are, which this certain man fell among, and that all mankind in the first Adam are signified by this man, and that all naturally are half dead; dead in their souls in respect of any true spiritual life, being wounded in every faculty, and member of the body.

Doct. So that we may infer, that mankind by sin naturally are in a miserable, wretched, and deplorable condition.

1. Their understanding is blinded. 2. The judgment is depraved, so that they cannot make any true judgment of themselves, nor of things. If you see a man that was very wise, to act like a mere idiot, or natural fool, you say his reason is gone, he is broken in judgment, or wounded in his intellectual parts. Thus it is in a spiritual sense with every unrenewed man, their understanding is darkened and full of folly, vanity, blindness, and incredulity; they esteem husks above bread, and choose a pebble before a precious pearl. Many cry down Judas for selling his blessed Lord for thirty pence. Alas, what do all wicked men much less, who refuse, nay reject the Lord Jesus Christ for the sake of their filthy lusts, or for the unlawful gain of a groat: what think you of them that take abundance of care to deck a sorry cabinet, but take no regard of the jewel, which is more worth than all the world, Matt. xvi. 26? See to this, you young men and women, who care not what you bestow to dress and adorn the body, but disregard your precious souls: are not you wounded in judgment? Suppose your house was all in a flame, and you lay on a soft bed, and one should cry out fire, fire, O arise and save your lives for the Lord's sake, your house is on a flame; and yet you should lie still and say, it is not midnight, you will not rise yet, it is a great while till day: would not all people that hear of it, say you were mad, or out of your wits! Sirs, the fire of God's wrath hath taken hold of every unconverted sinner, and they every moment:

The state of man by nature is deplorable.

See the parable of the Prodigal son.

are in danger to be cast into hell. But yet most refuse to take hold of Jesus Christ, and return to God, casting off all their wicked ways; no it is too soon, time enough (say they) to-morrow, though before then, perhaps they may be in hell.

2. The will (that noble faculty) is depraved, and as it were wounded unto death; and it must needs be so, since they are without understanding. As a man that hath his palate spoiled, being possessed with some vicious humour: everything seems bitter according to that humour; so the understanding counts the ways of God grievous and unpleasant; the will acts accordingly, utterly refusing to walk therein, but act cross, contrary to, and in direct opposition to the will and ways of God. O what pride, inconstancy, stubbornness, disobedience, and rebellion is there in the will of wicked men. "Our tongues are our own, and who is lord over us," Psal. xii. 4? This is the voice of the ungodly. "We will not have this man to reign over us," Luke xix. 27.

3. Their affections, as well as their understanding and will, are wounded to death. O how carnal, vain, loose, and earthly are their affections: "They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," 2 Tim. iii. 4. Their care is more to get an estate, than to get an interest in Christ, treasure on earth before treasure in heaven; they fear more the wrath of man, than the wrath of God, and the loss of their outward liberties, substance, or their natural lives, than the loss of their immortal souls; they rejoice more when they thrive in the world, than to find a gracious work upon their hearts, or to hear the word of God; they mourn for the loss of son or daughter, a husband or a wife, more than for the loss of God. O I have (saith one) lost my only child; and saith another, my dear husband is dead; O my heart will break, I am full of sorrow and heaviness, what shall I do? poor sinner! though these things are cause of grief, yet if thou art in thy sin, I must tell thee worse news, and that which is cause of far greater sorrow, thou hast lost thy God, and thy soul is dead, and what hast thou more? Thou art condemned, even sentenced to be burned alive in eternal flames. Sirs, is it not sad, that a man should be more affected, grieved, and afflicted in his soul, at the loss of a dumb idol, than sinners are for the loss of the true and living God! See Judges xviii. 24, (speaking of Michah) "And he said, ye have taken away my gods which I have made, and the priest, and what have I more? And this you say unto me, what aileth thee?" That which a man's heart is bound up in the love of, and which he esteemeth and prizeth most, is his God; and if he loses it, he cries out, what have I more? If it be a husband, a child, a name, or an estate. But, sinner, know when thou hast God to be thy God, thou wilt see thou canst not be miserable whatever you lose, nor ever be undone, and then all other losses will be patiently borne.

4. The memory is also wounded unto death: how doth that forget what it should remember, and remember that which it should forget; it forgets God, both what he is, and will be to them who find him. God is not in all his thoughts. They forget Christ, and who he is, and what he hath done and suffered for sinners; they forget their own precious souls, their worth, and whither they are going; they forget to pray and to seek God while he may be found; they forget what an evil sin is, they forget to hear and prize the word of God, they forget how short and uncertain their days are, they forget their last end; but they think upon the world, upon their riches, and upon external poverty and afflictions; they remember their pleasures, and those wrongs and injuries some have done to them, so as to seek revenge: is not this sad?

5. Their consciences are wounded, fearfully corrupted, have scarce any spiritual sense or feeling, or are in a drowsy and sleepy state, if not erroneous. "Unto them that are defiled, is nothing pure, but their minds and consciences are defiled," Tit. i. 15. Conscience, that like Job's messenger should bring them word that all the rest of the faculties of the soul are dead, is so maimed, stupified, and wounded, that it is dumb, says nothing, or else excuses when it should accuse, and severely rebuke them for their horrid sins. And as all the faculties of their souls are wounded by these thieves, so are their sensitive parts also; their eyes are full of idolatry, their lips are unclean and full of lies, cursing, blasphemy, backbiting, detraction, villifying, reproaching, and abusing their neighbours. Their ears are bewitched with carnal music, and do delight to hear cursed songs and romances, and idle stories, more than to hear the word of God, or of heaven and eternal happiness; their hands are for taking the forbidden fruit, and in many addicted to picking and stealing. "Their throat is as an open sepulchre, the poison of asps is under their tongue, and their feet are swift to shed blood," Rom. iii. 13. They yield their member servants unto uncleanness.

O how sad is the state of wounded mankind by these cursed thieves!

Secondly, but let us consider a little further of their deplorable condition, in respect to the nature of these wounds.

1. Remember they are soul-wounds. A wound in the hand or foot, is not so bad as a wound in the heart; these wounds have let out the blood or life of the soul, they reach to the very heart. "This is thy wickedness, because it reacheth unto thine heart," Jer. iv 18. The nature of these wounds.

2. They are poisonous wounds, they are wounds of a sting of a poisonous serpent, the Devil: "The sting of death is sin." When the Israelites were stung in the wilderness with those fiery serpents (saith Mr. Ainsworth) there was thereby a remembrance how sin came into the world by a serpent. O what were those serpents to the old serpents, or those wounds to these wounds? yet those wounds were very venomous, and the contagion spread itself over the whole body; so you have heard these wounds have spread over the whole man, both body and soul, and not only over every faculty, but also over every person: our first parents were wounded, and in them every soul that sprung from their loins by natural generation, not one person escaped; so that the wounds were not only venomous, but also infectious: "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners,—by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Rom. v. 18, 19.

3. These wounds are extremely painful and tormenting, as all experience, when they come to themselves; as those wounds by those fiery serpents were, they found a fearful inflammation which made them roar out in bitter anguish of pain and misery; so all poor awakened and convinced sinners feel the smart of sin, or of these wounds, and cry out as those did St. Peter preached to; "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts. ii. 39. "How did David cry out in anguish of soul, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day, for my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh," Psa. xxxviii. 6, 7. The sting of a serpent causes extreme thirst: this shows that all envious or revengeful persons are deeply wounded; besides that unsatisfiedness that is in men's hearts, after the riches, honours, and pleasures of sin, discovers what drought by sin hath seized all mankind, such a thirst that nothing but drinking of the water of life can allay it.

4. The poison of serpents, as Plutarch notes, gets quickly to the vital spirits, and corrupts the whole mass of blood. So did this sting and cruel wound corrupt the lump of mankind.

5. They are deceitful wounds; there is a strange insensibleness in sinners, who are mortally wounded, for a great while they feel no pain. I have read of the poison of some serpents, that as soon as a man is stung, he falls into a great laughter, tickled in a strange manner: but no sooner doth the poison come to his heart, but it makes him change his note, crying out most bitterly in dreadful anguish, a fit resemblance of the sting of sin. Poor sinners seem at first to be in sport, and rejoice in their wickedness, and spend their days in pleasure; but as soon as God brings them to feel the venom and sting at their hearts, their joy is turned into sorrow and extremity of misery; if they cry not out here, they shall howl hereafter.

6. The wounds by those serpents was present death, unless they looked up to the brazen serpent. So all those sinners who are wounded by these thieves, can expect nothing but present death; I mean of being cast into hell, except they look up to Jesus Christ, and believe in him.

7. These wounds fester and corrupt, and grow worse, and worse, and it must needs be so, for by these thieves they daily receive fresh wounds; "so that from the crown of their heads, to the soles of their feet, there are nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores," Isa. i. 6; and so they remain until the good Samaritan closes their wounds, binds them up, and mollifies them with ointment.

8. The wounds of those serpents in the wilderness, could not be healed by any art or wisdom of man: none could find any medicine or balsam that could give ease, or cure those poor wounded and miserable creatures: no, the way of cure was strange, marvellous and supernatural. So no angel in heaven, nor man on earth, could find out a cure for wounded sinners. Our cure is the wonderment of saints and angels; we could not have help, and live, unless the Son of God dies, and his precious blood be applied to heal our wounded souls.

APPLICATION.

1. O what an amazing thing is this, that the world is thus wounded, millions wounded, and yet but few complain of it; what should be the reason of this?

Ans. 1. It is because they are dead, dead in sins and trespasses. Can dead people feel pain? no, you may thrust a sword through their hearts, and they feel not; were there a principle of life in them, they would soon cry out in bitter pain.

2. How may this tend to incense sinners against these thieves? what indignation should we have against sin and the devil, who have in such a manner wounded our precious souls?

3. It may clearly discover, who they are that are spiritually dead. Certainly you that feel no pain, that sin, and yet cry not out under great anguish and misery, are dead: had you life in you, it would be otherwise with you; therefore such of you that feel the smart and bitterness of sin, and know what it is to offend God, and who cannot commit the least sin, but you find your souls and consciences wounded, it is an evident sign you are spiritually alive.

II. Be exhorted to take heed of these thieves, lest they give you yet more fresh wounds. O beware of all temptations, every sin is a wound.

MOTIVES.

Motives to beware of sin. 1. This sting hath stung our blessed Lord to death; let that enrage your souls against sin, to hate and abhor all iniquity.

2. It lays all ungodly sinners under God's wrath, and the curse of the law; and if you are not healed, it will make an eternal separation between God and you.

3. Know that this sting, or these wounds (though you may not feel much pain now) yet you will be sensible, and find yourselves tormented in an hour that draws near, if you meet not with a cure. There are four seasons when these wounds will be felt.

(1.) In a time of common calamity, when you will see sorrow and anguish coming upon you, and you not know whither to fly for succour; such days are near, that the blind and secure world dream not of. "Then your sins will stare you in the face, and your guilty souls and conscience will terrify you, and God then perhaps will mock when your fear cometh; because when he called you refused, and set at nought all his reproof," Prov. i. 25, 26.

(2.) At that time when God awakeneth your sleepy consciences, and lets out conscience to torment and terrify you, and God leaves you to desperation, and under his fierce and divine vengeance; think on *Francis Spira* and *John Child*; you may find such an hour.

(3.) At the hour of death, or at that moment you die: for if while your soul is yet in your body, you do not feel the smart and anguish of sin and wrath; yet no sooner are you dead, but your soul will be in torment. "And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments," &c., Luke. xvi. 23.

(4.) At the dreadful day of judgement, when both body and soul shall be brought before Christ's tribunal, to receive that fearful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. xxv. 41.

O cry with David, "Lord, be merciful to me, and heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." Psal. xli. 4, 5.

III. What hath been said, may be for terror to all wicked men: death is near, and it will come on you with its sting, if you are unbelievers; O fly to Christ for healing; pray that he will come where you are, and bind up your wounds, and pour in oil and wine.

IV. Comfort. What consolation may from hence arise to all true Christians that are cured of these wounds; such may triumph over sin, death, devils, and all enemies "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. xv. 55. What hurt can sin, death, or devils do me, who am in Christ? Death hath spent his sting on the Lord Jesus, the sting is taken away from all that believe, and their souls are healed, their issues of blood is dried up, their leprous souls are cleansed; what have such to do, but with David, to praise and magnify God, and admire the love of Jesus Christ? "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is in me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; and healeth all thy diseases." Psal. ciii. 1, 2, 3. Such who are pardoned, are healed; and they that are forgiven may rejoice. "Blessed is he whose sin is hid, whose transgressions are pardoned," Psal. xxxii. 1. They that are at ease, and freed from sin, need neither fear death, nor any danger: though the heavens and the earth shall suddenly shake, and the hearts of sinners tremble, yet they have a place of refuge, and shall be hid in the day of God's wrath.

So much as to this proposition.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he

passed by on the other side." "And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side," Luke. x. 31. 32.

"And by chance," not that any thing cometh to pass by chance; but the word is used here, to denote such events as fall out to men by the counsel of God, or by his providence. "If a birds-nest chance to be before thee," &c. Ainworth, from the Greek, reads it, if thou meetest with a bird's-nest," Deut. xxii. 6.

"A certain priest," &c.

I showed in the explanation, that by the priest may be meant the law, the priests being the interpreters of it: and our Saviour hereby might show two things.

(1.) That the lawyers, scribes, and Pharisees, were men of no bowels, they showed no pity to the distressed; though they boasted of their great piety, yet it only consisted in the lesser matters of the law. "They neglected mercy and the love of God," they loved not their neighbour as themselves.

(2.) To discover to the lawyer, that the law could not relieve a poor wounded sinner; that kills, but gives no life, wounds but heals not. "Had there been a law that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. iii. 21.

"And behold a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered aright: this do, and thou shalt live," Luke x. 25, —28.

Thus from the scope of this parable (as I minded) we may easily perceive whom our Lord means by the priest; he would not say a certain lawyer passed that way (perhaps) because he would not provoke him, but to let him know, that he failed in answering what the law requires, even in respect had to the second Table. Our Lord brings in this parable to show him, that the "law through the weakness that is in man to keep it," Rom. viii. 3, could not give life, or bring to life a poor sinner wounded to death; and that he loved not his neighbour as the law enjoined all to do: "This do and thou shalt live;" that is, live and sin not, or perform perfect obedience to the same: for a perfect loving of God and our neighbour, comprehends that complete righteousness the law commands, which none since sin entered into the world could do, or ever did, save the man Jesus Christ.

Could men live indeed, and sin not, either in word, thought, or deed, and had they never sinned, they might be justified by the law, as Adam was while he stood in a state of innocency: but now we have sinned, all having sinned in the first Adam, Rom. v. 12, and daily do actually sin, and cannot live and sin not: and from hence the moral law cannot afford us any help, but contrariwise it lets fly its dreadful curses against us: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them," Gal. iii. 10. Alas, if men fail in their duty to men, in their love to their neighbour, and thereby break God's holy law, and lay themselves thereby obnoxious to eternal wrath. How far short do all come, in respect had to holiness, and perfect conformity to God, or in their duty and obedience to God, which more immediately the law requires. And thus our blessed Lord clearly showed this lawyer (had he understood whom, or what he meant by this certain priest) that the law leaves every poor and undone sinner in his blood, and bleeding wounds. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. viii. 3. It can neither justify, heal, nor save lost sinners. A priest may read the law to the people every day, and expound it, and press them to the strictest observance of it imaginable, yet they still, after all that they can do, abide in their blood and filth: "For if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. 21. But because this is more fully opened in my speaking to some other parables, I shall say no more to it here.

"Likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him; and passed by."

As the moral law which the priest taught and instructed the people in, could not, did not help any distressed sinner; so the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices and offerings thereof (signified by the Levite here) could not take away sin, no, though he should come where the sinner is, and lies in his blood, and offer up a thousand bullocks, ten thousand goats, and ten thousand times ten thousand lambs, yet it would do nothing to help or heal a poor guilty and condemned sinner; therefore it is said, "he passed by on the other side."

Nothing comes to pass by chance.

No relief for wounded sinners by the law.

The scope of the parable further opened.

No help, no relief, no justification by the moral law.

Levitical sacrifices and offerings cannot relieve a wounded and guilty sinner.

As no obedience to the moral law performed by any sinful creature, no, though it were a priest himself, can relieve a sinner; so all sacrifices and legal offerings fail in doing it also. "Sacrifices and offerings thou wouldst not," &c., Heb. x. 5. "And when he said, Sacrifices, and offerings, and burnt offering, thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein—Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," ver. 8, 9. It is true, sacrifices were appointed of God under the law; nay, no doubt were from the beginning. Abel offered sacrifices, but all were but types of that great sacrifice, that only can take away sin, *i. e.*, Jesus Christ's offering himself a sacrifice unto God for us; they were shadows of Christ, or Christ in a cloud, he was the substance of them. But,

1. As in themselves they were insufficient to expiate sin: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls, and of goats, should take away sin," Heb. x. 4. They could make nothing perfect, nor purge the conscience.

2. What a noble creature is man above a beast; if any sacrifice could have appeased God's divine anger, we might think it might rather be our "First-born, or the fruit of our body, for the sin of our soul." But such a sacrifice could not do, it would but be to offer unto God a corrupt thing: nay, should an angel be sacrificed for us, such a sacrifice would fail, because angels are but finite creatures, and owe themselves, and all they have, and can do, to God; they can neither satisfy infinite justice, nor merit any thing for us: it must be a sacrifice of a person of infinite worth and dignity, and that could merit at God's hand, and make an infinite satisfaction for our sins.

3. It was not consistent with the honour of God to be pleased, and his wrath to be appeased with the blood of worthless beasts; how could such sacrifices discover the severity of his justice, and the purity of his nature? and how would it have been known, that God hath such an infinite hatred of sin, if he had accepted the blood of an abject animal, as an atonement for the sins of the precious, spiritual, noble, and high-born soul of man? "Was it becoming (saith one) the majesty of God, who had denounced a curse in the law upon the transgressors of it, and published it with thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes, to accept of the manglings of a few beasts in the place and stead of the offenders, who were rational creatures, endowed with excellent faculties?" No man can reasonably have such despicable thoughts of the majesty, justice, and holiness of God, or the vileness of sin, and greatness of God's provocation, as to imagine, that he should be contented with the sacrifice of a lamb or bullock, or that their blood could pass for an expiation of such abominable crimes man was guilty of.

Second Volume, p. 856.

4. Those sacrifices have, as reverend Charnock shows, "no proportion to the sin of man, the sin of rational creatures is too foul to be expiated by the blood of irrational creatures; nor could the blood of a human body, though the first-born, the strength and delight of man, Mich. vi. 7: no, the butchery of so poor a creature cannot be any compensation for that, which is a disparagement of the Creator of the world: what alliance was there between the nature of a beast, and that of a man? An inferior nature can never atone the sin of a nature superior to it: there is indeed in the groans of those dying creatures, some demonstration of God's wrath, but no bringing in an everlasting righteousness, nor any vindication of the honour of the law.

5. The often repeating, or the reiteration of those sacrifices, shows their insufficiency. "In those sacrifices there was a remembrance of sin every year," Heb. x. 3. They were the yearly sacrifices; but in the daily sacrifice there was a remembrance of sin every day. Besides, the Lord declared that he had no delight in them. "Thou desirest not sacrifices,—thou delightest not in burnt-offerings," Psal. li. 16. True, God delighted in such who offered them in faith, beholding a slain Christ in them, or rather beyond them; but the sacrifice itself was little valued by the holy God; that sacrifice that God accepteth must be pure and sinless, one perfectly holy, and yet one in our nature: "For he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, must be all of one," *i. e.*, of one nature; also such a one, in whose sacrifice there was an infinite worth. Jesus Christ, though he "Flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone," is nevertheless the Most High God, "God and man," in one Person. See the Parable of the Pearl of great price.

Thus neither law, Levite, priest, nor sacrifices, took any regard of this poor man, wounded by these thieves, and lying in his blood.

O what blindness was in the Jews, who thought by their obedience to the law to be justified, and could not discern by those sacrifices, that the Messiah, when he came, must die, or be offered up a sacrifice unto God. But no more at this time.

SERMON VI.

And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, &c.,—Luke x. 33.

DOCT. The compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ to poor sinners is very great.

I. I shall prove it.

II. Show what kind of compassion and mercy is in Christ.

III. Apply it.

As the relief, help, and cure of undone sinners, is alone of free-grace; so this parable shows Christ is full of bowels of mercy. "He had compassion on him."

1. Mercy, as you have heard, refers to man in misery. Man before he sinned, partook of divine goodness, but had no need of mercy; but God from eternity foresaw mankind fallen and undone by sin; and divine mercy moved his wisdom to find out a way for his relief and restoration, which was to substitute his Son to be our Surety and Saviour, and to send him into the world, to be the Physician or healer of our souls.

Mercy refers to persons in misery.

The Son of God early and readily consented to show to man his infinite love and compassion. "His delight was with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 22, 30. *i. e.*, such that the Father gave to him. He delighted in thoughts and acts of mercy. His accepting such an office, and to undertake such a work, sets forth that great pity and compassion that was in his heart, that he might relieve and recover miserable mankind. He yielded to those terms infinite justice did demand, that so the mercy that was in the heart of God the Father (who is called the Father of mercy) and his own compassion might be let out, and flow forth abundantly, without any wrong or dishonour to the truth, holiness, and justice of God.

Christ's compassion great in becoming our Surety.

2. His mercy and compassion further appears, in that no other way was found which could relieve the miserable creatures.

3. Besides, Christ's compassion is wonderful, because we deserved not the least pity, sinners being obstinate rebels, and enemies to God.

4. His mercy yet further appears, in respect of these things following.

(1.) In that he left his Father, when he lay in his bosom, and laid aside, or veiled his glory, and came into this dark and miserable world. (2.) To be abased, and make himself of no reputation, though he was equal with God; and took upon him the form of a servant, not the form of a prince, or the state and dignity of a mighty monarch, but the state of a servant, and to be in a low and mean condition, having no where to lay his head, who was the Maker, and Lord of heaven and earth. (3.) In his exposing himself to suffering, to shame, and reproach, out of compassion to them that were in misery, naked, wounded, wallowing in their blood. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. (4.) Nay, more, he became a curse for us; stood charged with our sins, and bore God's wrath, and the curse of the law for us. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. (5.) In his pouring out his own blood to heal our wounded souls;

Christ's mercy in his abasement.

In suffering shame for us.

doth not this show forth the infinite compassion of Jesus Christ, that when he saw the sentence passed upon us, and we were, as it were, brought to the place of execution, and the hand of divine justice was up to strike the fatal blow, he cried out, hold justice, stay, thrust thy glittering spear into my heart, I will die for these miserable criminals? He received the stroke of divine wrath due to us, as an act of his love and compassion towards us, our hell-pangs fell upon him, he died that we might live, "In due time Christ died for the ungodly; whilst we were yet enemies, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 6, 8. (6.) By his seeking after us miserable creatures, he came where we were, by his word and Spirit, even to that very land, city, town, or village, where his elect lay in their blood and filth; after he had opened the flood-gate of God's infinite mercy, by removing of all those obstacles that hindered it from flowing out, he hath broken up the fountains of the great deeps of divine mercy, to magnify and manifest his own compassion. (7.) His pity and bowels appear by his crying to us, and labouring to gather sinners to himself. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not," Matt. xxiii. 37. There is no creature, saith Bernard, that is moved with greater compas-

In dying for us.

In using all ways to gather us.

sion towards her young, than a hen. 1. A hen will fly in the face of ravenous birds, that seeks to devour her chickens. 2. She becomes weak to feed them. 3. She clucks and calls often, with a mournful voice to them, when they are in danger. 4. She stands ready prepared, to receive them under her wings. Sirs, what enevies hath Christ flew in the face of, and how weak did he become to feed sinners? and how often doth he call upon them to fly to him, and to get under his wings of mercy and gracious protection, seeing them in the uttermost danger? "Turn, turn, why will you die, O house of Israel?" (8). His compassion, in pitying us when none else did, is marvellous, he manifested his mercy to us. "When no eye pitied us, to do any of these things unto us," Ezek. xvi. 5, neither priest, nor Levite, then Christ took compassion on us, else we had perished for ever. (9). In easing us of all our burdens, as well as in healing of all our wounds; he doth not aggravate our crimes against us, nor upbraid us with our former abominable rebellion, but passeth by and forgiveth all. (10). By his pouring in oil and wine, and binding up our wounds; he leaves us not, but takes care to heal our sores, and to clothe us with a rich robe, and sets us also on his own beast, us to an inn, and provides an host, or a faithful minister, to take the care and charge of us, and by paying all the charges, supplying of all our wants, and giving us his Spirit, succouring us in all our temptations, comforting us in all our tribulations, and keeping us company at all times, and in all states, while we are in this world; also making such large promises to us, and in his engaging the Father to keep us from the evil, and that none of us may be lost, continually interceding for us, fighting against our enemies, sympathizing with us in all our afflictions, perfecting that grace begun in our souls, carrying his lambs in his bosom, gently leading them that are with young; charging his angels to minister to us, and to carry our souls to heaven when we die.

In binding
up our
wounds.

and carries

Phil. iv. 19.

Heb. vii. 12.

—17.

John xvi. 33.

Matt. xxviii.

20.

2 Pet. i. 4.

John xvii. 15.

1 Heb. vii. 25.

Isa. lxiii. 9.

Phil. i. 6.

Isa. xl. 11.

Heb. ii. 14.

Luke xvi. 22.

Inference.

Secondly, what mercy, or kinds of compassion, is in the Lord Jesus Christ. 1. Infinite mercy. Christ being God, goodness and mercy is an essential property of his nature; mercy is the effect of his inconceivable goodness. "Thou art good, and doest good," Psal. cxix. 68. There is in him an innate propenseness to pity and succour such as are in misery, though it is let out according to his sovereign pleasure and the counsel of his will. 2. Compassion and mercy in Christ, is equal with that goodness, compassion, and mercy which is in the Father, because he is the same God; I and my Father are one. 2. It is covenant mercy, and let out in a covenant way, as the result of that holy contract between the Father and himself in eternity. 3. It is preventing mercy, his goodness and compassion stopped the execution of divine justice; it prevented the speedy process of justice. 4. Sparing mercy, sinners are spared by the interposition of Jesus Christ, he cries out, spare this, and that sinner, one year longer, though like trees barren that cumber the ground. 5. It is redeeming mercy, he redeemed us by his own blood. 6. It is renewing, quickening, and regenerating mercy, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. 5. 7. Pardoning and healing mercy, as appears in his compassion to this man, that was wounded by thieves. 8. Supporting, confirming, comforting, and preserving mercy; it is the sure mercies of David, because covenant-mercy. 9. Free mercy, to set up desert or merit, is to destroy mercy. "I will love them freely." 10. Overflowing or boundless mercy. He is plenteous in mercy; as full of mercy and compassion, as the sea is full of water, or the sun full of light. 11. Soul-espousing and soul-enriching mercy. "I will betroth thee to me in loving-kindness and mercy," Hos. ii. 19. 12. Eternal, abiding, or everlasting mercy. "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever," Psal. ciii. 17. His mercy and compassion fails not.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn to trust in Christ, and call upon him, say with the poor child lately, of four years old, "Lord Jesus save me, Lord Jesus save me." What is God about to do, and what an unbelieving and Christ-contemning age is this!

2. Take heed of abusing the mercy and compassion of Christ, he is a Lamb, but when provoked will appear like a lion; labour to see the need you have of his compassion, how indigent you are, and pray him to pour his golden oil into your empty vessels.

3. Strive to be like Christ, let us imitate him in mercy and compassion, to such that are in misery, and show that we are good neighbours.

4. How amiable and lovely doth goodness and mercy render God, and from hence let us fear him. "There is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

5. Know, O sinners, your destruction is of yourselves, though your help is in Christ.

6. Dare any say Christ is not willing to save them, to heal them, and ease them of all their pains and sorrows? Heb. vii. 25.

2ndly. Exhortation. Come to him, venture your souls upon him, he has power, as well as compassion. Miss not the day of your visitation; delay not one moment, your wounds stink and are corrupt. He can heal the worst of wounds, or cure the greatest of sinners. Your ignorance is not a hindrance to him. "He hath compassion of the ignorant, and them out of the way," Heb. v. 2.

Lastly. Praise the holy God for sending such a helper, such a Saviour, one willing, able, and mighty to save; who can speak in a way of righteousness, as well as in a way of mercy and compassion. Isa. lxxiii. 1.

"And went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine." Ver. 34.

From hence observe.

Doct. That Jesus Christ is the only Physician of our soul.

Like as a physician heals the diseases of the body, so he heals all the spiritual distempers of our souls.

I. I shall show in what respect Christ may be called a Physician.

II. Prove he is the only Physician of the soul.

1. Christ hath licence, yea full authority from the King of heaven and earth, to be the Physician of our souls; "For him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 27. He received a commission, and it was miraculously sealed by the king's broad seal, "This is my beloved Son."

Christ authorised to cure our souls.

2. In respect of his great skill, wisdom, and ability: a physician ought to be a skilful person, knowing the nature, kinds, causes, and what will cure all distempers of the body. (1.) The Lord Jesus knows all chronical, habitual, inveterate, stubborn, and contumacious diseases of the soul, from such that are acute, occasioned by heat or cold; I mean by some sudden temptation or infection, by means of the corrupt air or place where cast: he knows the nature of sin, original and actual, and whether deadly or but common weaknesses; and so the spots of his own people; he knows whether the disease be radicated and habitual or not, a disease of unregeneracy, or only such as attends a renewed person. (2.) Whether it be the stone of a hard heart, or the timpany of pride, or the consumption of spiritual strength, courage, faith, love, zeal, or of any other grace of the Spirit; or whether it be the giddiness of the head, for want of a good judgment and understanding in the truths of the gospel, a distemper too many are troubled withal in these times; or whether it be the feebleness of the knees that cannot bend day and night before the Most High God, nor bear burdens; or the weakness of the hands, some cannot lift them up to God, nor stretch them forth towards upholding the interest of Christ, the support of his ministers, and the poor saints: he knows all predominant, nauseous, and evil humours, which must be purged out, suppressed, or dispersed, by letting of blood in mortification; or whether the distemper arises from unbelief, worldly-mindedness, or for want of watchfulness, neglect of prayer, or hearing of the word. Jesus Christ also knows the constitution, or natural inclination of every soul, whether most addicted to this or that sin, or pride, passion, the inordinate love of this world, or of a slothful disposition.

Christ a wise and skilful Physician.

3. The Lord Jesus useth fit, proper, and suitable preparations to dispose the soul to seek after, and receive a cure, i. e., by making the sinner sensible of his state, by the convictions of his Spirit, and putting him upon prayer.

4. Christ, like a wise physician, searcheth the festering wounds of every soul that be undertakes to cure, to prevent the danger that would otherwise ensue upon their being but slightly healed, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, crying, peace, peace, when there is no peace," Jer. vi. 14. To prevent this Jesus Christ lays open the wound, "I am he that searcheth the heart and the reins;" that is, the secret thoughts, motions, ends, counsels, and designs of all men's hearts.

Christ searches all men's hearts.

5. The Lord Christ, in desperate cases, directs to cut off corrupt members, though it be a right hand, or right foot, and to pull out a right eye; these rotten members of the body of sin which offend, must be mortified," Mark ix. 43, 44.

6. Christ also, like a gentle physician, deals tenderly with poor wounded and distressed sinners, in binding up their wounds, as appears in this parable, "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," Isa. xl. 3, Matt. xi. 28. He calls all that are weary and heavy laden, to come to him. O how ready is he to apply his healing balm to a wounded soul.

7. Jesus Christ makes a right and timely application to sin-sick sinners; he doth not prescribe corrosives, when he should give cordials, not the terrors of the law to broken spirits but the comfort of free promises; the oil of gladness, and wine of consolation he knows is proper for such.

8. Jesus Christ deals plainly with sinners, he will let them know the worst, whether death is like to ensue or not, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. "He that believed not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3.

9. Christ, like a faithful physician, often visits sinners, he is ready always at their doors, and at a call; nay he sits up with his saints all the night of their sorrow and affliction; "Lo, I am always with you to the end of the world," Matt xxviii. 20.

10. Jesus Christ prescribes rules to his saints, to preserve their souls in health, how to avoid all spiritual surfeits, *i. e.*, all inordinate excess, or use of this world, or enjoyment of the creature, "Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged by surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life," &c. Luke xxi. 34. To keep good and pious company, and to avoid the wicked; moreover, to live upon good food, wholesome diet, to hear good doctrine, and not to feed on the wind, or chaff of the idle and airy notions, and to be frequent in prayer. He speak a parable to this purpose, "that man should always pray," Luke xviii. 1. He also directs to reading and meditation, and to holy watchfulness, &c.

11. Christ, like a tender physician, rejoices to see his medicines have the desired effects on sinners, and on the souls of believers, when his word operates, when it abides in them, and when it cleanses and purifies their hearts and consciences, or gives them peace and inward joy and comfort in believing.

12. He gives his cordial to such that are ready to faint. "I had fainted unless I believed," Psal. xxvii. 13. For which cause we faint not. His spirit will raise the dead, as well as revive from deadness.

II. Jesus Christ is the only physician, and exceeds all others.

1. God hath appointed none else; "There is no other name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12.

2. None else are able to help or save us, they have no healing medicines, not the oil and wine to pour into our wounds, there is nothing can cure sinners but Christ's blood, nor clothe their naked souls but his righteousness. "Whither shall we go? thou hast the words of everlasting life," John vi. 68. They that depend on any other thing or object, shall perish eternally.

3. Because no sinner, from the beginning of the world to this day, was healed and saved by any other physician, means or medicine. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified," Rom. iii. 20. "It was impossible that the blood of bulls or goats could take away sin," Heb. 10. 4. "If righteousness be by the law, Christ is dead in vain"—the law kills. Christ is choice, and the best physician, excelling all physicians. Gal. ii. 21. and iii. 21. (1.) In respect of his infinite knowledge, and deep judgment; he cannot be deceived, nor be mistaken about the state of any person, "because he knows all men, and what is in man," John ii. 24. Yea, he knows the nature and cause of all diseases, and so doth none else in the world. (2.) Other physicians sometime, for want of skill or care, kill instead of curing the sick; but Jesus Christ never undertook the cure of one soul that died under his hand. (3.) Christ can as easily raise the dead to life, as he can heal the living.

(4.) Other physicians are mercenary, do all for money, sometimes are unreasonable, but Christ doth work all his cures freely; "without money, and without price," Isa. lv. 1, 2. He received nothing of this poor man, but was at all the charge of the inn, and paid the host. (5.) Other physicians will not come to the sick until they are sent for, nor perhaps then neither, if there be no hopes of money; but Christ came without our sending for. "I am found of them that sought me not," Isa. lxx. 1. (6.) Other physicians cannot bless their physic nor medicines, but Christ can, and always doth, when any cure is wrought; he quickens whom he will; he makes his word to prosper to them to whom it is sent. (7.) Other physicians attend the rich chiefly, but Jesus Christ is the poor man's physician, such that are poor in this world. The poor receive the gospel, but more especially such who are spiritually poor, little, nothing in their own eyes. The rich he sends empty away. The whole need not a physician. Self-righteous persons Christ came not to call, they are not sick. (8.) Should other

Christ is the
poor man's
physician.

physicians, when they come to the sick, be kept out of their houses, and let to stand knocking all night, they would come no more. But though this physician has been many times thus dealt with, yet his mercy is not dried up, nor his patience worn out. "Behold I stand at the door and knock," Rev. iii. 20. (9.) What physician would die to cure his patients, pour forth his own blood to make a balm to heal their distempers? Jesus Christ did thus, he poured out his own blood to heal our wounded souls.

Canst thou be sick and such a doctor by?
Thou canst not live unless thy doctor die.
Strange kind of grief, that finds no medicine good
To asswage her pains, but the physician's blood!

F. QUARLES.

Quest. What way doth Christ heal sick and wounded sinners?

Ans. It is (as you have heard) by his own blood, which was shed to satisfy the law and justice of God, that we are healed of the guilt of sin, by the application of the virtue thereof to our souls, through the Spirit. The word is said to heal us here, i. e., it makes known the only way of our cure, and in its promises gives us encouragement to believe. Faith is likewise said to heal or justify us, but it is only objectively, or in respect of Christ: by faith we apprehend, receive, or apply Christ's blood, merits, and righteousness to ourselves, or to our wounded souls, when we believe we are healed of the guilt and filth of sin. O what a physician is Jesus Christ!

'Tis either thou must bleed, sick soul, or I;
My blood is a cordial: he that suck'd my veins
Shall cleanse his own, and conquer greater pains
Than these: cheer up, this precious blood of mine
Shall cure thy grief, my heart shall bleed for thine.
Believe and view me with a faithful eye,
Thy soul shall neither languish, bleed, nor die.

QUARLES.

It must be the wine that flows from the veins of the true vine, and the oil of the true olive-tree, that must be poured into our wounds; and this applied by faith, purges and purifies our hearts, or works holiness and sanctification in us, and so heals us of all our sores.

APPLICATION.

I. We infer, that the ignorance of some men is very great and dangerous. (1.) Such as think their prayers and tears can heal their souls. (2.) Such who apply or trust in their own righteousness. (3.) Such that think their faith is a habit or act, doth heal or justify them, as the material cause thereof; that God will accept of their sincere obedience, though imperfect, instead of a perfect obedience to the law; or deny that Christ's righteousness, as imputed to us, is the matter of our justification in the sight of God.

2. Exhort. Sinner, thou art mortally wounded. O fly to this physician; if Christ heals thee not, thou must die eternally. (1.) Know that Christ can heal thee, let thy disease be what it will. (2.) He is not only able, but also very ready, and willing: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. (3.) He is now come, and stands knocking at the door. (4.) He will make a perfect cure, yea cure thee for ever. (5.) Thou mayest have a cure, though thou hast no money, no righteousness, no worthiness in thyself, no qualifications, or nothing to recommend thee to him, but art in thy sins wounded, and ready to bleed to death.

3. Trial. Art thou healed, not slightly, but effectually, thoroughly healed? Try thyself. (1.) Have thy wounds been seared and laid open? Wast thou ever put to pain by the cutting and piercing convictions of the Spirit? (2.) Hast thou found thyself sick at heart, sick of sin? Is sin thy sorrow, thy sickness? Hast thou been restless, like a sick man, and roared out as David speaks? Psal. xxxviii. 5, 6. Hast thou found thy wounds stink, i. e., sin loathsome to thee, like corrupt and putrefying sores? Hast thou not applied some false remedy to cure thy sick and wounded soul? Hast thou made use of no balm, but the blood of Christ? Dost thou rest on nothing but a crucified Saviour? (1.) Hath the portion of physic stayed with thee, i. e., the word, or promises, abode in thy heart? Some vomit up that dose that is given to them; so the word doth not abide in some sinners; nothing will stay with them, such persons are in a dangerous condition. (5.) Doth thy sickness abate, is sin weakened? Some under the cure, under the word,

grow worse and worse, that is a sign death will ensue, even eternal death. (6.) Doth Christ's physic work with thee? What operation hath the word and Spirit on thy soul? does it purge out thy sins, and cleanse thy heart? or has it wrought a thorough change upon thee? (7.) Canst thou relish or taste a sweetness in the word? When a sick person hath no stomach, cannot eat nor relish his food, it is a bad sign. Dost thou taste that God is good, Christ precious, the word sweeter than honey to thy soul? (8.) Art thou averse to all sin, and hatest vain thoughts, and evil company? (9.) Dost thou cry out to thy physician for help at the least appearance, or return of thy distemper, by a sudden temptation? is thy heart set against all sin, and doth thy will oppose and resist it, so that thou canst say with Paul, "It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me," Rom. vii. 17? (10.) Hast thou got strength to walk, to go out into a visible profession, and walk in all the commandments of Christ? (11.) Dost thou make no provision for the flesh, nor feed thy distemper? some do thus. (12.) Canst thou take reproof kindly, or be easily convinced of thy sin, as soon as told of it? and say, "I have sinned against the Lord?" 2 Sam. xii. 13. Some excuse themselves, extenuate, nay, may be deny their sin; but a gracious person will rather greater his sin, and cry out against his evil heart, than hide or lessen it. (13.) Art thou easy stopped in any undue or disorderly practice, and brought presently to leave it, and turn from it? (14.) Art thou the same in private as in public? (15.) Dost thou mourn most before God, for such evils that appear least before men? (16.) Hath no one sin power over thee, or dominion in thee; Rom. vi. 14, so that thou dost not obey it, but dost make resistance against it? and is the opposition universal, i.e., against all sin? (17.) Dost thou love holiness, is it most amiable in thy sight? and art thou as much in love with the duties of religion and godliness, as with the wages thereof? and is it because God hates sin, that thou darrest not commit it? some avoid it, because it causeth shame here, and ruin hereafter. By these things thou mayest know whether thou art cured or not.

4. Terror. How fearful is your state that slight and cast off this Physician, and count his blood as an unholy or useless thing?

5. Caution. Do not delay; will a man mortally wounded say, I will look out for help, for balm to heal me hereafter? O cry those about him, he is insensible, fetch a physician presently. Nothing is more dangerous than delaying looking to Christ.

Take heed you refuse not the remedy, because of the pain of pulling out of a right-eye, or cutting off a right-hand lust.

6. You that are healed, see you ascribe all the glory to Christ, none of it to yourselves, to your care, wisdom, industry, nor to the instruments; what is Paul, or what is Apollos?

SERMON VII.

Pouring in oil and wine.—Luke x. 34.

Doct. Christ, who is our only Physician, makes use of fit and proper medicines, to heal sick and wounded sinners.

I. I shall show you, why the blood of Christ is compared to wine.

II. Why the Spirit is compared to oil.

III. What is meant by pouring of it into his wounds.

I. Wine is a precious thing; the best of earthly things is set forth by corn, oil, and wine. We read of wine, as that which cheers God and man: "And the vine said, shall I leave my wine which cheereth God and man?" Numb. xv. 5, 7, 10, &c. Mr. Pool thinks that wine here refers to the wine used in legal sacrifices, and I am of the same opinion; but

it must then refer chiefly to Christ's blood, which was typified thereby: for God was not pleased with any of those bare sacrifices, but as they were types of Jesus Christ, the substance of them. True, the blood of Christ, the fruit of the true vine, satisfies the justice of God, and it is the only cordial that cheers the heart of man, who drinketh thereof by faith. The healing and comforting virtue of Christ's blood, is meant by wine in this place no doubt.

1. Wine is a choice liquor; so the blood of Christ, that sacred wine, is a most precious thing. (1.) Considering the excellency and dignity of his person. (2.) Considering the end and design of God in pouring of it forth. (3.) In respect of the effects and

virtue of it. (1.) It is pacifying and wrath-appeasing blood. (2.) it is justice-satisfying, and God-reconciling blood. (3.) Redeeming blood: "We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Is the blood of the saints precious to God? What is then the blood of his own Son? (4.) It is purifying blood, it is that which purges our consciences. (5.) It is purchasing blood, as well as cleansing, we are bought with this price: God purchased the church, and grace and glory for his church, with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. (6.) It is pardoning blood. without the shedding of Christ's blood there is no remission of sin. (7.) It is pleading blood, it cries to God for us: the cry of sin, of the law, and of justice is against us; but the blood of Christ outcries them, and pleads for us continually, it speaks better things than the blood of Abel. (8.) It is softening and mollifying blood; it breaks a hard heart, yea, the heart of stone. Hence the Lord applied it to this poor wretch. (9.) It is quickening blood; it hath a quickening and reviving virtue in it. Unless we drink Christ's blood, we have no life in us, John vi. 33, 34. (10.) It is justifying blood; justification is not without the blood of Christ: "Much more being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," Rom. v. 9. (11.) It is soul-healing and soul-saving blood. May wine be called precious, much more is the blood of Christ precious.

The preciousness of Christ's blood.

Christ's blood esteemed above wine.

2. Wine is highly esteemed by all that know its virtue, so is the blood of Christ; all believers who know its virtue, value it above all things in this world.

3. Wine, naturalists say, is most excellent to heal sores and wounds, if it be rightly applied: so had not this wine a healing virtue in it, the good Samaritan had not poured it into the poor man's wounds. The blood of Christ only heals our sores, "By his stripes we are healed, Isa. liii. 5.

4. Wine is sweet and pleasant to the taste; but O how much more sweet and pleasant is the virtue of the blood of Christ, to a believing sinner! "My blood is drink indeed," John vi. 55.

5. Wine is a restorative, and greatly strengthens decayed nature; the blood of Christ is the only restorative of our languishing souls; it quickens and brings to life, as well as strengthens such it hath restored.

6. Wine comforts and cheers the hearts of such that are ready to faint, and are ready to die; nothing cheers, comforts, and revives a sinking, drooping, and fainting sinner like the virtue of Christ's blood received by faith. "I had fainted, unless I had believed," &c., Psal. xxvii. 13.

II. Why is the Spirit compared to oil? he poured in oil as well as wine.

What is meant by oil.

Ans. The Holy Spirit, and the graces of the Spirit, may be compared to oil.

See the parable of the ten virgins.

1. Oil is of a softening and mollifying nature, and a most sovereign thing to assuage all hard swellings and tumours of the body. So the Spirit and graces thereof soften a hard heart. God complains that the sores of his people "were not bound up, nor mollified with ointment," Isa. i. 6.

Why the Holy Spirit is compared to oil.

Grace will soon bring down the timpany of pride, and bow the obstinate and rebellious will.

2. Oil is known to all to be of a healing nature, it searches into the bottom of sores: so the Holy Spirit searches the heart of the sinner; there is no sin, nor secret lusts, but it will find and purge it out, and then heal the wounds those sins had made.

3. Oil expels poison. Pliny saith it is contrary to scorpions, and in a wonderful manner expels dangerous venom; and secures the vitals from the penetrating power and poison thereof.

My brethren, the Holy Spirit is directly contrary to that old serpent the devil, and it expels all the venom and poison of sin (especially as to its power and dominion in the soul) and it secures that vital principle that is in believers, against all the hellish venom of every sin. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," Gal. v. 16.

4. Pliny also tells us, that oil is excellent good to open all obstructions, and so help them that cannot breathe freely, the Holy Spirit, when Christ pours it into a sinners heart, it will open his heart and mouth too, to cry mightily to God. Before grace sinners cannot pray; they cannot breathe freely, till God "pours out upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication," Zech. xii. 10. No, there is not a sinner in the world can breathe forth his desires to God, until this spiritual oil hath opened all those obstructions they naturally are attended with. "Behold he prays," Acts ix. 19. O know he has received the Spirit of prayer. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26.

5. Oil, physicians and naturalists say, is good to clear the eyes. Pliny saith it dispersth mists and clouds, that cause dimness of sight.

The Holy Spirit clearth the eyes of the understanding, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of your calling," &c., Eph. i. 18. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of illumination.

6. Some oil is exceeding good against shakings, tremblings, and convulsions, which many are afflicted with. So the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of faith, is a present remedy against all the tremblings of the heart in times of dismal calamities. He that believes and trusteth in God, God will keep in perfect peace. "At what time I am afraid (saith David) I will trust in thee." The Spirit and graces thereof make a believer fearless in evil times, when fearful convulsions seize upon all others. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," Psal. xxiii. 4.

7. The weak joints and limbs of babes, or others (arising from several causes) being anointed with oil, it will strengthen them greatly; but you must not suppose these virtues are in all sorts of oil. Now since some oil hath so many excellent properties in them, and is good in so many distempers, it is no wonder it is mentioned here, to set forth the healing virtue of the Holy Spirit, and the saving graces of it: the weak hands and feeble knees, hereby will be greatly strengthened, as all weak Christians daily experience, so that they are enabled to leap as an hart.

III. Why must this wine and oil be poured into the wounds of poor sinners.

Application of Christ's blood necessary. Answ. To show that Christ's blood, without the Spirit and grace of the Holy Spirit, can heal no sinner: we must have the Holy Spirit, and true faith in Christ, whereby we have his blood and merits applied to our wounded souls, if ever we are thoroughly healed.

APPLICATION.

1. O the love of our spiritual Physician! What, heal our wounds by the application of his blood! he must pour forth his heart's blood to cure us; it is not a drop of his blood, by pricking or opening of a vein will do; no, he must die, if we ever live again.

2. When you see wine, remember Christ's blood; wine is appointed in the Lord's supper to be poured forth and received by us, to bring to our remembrance how we came to be restored and healed of all our diseases.

3. Rest not, presume not on Christ's death, or on the shedding of his blood, unless it be applied to you by the Spirit, and true faith be wrought in your souls.

4. He poured in oil and wine. As Christ prepared the remedy, so he only applies it, he makes use of our hand, of our faith; "But faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8, Gal. v. 22. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit.

5. Examine yourselves, whether you have received the mollifying and healing virtue of this spiritual oil; and when you see oil, remember the nature of the oil of the Spirit and grace thereof, and ascribe your health and cure to Jesus Christ.

"And set him on his own beast," Ver. 34.

What meant by his own beast. "On his own beast." I told you his own beast may mean, his own blessed doctrine of free-grace, or the holy doctrine of the gospel, together with the precepts thereof: this I conclude may be meant hereby, because the apostle shows, a doctrine may be said to carry a person in a spiritual way, as a beast doth carry us in an external way. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines," Heb. xiii. 9. False and strange doctrines carry a poor shattered professor this way and that way, and he knows not whither, like a head-strong beast; but Christ's true doctrine, and holy precepts, carry believers to an inn, i. e., to some true gospel congregation, where Christ takes care of them. But O what wild beasts do some men ride upon in these evil days; what strange notions and doctrines do they suffer to carry them about, and seldom rest long anywhere: they are not carried to the inn, where Christ would have them be, but rather from it, they are unsettled, unestablished persons; some observing Jewish days, and others plead for human rites and ceremonies, which profit them not.

The inn may mean a true gospel church; for all know thither the doctrine and ordinances of Christ do carry believers, when they are at first converted: those that were healed, or wrought upon by the preaching of St. Peter, were commanded to be baptized, Acts ii. 26-- and so were carried, or added to the church; and in the same manner were they at Samaria, Acts viii. 12, 14. Christ's holy doctrine and ordinances carried all believers, as soon as converted in the primitive times, to one inn or church,

or another, where Christ provided an host, or a faithful minister, to watch over them, feed and take care of them.

Doct. A church of Jesus Christ may be compared to an inn.

Why the church is compared to an inn.

This will appear, if we consider these things following.

1. An inn is a place to entertain travellers, whilst they pass from one place or country to another; even so a church or congregation of saints is a place to entertain godly Christians, whilst they pass through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Jerusalem, or from the valley of tears to the mount of joy.

2. In an inn there is an host, who is to take care of, and make the guests that come thither welcome, and to provide all things for them they need; so in a church there is a pastor, who is ready to receive all that Jesus Christ brings to this spiritual inn, and to make them welcome, and to feed them like a good householder (or innkeeper) with things both new and old.

3. An inn ought to be well stored or provided with all things that travellers want, so ought a church of Christ to have whatsoever is necessary to refresh, clear, strengthen, and comfort the souls of the people, who are members thereof.

4. An inn ought to be well governed, and no disorders be suffered or allowed of: so ought a church of Christ to keep up and maintain a right and godly discipline, and no disorderly person allowed to dwell or abide therein, but be turned out, if they are unruly.

5. An inn is a place for all sorts of travellers to lodge in, both noble and ignoble, even persons of all degrees and quality, sometimes the king may lodge in an inn. So a church is a place for all sorts of Christians, both young and old, poor and rich, high and low; a king, if godly, ought to take up his lodging in it.

6. An inn is the only place where wounded or sick travellers can find, or meet with comfort and refreshment, and the innkeeper is to receive them, and not let them lie in the street. So a church of Christ is appointed as a place of refreshment for such believers who are sick or wounded in Spirit, where they meet with convenient food, and sweet repose; and the pastor, like a tender host, is to minister comfort to them, or "to comfort such who are cast down, with the same comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God," 2 Cor. i. 2, 3, 4. There is in an inn all sorts of food; a traveller may have whatsoever he pleaseth, either milk or strong meat, so in a church there is food for all sorts of Christians, even for babes, for strong men and fathers; the milk of the word, as well as such doctrine that is compared to strong meat, Heb. v. 12, 13, 14.

7. An inn must not refuse such that are desolate; and though the traveller is very poor, yet if he hath a friend that promises he will pay the host all the charge he is at, he will readily entertain such, so a church is not to refuse the poorest saint, though never so desolate: and it is a shame to that congregation that refuses any such, because Jesus Christ hath engaged to pay all charge and pains they are at, when he comes again.

8. The door of an inn ought to stand open all the day long, for all comers that want rest and refreshment; yet care ought to be had of such that are cheats or thieves. So the door of a church is opened by Christ for all sincere believers who want spiritual refreshment; but they must come in at the door Christ hath appointed, and not thrust themselves into the church in a disorderly manner; also it behoveth the pastor and church to examine well all suspected persons, to see they are sincere or faithful, and not hypocrites, or such who are counterfeit Christians, who seek Christ for loaves, or out of and by sinister ends.

9. An inn nevertheless sometimes, through the ignorance of the host, or such that dwell therein, or for want of care, or through the craftiness of some deceitful persons who pretend they are honest travellers, entertain and lodge evil persons. So a church oftentimes through ignorance, or want of care in the pastor, or by means of the subtilty and craftiness of some cunning people, let such in who cause great trouble to all that lodge in it, and expose religion to the reproach of the world.

10. An inn is a very desirable place to weary travellers, and also a safe place when thieves are abroad. So a church of Christ is a desirable place to a soul that is weary and under many weights, being tired out by temptations. "One thing I have desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," &c., Psal. xxvii. 4. He longed for the courts of God's house, as some weary travellers long for an inn. One day in God's courts was better to David than a thousand: "My soul longeth, yea, fainteth for the courts of the Lord," &c., Psal. lxxxiv. 2.

11. An inn is not a place to abide long in, the traveller takes up his lodging there but for a night. So the church militant is a place for us to abide in but a short time, *i. e.* during

the night of our mortality. Heaven, or the church triumphant, is our lasting dwelling-place; that is, our home, and thither we are a travelling.

Secondly, The church, or spiritual inn, exceeds all inns.

The church excels all inns. 1. In other inns there is nothing to be had without money; if a man has no money, nor credit, he is no guest for them, but a church of Christ feeds all freely; all is at Christ's cost, he pays the host, and bears all the charges of all that come thither, all is of free-grace, we pay for none of the fat things of God's house. "We have milk and honey without money, and without price," Isa. lv. 1, 2. We are bid to "take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17.

2. A man that comes to lodge in an inn, though he hath good entertainment, yet he is not satisfied, nor contented to stay there, but would be gone; but in God's house is all soul-content and satisfaction, and a believer desires to dwell there all the days of his life. Psal. xxvii. 4.

3. An inn is not a traveller's home or dwelling-place; but the church or house of God is a saint's own dwelling-place, it is his Father's habitation, the place where the Lord desires to dwell for ever; and therefore believers desire to dwell there always likewise. O how sweet is the presence of God and Christ in Zion, and what glory of his shines forth therein!

God dwells in his church. 4. The food of this inn excels all food, and the privileges all privileges, and the rest all rest, and the company all company.

5. In some inns there is no room, it is so full of guests; there was no room for Mary in the inn: but in the house of God and heart of God, there is room enough, though hundreds, nay, thousands come thither, yet there is room: we read of three thousand that came to one of these inns in one day, and all had room enough. Acts ii. 41.

APPLICATION.

1. Bless God that there is a place of entertainment, and of spiritual repose and refreshment for poor weary travellers, or for such who are going to heaven. Christ hath well provided for us in our journey, that we may not be exposed to wants, dangers, and necessities, in respect of our souls, while we are in this world.

2. We infer, that great ignorance and folly attend many Christians, who are going to heaven, in that they refuse to take up their lodging in this inn, and rather choose to lie without doors. Hath God provided this place, built his house for all his children to dwell in; and doth "he love to dwell in Zion, and love the gates thereof more than all the dwelling places of Jacob;" and is his presence there, and will "he bless the provision of his house," and have all the saints prized a dwelling in it; and shall any of God's children refuse to dwell therein? this is sad. What, would they rather be "fed as a lamb in a large place?" it is a sign of much ignorance and folly: perhaps they do it to save charge, and to seek their bread where they can find it, God forbid;

3. You that are spiritual travellers, may from hence learn where you should take up your lodging whilst you are on your journey: know Christ hath many inns, and you that are yet without may choose what inn you like best, but be sure see it is one of Christ's inns, one of his churches, and where he dwells.

4. This may caution churches and pastors to take care who they let in, or what travellers they receive and entertain; also to see good order kept, or a right discipline maintained in their respective congregations, that all weary travellers who lodge in them, may take their quiet repose.

There are many other uses which I will leave you to make.

SERMON VIII.

And took care of him.—Luke x. 34.

Doctr. Jesus Christ takes care of all them that he heals, pardons, and brings into his church.

Christ takes care of all his saints. 1. He takes care of their souls, bodies, and all things else; he is their Shepherd as well as their physician: "the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," Psal. xxxiii. 1. We are put into the hand of Christ to heal, to renew, to quicken, to strengthen, to feed, to comfort, to clothe, to guide and lead us: and all

things he hath undertaken to do, and will certainly perform; for many reasons that might be given, some of which here follow.

1. Christ will take care of believers, brought to God, or into his house.

(1.) Because they are his, they are his own by election, and by free donation, the Father gave them to him; his by redemption, he bought them with the price of his own blood; his by adoption, his by regeneration; they are his friends, his children, nay, his beloved spouse; believers are the bride of Christ.

Why Christ takes care of his saints.

(2.) Because he entered into covenant with the Father, not only to come into this world to restore, heal, renew, and quicken them, but also to preserve, to keep, and to provide for them all things they want, so long as they are in this world: he hath undertaken to begin the good work; and what says the apostle, "Being confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it to the day of Christ," Phil. i. 6, or to the day of their death.

(3.) Because he knows their weakness, and how unable they are to help themselves; he knows their impotency, or their inability to stand one moment without him, without his care, his protection and preservation of them. "Without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5. Ye cannot resist temptations, ye cannot continue in believing and resting upon me: our faith would fail, did not Christ strengthen it day by day; the sap is in the root, that makes the tree to grow. "The branches bear fruit of themselves." Christ also must prune them; all our fruitfulness is from him. "From me is thy fruit found," Hos. xiv. 8.

(4.) Because they have resigned themselves up unto Christ, wholly to rest upon him, and to be cared for by him, taught, justified, pardoned, strengthened, healed, guided, and comforted by him. "The poor committeth himself to thee, thou art the helper of the fatherless," Psal. x. 14. Will a faithful man fail to take care of the poor fatherless children, who are left wholly to his oversight, care, protection, and provision, who have committed themselves to him, and to his care and faithfulness, after he hath also undertaken the care and charge of them? no, he hates the thoughts of betraying so great a trust; much more then will not Christ fail, nor leave any poor helpless saint, who wholly committeth himself to him. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. What was that which Paul had committed unto Christ, but his precious soul, and the souls of all those under his charge? it is said, the saints "gave themselves unto the Lord," 2 Cor. viii. 5. They durst not venture themselves in their own hands, to stand by their own power, or by the power of any inherent grace they had received, but to go to him for all future supplies of grace, and divine aid and assistance.

(5.) Christ will take the care of them, because none else is able; none but the blessed God can keep them, or is capable to take the care of them. As they cannot keep themselves, so ministers (to whom a charge is given to watch over them) are not able to preserve and keep them from falling, or to support and strengthen their souls; no, though they are never so faithful, yet is not in their power to do it. Christ only is clothed with might, and with everlasting strength to do it, he hath only the ear of God, he only is our Mediator and Intercessor; and what is his business now in heaven, but to take care of his saints on earth, and to intercede to the Father for them? "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25.

(6.) Because believers have many cruel enemies, who continually seek to destroy them, and are also attended with manifold wants, which must be supplied out of his own fulness.

(7.) Because all grace and supplies of whatsoever we want, is put into the hands of Jesus Christ, for him to give forth to us at all times of need. Like as Pharaoh put all the corn of the land of Egypt into the hands of Joseph: and when they came to Pharaoh for bread, he sent them to Joseph, so the Father sends all believers, all his children to his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, when they need anything for their souls and bodies. "Of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace," John i. 16. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus," Phil. iv. 19.

See the pearl of great price.

(8.) Because of his promises; he hath made many gracious promises, to help, and take care of his saints at all times, even in afflictions, and when they fall into great tribulations for his sake. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt," Isa. xliii. 2. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Again he saith, fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men

of Israel, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys," Isa. xliii. 10, 14. 18. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. "Verily thou shalt be fed." "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

APPLICATION.

This may be for reprehension to such who affirm, there is a possibility, that true believers may totally and finally fall and perish for ever; if that be so, then our standing is not by grace, nor by reason we are put into Christ's hand, but it is by our own power, our own care, or by means of our own diligence. My brethren, though we must be careful, watchful, and diligent, yet it is Christ only that keeps us in that watchful and diligent frame of heart; we are not only ordained to believe, but to be fruitful, "And that our fruit should remain," John xv. 16.

2. This may tend also to reprove such poor, weak believers, who fear they shall fall, and not be able to hold out to the end. O take from hence a sharp rebuke; what hath Jesus Christ taken the care of us, to feed, heal, strengthen, and succour us at all times, and to preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom, and yet do you fear you shall one day perish by this sin, or the other corruption, or temptation? will you cast such contempt upon the ever blessed and faithful Jesus? he took care of this poor man he brought to the inn, so he takes care of every one of us; sure you know not, or at least consider not on whom you have believed, and committed the keeping of your souls.

3. This also may be of use by way of exhortation. "O be persuaded to cast all your care upon Jesus Christ, since he careth for you," 1 Pet. v. 7. It is needless for us to be over-careful, nay, and it is a great evil to be distrustfully careful. Unbelief is the greatest sin; it renders God unfaithful, who hath promised to keep us by his mighty power, through faith to salvation. Also as you can commit the care and keeping of your souls to Christ, so be exhorted to commit the care and keeping of your bodies, your families, your estates, your liberties, your lives; and all your secular concerns to him also, can you commit the greater things to him, and not the lesser?

On the morrow when he departed, he took two-pence and gave them to the host.

This I humbly conceive refers to our Saviour's ascension, when he gave his blessed Spirit and gifts unto men. By the two-pence may be meant, as I intimated, the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, which he gave when he ascended on high; it is, my brethren, by virtue of those gifts Christ's ministers are enabled to preach, and to take care of those souls Christ brings to his spiritual inn. It is not human learning that makes men ministers of Christ, but the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, the fruit of which is sweet to their own souls, and their work being accepted of God, is a reward to them beyond all encouragement, which otherwise they receive. Yet I will not contend with them, who conclude that by the two-pence is meant also the minister's maintenance. It is clear and evident, that Christ hath provided a comfortable livelihood for the pastors of his churches. "God hath ordained, that they that preach the gospel, should live of the gospel," 1 Cor. ix. 14. Perhaps it may also refer to this, yet ministers should be contented with a small allowance, should not desire hundreds by the year, but according to the riches or ability of the Church, so they ought to hand forth freely to their pastor, and be sure they ought to be delivered from the cares and snares of this life, and their widows and children should be well provided for after their decease.

And gave them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him.

Doct. The care of the souls of God's people is committed, by Christ, to the pastors of his church, which care shall in a way of free, grace, be well rewarded by Christ at the great day.

I. I shall prove this.

II. Show what care they are to take of them.

III. Why they ought to take this care.

The duty of I. Our Lord commands them to feed and take care of those he brings into
pastors. his house.

This appears by these texts. "Simon, Son of Jonas, Lovest thou me? feed my sheep," John xxi. 16. Christ will not trust any to feed and take care of them, but such that love him. "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God," Acts xx. 28. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof," 1 Pet. v. 2.

II. I shall show you what care he should take of them.

1. He is to study, read, and meditate for them, to enrich his own heart with divine truths, that he may enrich them also. 1 Tim. iv. 13.
14.
2 Tim. ii. 15.

2. To feed and nourish them with sound doctrine, he must feed them with "knowledge and understanding," Jer. iii. 15. For such pastors God promised to give his people, he is obliged to feed them with the bread of life, that they may be fat and flourishing, and rich in good works.

3. To take the oversight of them, and watch for their souls, or watch over them. Heb. xiii. 10.
1 Pet. v. 2.

4. To love the flock with a hearty and sincere love and affection; the church should be dear to him, even be "his joy and his crown," 1 Thes. ii. 20.

5. To do what he can to resolve all their doubts, confirm weak hands, and to strengthen feeble knees, and to carry the lambs (like the great shepherd) in his bosom, &c., and endeavour to settle troubled minds, and succour such that are tempted. Isa. xxxv. 3.
and xl 10, 11.

6. To be of an humble and condescending spirit in all things. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men," 2 Tim. ii. 24. Not of a contentious spirit, striving about words.

7. To pray for them in private and in public. "God forbid (saith Samuel) that I should sin, in ceasing to pray for you," 1 Sam. xii. 23. Paul made mention of those under his care, day and night, in all his prayers. 1 Thes. i. 2,
11.
2 Tim i. 3.
Prov. xxvii.
23.
Phil. ii. 19,
20.
Ezek xxxiv.
4.

8. To know the state of the flock, and as oft as he can to visit them, especially when sick, or under trouble or temptation; and also to rule them well, with such helps of government Christ hath given. For the power of the keys is given to the church, but a pastor is a ruler or governor therein.

9. To administer all the ordinances of Christ to them, according to that order Christ hath left in the gospel. "And to shew himself approved, rightly dividing the word of truth," 2 Tim. ii. 15. Giving every one his portion in due season. "They are to seek out acceptable words, even words of wisdom," Eccl. xii. 10; not eloquent words, or words of man's wisdom, but "sound speech that cannot be condemned," Tit. ii. 8, not light and airy expressions, nor new uncouth notions, to please itching and wanton ears.

10. To be laborious, not slothful or idle, giving himself wholly up to his work and business, by preaching and writing, if it be set upon his heart, and to adorn his doctrine and ministry with a sober, and holy life and conversation, so as to be an ensample to the flock; in these things his care and work lies. 1 Tim. iv. 15.
1 Tim. iv. 12.
1 Pet. v. 3.

III. I shall give you the reasons why they should take this care of them.

1. Because the care of them in Christ's absence is committed to him; the good Samaritan went away, and gave the host the charge of this poor man upon his departure; and Christ commands his ministers to see that they take care of all that are committed to them, "Feed my lambs." Why pastors
should take
care of the
flock.

2. He is gifted or endowed with ministerial abilities to this end; they are given to him to this very purpose, that he may be in a fit capacity to take the care of them. He is chosen and ordained, and hath a competent maintenance allowed him to this end and purpose. He is made a watchman over them by the Holy Ghost, therefore must take care of them.

3. Because of the great worth and preciousness of their souls, whom Christ redeemed with his own blood.

4. Because if any miscarry through their negligence, or for want of giving them warning, Christ will require their blood at the watchman's hand; they must give an account of their souls. Ezek. iii. 17.
18,
chap. xxxii.
6, 7, 8.

5. Because they are Christ's sheep, the elect of God, and members of his body, and are put into his hand to preserve and keep.

6. Because they are subject, like sheep, to go astray, and are in danger to be devoured by wolves and other beasts of prey. "After my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock," Acts. xx. 29.

7. He must be accountable for their souls to Christ at the last day; and from hence it appears it is his duty to take the care of them.

APPLICATION.

1. We infer, it is no small thing to be a watchman, or an overseer of a congregation; it should be therefore undertaken with trembling, and by men whom Christ by his Spirit hath endowed with suitable gifts and graces for so a great trust. And

2. That they ought to be men of great light and knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel, and in all the main truths thereof. How should they feed others else with knowledge and understanding.

3. Moreover, that it is the duty of the church, and of every member, to pray for them continually, and bear them upon their hearts always. "Brethren, pray for us."

4. To behave themselves towards their pastor with due respect and honour, as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, and as a father, and not to rebuke him as an equal. Would it not be a shame in that child, (because he sees infirmities in his father,) to rebuke him, and reproach him before other children: or would other wise and obedient children endure or bear it in such an irreverent brother without severe reproof?

5. It shows the great evil of such, who like cursed Shem, discover their father's nakedness. Let such that so do, fear God's displeasure, and let all act towards their spiritual father, as Shem and Japheth did to their father Noah, who wisely covered his nakedness, by which means they were blessed of the Lord, as well as by their father. Ministers are but men, and men of like passions with their brethren. It is a horrid evil to blame (in an undue manner) the pastor of a church, and far worse to despise and slight him, or speak contemptibly of him, or of his ministry before his face, or behind his back; for as it is hateful to God, so it may hinder his ministry, and tend to weaken his hand, and lay him under temptations: therefore such who so do, should be laid under severe reproof, and if they repent not, cast out of the church as scandalous persons.

6. It is the duty of each member to sympathize with him in all his sorrows, trials, temptations, and afflictions; to encourage, strengthen, help, and comfort him, and not to join in, or favour such, who by an unbecoming manner reproach him, or slight his ministry, or cast his infirmities at every turn into his face, in the presence of others; but never in private entreat him as a father, nor let him have the usage of the meanest member, who, if he offends, must be dealt privately with at first, according to Matt. xviii.

7. All ought to attend upon his ministry at all times, and not desert or neglect it on any account at their own will and pleasure; for it is a duty they owe to God, and also to him; for as necessity is laid on him to preach, so necessity is laid on them to hear, 1 Cor. vii. 9. Heb. xiii. 17. they must obey him in the Lord.

8. Moreover, it is their duty to visit him, to show they have a dear love and respect for him; the neglect of which, and their strangeness unto him, is very offensive and discouraging. "The pastor (saith a worthy minister) must not only visit the church, but they are to visit him also."

9. They are bound to minister of their carnal things to him. "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that taught him in all good things," Rom. xv. 27. It is the will of Christ, and "God hath ordained it, that they that preach the Gospel, should live by the Gospel," Gal. vi. 6, 1 Cor. ix. 7, 8. Like as they that feed a flock, eat of the milk of the flock; his maintenance should be freely and cheerfully handed out to him, with respect and honour, and not given grudgingly nor sparingly, but bountifully, according to every one's ability, and their avowed obligation; and as his maintenance is of divine right, so such that withhold it, rob God, and may look for a blast in what they have. "Ye have robbed me," Mal. iii. 8. How was that? Why, in withholding from his ministers, what was appointed for them.

Lastly, (As one well observes,) they are bound to vindicate him under all reproaches and undue reflections cast upon him.

"And whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee," ver. 35.

What thou wastest in this world, I will make up to thee when I appear the second time. Our Lord says, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every one according as his works shall be," Rev. xxii. 12. They are all rewards of free-grace, and Christ's ministers shall have a glorious reward when their Lord comes, who are faithful, "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for evermore," Dan. xii. 3. See the latter end of the parable of the wheat and tares, where I have spoken of the reward of Christ's servants. I shall add no more now, but shall close this parable.

THE
P A R A B L E
 OF THE
LOST SHEEP OPENED.

S E R M O N I X.

And he spake this parable unto them, saying, what man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.—Luke xv. 3—10.

1. THE scope and chief occasion of Christ's speaking this parable, we have laid down in the first and second verses. The Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, "This man receiveth sinners." That is, great sinners, notorious sinners, as publicans and harlots; and this offended these self-righteous, proud, and vain-glorious Pharisees; so that the design of our Saviour in speaking of this parable, is to show wherefore he came into this world, which was "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Matt. ix. 13, or to seek such that were lost, not such that in their own conceit never went astray.

Scope of the parable.

2. We shall now open all the parts hereof.

First, By the man having an hundred sheep, is meant the Son of Man, or our Lord Jesus Christ. "The Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost," Matt. xviii. 11, 12. Thus St. Matthew begins this same parable, for in the next words it is said, "Then he spake this parable. How think ye? if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them goeth astray," ver. 12. "Doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?"

The parts of it explained.

2. By the hundred sheep, and ninety-nine that never went astray, expositors greatly differ. I find no less than four different apprehensions or exposition about them.

1. Some say by the hundred sheep, is meant the whole number of the elect, whether in heaven or on earth, whether called, or hereafter to be called. They also say, by the sheep going astray, signifies also all the elect, who by nature went astray and are "children of wrath, as well as others, being dead in and trespasses," Eph. ii. 1, 2. Here mention is made but of one going astray (say they) though they went all astray, to let us know the love of Christ to every individual soul of his; that if but one particular soul had been to be redeemed, Jesus Christ would have come down from heaven to have redeemed that one. Moreover, these expositors say, that the ninety and nine signifies all the sheep of Christ who are in heaven, now glorified, whom he left when he came into this world.

See Poole's Annot. on this parable.

But this exposition I cannot close with, because it is said, these ninety and nine never went astray; but so it cannot be said of the sheep of Christ, now glorified in heaven, for they once, when they were on earth, went astray. All we like sheep went astray in the first Adam, and we went all astray by actual sins too, until called.

2. Others conclude, by the ninety and nine is meant, such sheep of Christ, who need no repentance comparatively, or in respect of others, who being actually justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, need not such repentance as unregenerate sinners do, being for ever personally acquitted, and delivered from God's vindictive wrath and justice, and so shall never be lost nor go astray any more.

3. Others by needing no repentance think he means no public confession for offences taken by the church against them; but there lies one or two objections against this sense also.

Object. How can it be said, that God and the holy angels rejoice more over one sinner that returns to him, than over all his saints that are gathered home to him?

Answ. Yet an answer may be given to this objection, *i. e.*, that Christ speaks here after the manner of men. Now a man expresseth more joy over one child recovered from the

jaws of death, or escaped with his life, when in a lion's den, than over the rest of his children, who were not exposed to that danger. But then there is another objection, viz.

Object. 2. But these sheep, viz., such saints that are now in Christ, and need no repentance from dead works, as all unrenewed persons do, did once go astray; but Matthew saith, they went not astray.

The answer to this is, i. e., They do not now go astray, but to take of this the text doth not speak of the present time, but of the time past, "which went not astray," that is, never went astray.

3. Some interpreters say, that the ninety and nine are the holy angels (who be sure need no repentance, because they never sinned) whom Christ left, when by his incarnation he came down from heaven on earth, to work out our salvation: of this opinion it seems was St. Ambrose, Chrysostom, Hilary, &c.

4. Others think thereby both angels and men signified, by an imperfect number (ninety and nine) left in the wilderness, because by man's fall the number of them made to live in God's presence was diminished, thus Greg.

Hom. 34. However there are divers objections against both the last expositions.

(1.) It seems clear to me, that the ninety and nine, and the sheep which was lost, were all of one fold, or of the same species, but so are not angels and men.

(2.) Angels I think are no where called sheep in all the scripture. A sheep is (as one observes) a certain image to resemble mankind.

(3.) Moreover, doth God rejoice more over a returning sinner, than over all his holy angels?

(4.) The holy angels are the friends and neighbours spoken of, who rejoice at the returning home of the lost sheep, and therefore none of the ninety and nine left in the wilderness.

(5.) It seemeth strange to me, that heaven should be compared to a wilderness, and the angels left therein.

6. Others understand by these ninety and nine, pharisaical, or self-righteous persons, who themselves just, and are highly opinionated of their own good condition. Thus Aug. "The ninety and nine left in the wilderness, may set forth the proud, who have a wilderness in their mind," &c.

I am fully satisfied in this last sense; and the reasons why I take this to be the meaning of our blessed Lord, are,

1. Because it directly agrees or suits with the scope and coherence of the parable; and what better help have we to find out the true meaning of a parable, than to consider of the drift and scope attentively? "The Pharisees murmured, saying, this man receives sinners. They did not look upon themselves to be sinners, or such that needed repentance, but were holy and just persons, and so not in a lost state and condition. Well (as if our Lord had said) let it be granted, that you are such that are righteous, and not gone astray, yet these whom you call sinners, you certainly conclude they are lost; and now he adds this parable, "What man of you having an hundred sheep, if one is lost," &c. And this he did to rebuke them, and the same way he took for their conviction, in using other parables upon the like occasion. The Pharisees, I say, looked upon themselves to be such righteous and just persons that needed no repentance, not that there are any who indeed really do need no repentance, but our Lord speaks these words to denote what opinion they had of themselves; you conclude and think you are just persons, and not gone astray; you are the flock of God, and sheep of the field of Israel. Well, but these persons whom you see me concerned for, and willing to receive, viz., Publicans and harlots, you look upon to be lost sinners, great and undone sinners; well take this for granted, let it be so, "What man among you having an hundred sheep, if one be lost, doth not leave the ninety and nine, and go to seek that which is gone astray?" If he will leave all the ninety and nine to seek one, do not blame me, for there are many poor lost and undone sinners, such that have no inherent righteousness to trust in.

2. I take this to be the meaning of our Saviour, because in another place the Pharisees are called righteous ones upon the very same occasion. "Jesus sat at meat with publicans and sinners," Matt. ix. 10, 11; and this the Pharisees reproved him for, and murmured. "And when Jesus heard it, he said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Not that the Pharisees needed no physician, but they thought they did not: the objection which our late annotators bring against this exposition, is this, viz., because the holy angels are said to rejoice more over a returning sinner, than over these who needed

Quest evang.
lib. 2. 9. 31.

Pharisees
meant by
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astray.

no repentance, or these ninety and nine just persons; implying, say they, as if they did rejoice over these self-righteous persons, who rather grieve them, than give cause in any sense to be rejoiced over.

Answ. 1. That it doth not follow in my judgment, that they rejoiced at all over them, from those expressions, "There is more joy in heaven," &c.

2. But suppose it doth imply they did in some respects rejoice over them, why may not the angels rejoice in doing that service they might be employed in towards such persons? for at that time the Jews who believed not, and the Pharisees were the church of God, and members thereof, and so might be called his sheep, for so were the men of the house of Israel, which church continued until the death of Christ, and the gospel church took place, might not angels rejoice in doing them what service they could, or were employed in, though far greater joy is amongst them, when one poor sinner is brought home to Christ?

Secondly, by the "one sheep that was lost," is meant all God's elect, who are brought to see that they are sinners, lost sinners, before they are convinced of righteousness; the elect no doubt are that world which the Holy Spirit, first convinceth of sin, and of their lost and undone condition.

Thirdly, the man going after the lost sheep, signifies Jesus Christ, who, in order to restore lost sinners, came into this world and took our nature on him, and died for us; as also his sending of his gospel, his ministers, his word and Spirit to convert and turn them to God, as shall hereafter be more fully opened.

Fourthly, Christ finding the lost sheep, signifies his meeting with a sinner, by the powerful convictions of his word and Spirit, for when the word hath fastened upon a sinner's heart and conscience, then Christ may be said to have found the lost sheep.

Fifthly, "He layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing," ver. 5.

Shoulders denotes the great power or strength of Christ, as it is put forth or exerted in working upon a rebellious sinner, in bringing him home, when Christ is said to "carry his lambs in his arms, and lay them in his bosom," Isa. xl. 10, 11, that implies his great love; but when he is said to "take them up, and lay them upon his shoulders," that denotes his almighty power: because when a man sets his shoulders to a work, he puts forth the greatness of his strength, the strength of a man lying in his arms and shoulders; it is not said his shoulder, but his shoulders; he puts both his shoulders to this work.

Sixthly, "When he cometh home," ver. 6.

Jesus Christ hath two homes.

1. The church upon earth is his home, there he dwells; Zion is his home and habitation, or dwelling-place for ever.

2. Heaven is his home; that is, his upper house, palace, or principal place of abode.

Seventhly, "He calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost."

1. When Christ brings a lost sinner home, or unto his house or church on earth, he stirreth up all his saints and members there to rejoice; the saints below rejoice.

2. Also there is joy in heaven amongst the holy angels, when a lost sinner is brought home, see ver. 17. "And I say unto you, there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," &c.

From this parable thus briefly opened, I shall take notice of several propositions, or points of doctrine, and also prosecute them,

Doct. I. That our Lord Jesus Christ leaves all self-righteous persons in the wilderness of this world, and goes after to seek and save such that are lost.

Doct. II. That sinners are lost naturally, even God's elect.

Doct. III. That the Lord Jesus Christ came to seek his lost sheep, and will not give over seeking them, until he hath found them, and will carry them all home to God.

Doct. IV. That Christ's lost sheep cannot go home, or return to God of themselves, or upon their own feet (or by virtue of any power of their own) but must be taken up in Christ's arms, and carried home on his shoulders.

Doct. V. That Jesus Christ, and all his saints below on earth, and also his angels above in heaven, greatly rejoice when one lost sinner repenteth, and is brought home to God.

I shall, my brethren, begin with the first of these observations, and

I. Show you, why this world is compared to a wilderness.

II. Show what kind or sort of people they are, that Jesus Christ leaves in the wilderness of this world, as also what may be meant by his leaving of them.

III. Show why he leaveth them in the wilderness.

IV. Apply it.

The lost sheep signifies all the elect, who are brought to see their lost estate. John xvi. 8.

This world compared to a wilderness.

1. This world may be compared to a wilderness; a wilderness is a vast barren place, which is not tilled, manured, nor sowed; nothing grows in it, but comes forth naturally. So, my brethren, the world, I mean the vast and common lump of mankind (or ungodly sinners, who are by our Saviour called the world) are a barren people. God, the great husbandman, takes no pains with them, but lets them lie untilled and unsown; he doth not plough, dig, nor manure, sow, nor plant this wilderness; mankind naturally are barren and fruitless in their hearts and lives; nothing grows but what they bring forth by natural light, or natural powers and principles improved.

The Quaker detected.

(1.) By the way, let such that cry up a Christ in all men, see to this. Do but once fancy that the light within, the light of natural conscience is the true Christ, and walk up unto it; and O what raptures of joy may such feign to themselves! They think they have Christ within, and live and sin not, and fancy themselves perfectly righteous, and justified persons; when all their righteousness is but the imperfect righteousness of the law, or first covenant.

(2.) Let such also that cry up natural religion, and condemn the revelation of Christ and his righteousness, look to it: alas, morality is often found to grow in the wilderness of this world, and it is the proper product thereof; these men do but strive to paganize the nation, and labour to make Christians renounce the blessed fruits of Christ's spiritual garden, to feed with the old Heathen on the grass of the wilderness, and would have us to put no difference between Christianity and morality, and so cast contempt upon the gospel, as if it were a mere romance.

2. A howling wilderness is not fit place for mankind to inhabit, it is therefore forsaken of the inhabitants; so the godly cannot live amongst, but separate themselves from the people of the world. "Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord," &c. 2 Cor. vi. 17. "I have chosen you out of the world," John xv. 16. They cannot live there, because there is no water, no bread of life, nor water of life.

3. In a wilderness are many pricking briars and thorns; so that it is hard passing through it without a scratched face, or being torn or wounded. So our Lord himself, and his disciples, in passing through this world, were torn, abused, and wounded in their names and persons by the pricking briars and thorns; the Scribes and Pharisees, the inhabitants of the wilderness, scratched and wounded them. Wicked men are fitly compared to briars and thorns: (1.) In that they are the fruit of the curse, and abide under it. (2.) In that they are good for little, unless it be to make a hedge of: God sometimes, to secure his own people, causes the wicked of the world to be a hedge or defence unto them; the earth helped the woman. (3.) If thorns should chance to spring up in Christ's vineyard, they are presently cut off by the axe, or dug up by the spade of church-discipline. (1.) "They must be as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with the hand," 2 Sam. xxiii. 6. What are the briars and thorns, but fuel for the fire? So shall all the briars and thorns of this world be thrown into the fire of God's wrath; "They are near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 7, 8.

4. In a howling wilderness are many savage and devouring beasts of prey, so that it is dangerous to pass through it; and especially if a sheep should chance to stray away, and be lost in a wilderness, it is by those beasts in eminent danger of being devoured: so in this world are many wicked men, who are of a savage and cruel nature; and although they are in the shape of human creatures, yet they have the nature or qualities of lions, tigers, wolves, bears, serpents, foxes. A tyrant is compared to a tiger, a lion, a dragon; a deceiver or seducer to a wolf; a drunkard to a filthy swine, a gluttonous person to a cormorant; a backslider to a dog, licking up his filthy vomit again; a flatterer to a panther, and a crafty persecutor to a fox; and this makes this world like a wilderness.

5. In a wilderness a man may soon lose his way, unless he hath a knowing and faithful guide: so a poor Christian may soon lose his way whilst he is in this world, where there are so many by-paths, and one crying this is the way, and another that is the way; wherefore it behoveth all to keep to the unerring rule of God's word, lest they are deceived.

6. A wilderness is a dolesome and solitary place, and it is so called; even so is this world; what can we expect here, but trouble, sorrow, and afflictions? Also, we are amongst wild beasts, who by their treachery, cruelty, deceit, flattery, horrid oaths, blasphemy, malignity, and all other detestable evils, render this world like a wilderness. "I have fought with evil beasts at Ephesus," saith Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 32.

7. A wilderness hath many pits and dangerous places in it, into which a man may soon fall if he lose his way, especially in a dark night. O what dangerous pits are there in

this world, temptations abroad and at home ; our very tables may be a snare, or pit to us, by which we may be spoiled and undone for ever ; nay, our trades may be like a pit of destruction ; a man's wife, his children, his riches, pleasures, honours, may be as snares or pit into which he may fall and perish eternally. Temptations (to such that fall by them) may fitly be compared to a pit, into which a man in a dark night falleth and is lost. O it is dangerous to dwell in the wilderness of this world.

8. Some part of a wilderness hath been turned into a garden or fruitful vineyard : so God hath out of the people of this world, taken his churches and walled them about, that none of the evil beasts can hurt them : all mankind naturally were alike dry and barren, as a wilderness, and brought forth no good fruit. But God hath separated some of this barren ground, to make lovely gardens for himself to walk and delight in.

9. Though a wilderness is dry and rocky, and without water, yet God can turn a wilderness into pools of water, nay, and he hath promised so to do. "The wilderness and solitary places shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom, as the rose in the latter days," Isa. xxxv. 1. "The whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the water fills the sea," Isa. xi. 9: and then the wilderness shall become a lovely garden : O pray for those days.

10. God can spread a table in the wilderness, and bring water out of the rock, as he did of old ; so whilst we are in the wilderness of this world, God feeds his people with manna from heaven, and makes them drink of that blessed Rock, Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. x. 3.

11. The way to Canaan is through the wilderness ; yet the Lord led Israel safely to the land of promise : so our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of this world ; but Jesus Christ feeds us with heavenly bread, and leads us safely to the true spiritual and antitypical Canaan.

12. Sometimes poor sheep are lost in the wilderness, and on the mountains, and thither the shepherd must go to seek them.

Matthew saith, the man that lost his sheep, left the "ninety and nine, And went into the mountains to seek the sheep that was gone astray." The world compared to mountains. By mountains and wilderness is meant the same thing, viz., this world. (1.) Mountains are dry and barren places, like a wilderness. (2.) Mountains are high and lofty : so are the ungodly of the earth, they are proud and haughty in their hearts and spirits. What people were more swelled with pride and self-conceit, than the Pharisees ; yet amongst the Jews who were then as a barren wilderness, or high and lofty mountains, Jesus Christ had some sheep, whom he came to seek, even the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (3.) Mountains are hard and rocky, so are the hearts of all wicked men, and particularly the hearts of the unbelieving Jews. It is said, that our Lord was grieved, because of the hardness of their hearts.

So much as to the first thing.

II. I shall show, what sort of people they are, that Jesus Christ leaves in the wilderness. What sort of people Christ leaves in the wilderness.

1. They are such as looked upon themselves (as you heard) to be the flock of God, the people of God ; and so the Jews indeed were by profession, and by that legal covenant made with Abraham, which was also afterward renewed, when they came into the wilderness, Exod. xx.

2. They were a people that thought they were not gone astray ; for so the Scribes and Pharisees thought of themselves.

3. Such as thought they needed no repentance, not believing they had broken God's holy law, but were pure, holy, and righteous persons.

III. I shall show you what his leaving them in the wilderness does imply, and also why our Lord doth leave them there. What leaving them in the wilderness signifies.

1. Jesus Christ leaving the ninety and nine in the wilderness signifies, his not choosing them, they being none of his sheep, by God's special choice or election, though his flock by that external or legal covenant made with their fathers : "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel ; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children : but "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." That is, they which are children of the flesh, these are not the children of God," Rom. ix 7, 8 ; namely, as so considered, or as such.

2. Christ's leaving them in the wilderness denotes an act of preterition, or a passing of them by, not manifesting himself to them, but rather hiding the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from them.

3. It may also signify his leaving them in a bewildered state, they not knowing in what

a woful, ignorant, and blind condition they were. "And Jesus said, for judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see, and that such that see might be made blind." John ix. 39. And thus was Christ a "foundation to build upon for some, and a stumbling-stone, and Rock of offence to others, even to the whole flock or house of Israel." Under which blindness Christ left them, and at last to final unbelief and impenitence, as a just judgment for their horrid pride and contempt of the gospel.

Quest. Why doth Christ leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, or pass them by?

Why the self-righteous are left in the wilderness. Answ. (1.) Because they were not lost, i.e., they thought so, or were not lost in their own sight; therefore our Lord told them, If you were blind, ye should have no sin. If your ignorance were simple, and not affected, or you were sensible of your blindness, you would not be so incurable, nor sin with those aggravations, also then you would see great need of me to open your eyes; but because they saw no need of Christ, but looked upon themselves as righteous persons, and never lost or gone astray, he leaves them, or passes by them. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Matt. ix. 12.

(2.) Jesus Christ leaves them, because they were not fit and proper subjects of Gospel grace. The design of God is to magnify rich bounty, and sovereign love and favour to such persons that will readily and heartily receive it, as such that see and know they need it, and that will exalt and magnify God in the riches of his free grace towards them: but self-righteous persons can see no need to praise, bless, and magnify God and his free grace, they thinking that they have a fulness in themselves: the Pharisee cries, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men—nor as this publican." God extends his favour to such as will exalt his Son, and his divine goodness; but so doth no self-righteous person; and therefore Christ leaves these in the wilderness.

(3.) Jesus Christ leaves them because they had rejected him, and grew headstrong and unruly, and would not own him to be their Prince and Saviour; though he was the "chief corner-stone," Acts. iv. 11, yet he was disallowed of by these master-builders, and refused as their shepherd.

(4.) Because that flock that consisted of "ninety and nine," a great multitude, was now to be scattered; I mean the church of the Jews was to be dissolved, as a legal and typical church, the date of its continuation being now expiring, or expired; and they refusing to become members of his Gospel-church, he must leave them of necessity, the providence and dispensation of God calls him so to do: remarkable it is, he leaves no man with this flock, "The ninety and nine." When he goes after his lost sheep, as other shepherds were used to do; no, "Moses and the prophets were until John, but the servant abides not in the house for ever." All must be under Christ's teaching, under his feeding, his care, and his government, or else he will leave them. I do not think in this I at all strain this part of the parable.

(5.) Our Lord leaves them, because they were none of his sheep, nor the flock whom he came to gather; it is true, it is said, "He came to his own, and they received him not," John i. 11. How his own? not by the election of grace; not his own by the gospel-covenant, or his gospel-flock; but his own by the legal covenant. Our Lord came not to keep up, support, and uphold the national church of Israel, but to gather all his lost sheep out from among them, and to bring them into a new church state. Now these are some of those reasons, why he left the ninety and nine in the wilderness. And so much as to this first proposition.

APPLICATION.

1st. Is this world like to a wilderness? then we may infer, that it is a great mercy the people of God are not utterly destroyed by the ravenous beasts of this wilderness.

2thly. That it beloveth all people that dwell in this wilderness, to enquire the way how they may come out of it, and that is by Christ alone; he must bring them up out of the wilderness: "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Cant. viii. 5. Or trusting in, or relying upon a blessed Saviour.

Quest. How do sinners come out of the wilderness?

Answ. 1. In spirit; they receive another spirit; we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12. That is not a sensual, an earthly, a contentious, a proud, a malicious, a covetous, a self-glorious, a self-righteous, nor a superstitious spirit; but they have received a praying spirit, a believing spirit, a humble spirit, a soul-sanctifying spirit, a God-honouring, and a Christ-exalting spirit.

2. By being born again, or by attaining a new birth, they came out of the wilderness; they are born or brought forth into God's kingdom; delivered out of the kingdom of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. They obtain a different life, different light and knowledge, a different love, different affections, different fears, different inclinations, and different resolutions, different principles, ends, aims, delight, joy, peace, and different appetite, diet, food, company, and apparel; they wear not their own apparel.

3. They come out of the wilderness, or out of the world, in respect of adoration or worship; the worship of the world is not divine, but devised, not of God, but of man; or much of it is human, and not of divine institution, proceeding from Rome, and not from Jesus Christ.

4. Believing sinners come out of the wilderness, in respect of church constitution; they leave the worldly sanctuary, which is not of God's, but of man's pitching; a mere formal, carnal, and national constitution, built up of dead stones, or consisting not of a people renewed, or made spiritually alive, but are generally profane and ungodly ones, yea, the worst of men. What wretched and abominable persons are allowed to be members of such a church-state; what briars, thorns, and brambles grow in this wilderness.

But enlightened sinners come out of this wilderness into a new constitution, a new church state gathered according to the pattern left by Jesus Christ and his apostles in the New Testament, free from all human mixtures, though not its full glory yet.

5. They come out of the wilderness and worldly sanctuary, or worldly communion, in respect of discipline; the church into which they come, has its government and discipline in itself, or power to receive and cast out by that authority Christ hath left in it, Matt. xviii.

6. In respect of conversation; they walk not as others, in the vanity of their minds, who chiefly pursue the world, and their own worldly interest; they walk not according to the course this world, "nor according to the power of the prince of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" see, Eph. iv. 1-8. Eph. ii. 2.

Quest. But why must not Christ's sheep remain in the wilderness, or in the world, i. e., in the worship of this world?

Ans. I. Because Christ came to seek them in this world, and to bring them out of it; they are chosen and called out of the world. "I have chosen you out of the world."

Why all
believers
should come
out of the
wilderness.

2. Because they are not of this world—"because ye are not of the world, the world hateth you," John ix. 19.

3. Because they are redeemed out of this world, or out of every kindred, nation, tongue, and people. Rev. v. 9.

4. Because they are commanded to separate themselves, and come out from among them, or separate from the world in their worship, rites, customs, and human ceremonies, and vain superstitions. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." &c. 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Come out of her, my people, and partake not of her sins," &c. Rev. xviii. 4.

5. Because conformity to this world, in point of worship, customs, evil practices, and in conversation, is forbidden, and it is a great sin to conform to it. "Be not comfortable to this world," &c. Rom. xii. 2.

6. Because the church of Christ is a garden inclosed, or a community of Christians distinct from the world. "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse," Cant. vii. 12.

2nly. Doth Christ leave all self-righteous persons in the wilderness? O then let such souls tremble, who trust to their own righteousness.

4thly. And doth he seek sinners, lost sinners? then this is good news to those that see themselves lost and undone, as having no righteousness of their own to justify them.

5thly. Wonder not you that are believers, you meet with trouble in this world; it is a wilderness.

6thly. Let sinners get a good and wise guide to lead them out of the wilderness.

7thly. Let the saints labour to keep themselves clear of the defilements and pollutions of this world, and strive to live above the world, and to get well out of the world, to the heavenly Canaan.

Lastly, It reproves such that remain in the ways and worship of this world; O fly to Zion. And in coming out see you lean upon Jesus Christ as your beloved, as your Saviour, as your guide, your priest, your king, your prophet, &c.

But so much at this time.

SERMON X.

What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? Luke xv. 3, 4, 5.

I HAVE prosecuted one point of doctrine, viz., That this world may be compared to a wilderness.

I shall now proceed.

Doct. 2. That sinners by nature, or as they are in their natural condition, are lost, like lost sheep.

I. I shall show what to be lost doth denote or signify.

What it is to be lost. II. Show the nature of being lost, or the woful condition such are in.

III. Apply it.

I. I shall show what to be lost doth denote or signify.

I. To be lost, is to stray away from our proper place, where we were set by the Almighty. As a sheep that is lost is gone from the flock, from the fold, or pasture where it was put; so sinners are gone astray from God, and from that blessed place and state in which they were created. They are gone out of the way; we are gone astray like lost sheep.

2. To be lost is to be undone. As we say of a man that falls into the sea, and no help near, or of a man condemned to die, and hath no pardon, he is a lost man, a dead man, dead in law; so sinners naturally are undone, they are lost, though but few see it, or cry out with the prophet, "Woe is me, for I am undone," Isa. vi. 5. All mankind are fallen into the sea of God's wrath, and none can help them, no friend, nor brother; they are as a sheep gone astray, fallen into a lion's den. Sinners are become a prey to Satan, every man is condemned in the first Adam, and spiritually dead, "dead in sins and trespasses," Eph. ii. 1, 2.

II. I shall show the woful state and condition of such that are lost.

And this in three respects.

The woful state of such that are lost. 1. Such is the fearful state of all mankind in the first Adam, that they have lost God.

2. God hath lost them.

3. They have lost themselves.

They have lost God. First, all mankind in the first Adam have lost God, hence it is said, that the saints at Ephesus were by nature without God. "Being at that time without hope, and without God in the world."

1. We all lost the knowledge of God, all men naturally are ignorant of God, and may say with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, that I should obey him." Though they may know there is a God, yet they have lost the true knowledge of the great and holy God. "They proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord," Jer. ix. 3. They know not the holiness, purity, justice, wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness of God.

2. They have lost the life of God, that blessed life the soul had in the first Adam, and by this means they are said to be spiritually dead, "Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart," Eph. iv. 18. Men are alive in their bodies, but without spiritual life in their souls.

3. They have lost the image of God, or likeness to God in holiness and true righteousness. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," Rom. iii. 23. The glory of God, which shone forth in our first parents in the state of innocency, was the image of God; and by sin instead of that naturally, they, are become like unto the devil.

4. They have lost communion with God. Sin hath so alienated them from God, that they cannot endure his presence. Adam run away from God, would, if he could, have hid himself from his offended Creator. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. Adam no doubt before he sinned, delighted in, and had sweet friendship and communion with the Almighty, but no sooner had he sinned, but he became a stranger to him, and so are all men naturally. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. They say to God, depart from us," &c. Rom. viii. 7.

5. Man hath lost that love and favour of God, which was let out at first, whilst he

stood a perfect and sinless creature. God hates all the workers of iniquity, though I deny not that love, pity, purpose, and good-will of God to his elect from everlasting.

But now let us consider a little the sad effects of this loss.

The sad effects of the least sin.

1. Mankind having lost God, they lost their chief good in whom our happiness alone lieth, and in the loss of which sinners became miserable.

2. By losing God, and sinning against him, all men were brought under the curse; the breach of the law of the first covenant, brought all mankind under the curse, and so they remain until they find Jesus Christ, and are united to him. "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. Cursed is he that continueth not in all things that is written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. The least sin exposeth the soul to God's eternal vengeance, and lays all mankind under the sentence of wrath and condemnation; nay, and such "who believe not in Christ are condemned already," John iii. 18; and it will, if grace prevent not, plunge the sinner into everlasting perdition and destruction. I say, the least sin, though observe, there is no sin absolutely small or little, who can call sin little, that is committed against a great and infinite God; (though comparatively some sins are greater than others) but one evil thought, or an idle word, deserves eternal wrath. The least sin in some sense is an infinite evil. We ascribe infiniteness to these two (saith a divine) 1st. To the great God. 2nd. To sin. God is infinite essentially, sin is infinite objectively, or in respect of the object sinned against, because injurious to an infinite God, an offence of an infinite majesty, a contempt of infinite authority, an affront to infinite sovereignty, an abuse of mercy, a dishonour to infinite excellency, a provocation to infinite justice, a contrariety to infinite holiness, an enemy to infinite love. "Is not thy wickedness great, and thy iniquity infinite?" Job xxii. 5. Sin therefore, yea, the least sin, deserveth an infinite punishment: O woful condition of lost sinners! Justice requires that the punishment should be according to the offence: a punishment intensively cannot be inflicted upon a mere creature so as to satisfy for it, because a mere creature is not capable of it; therefore what it wants in degrees, must be made up in duration.

Secondly, as sinners have lost God, so God also hath lost them, as a shepherd hath lost his sheep that are gone astray.

But here, first, I must premise one or two things: (1.) That no person, no sinner is so lost to God, but the Lord knows where they are, and in what state and condition they are; he knows the way and course they take, and the thoughts of their hearts. "Thou knowest my foolishness," (saith David,) Psal. lxxix. 5; and saith Job, "He knoweth the way I take," Job xxiii. 10. A shepherd knows not where his lost sheep is, neither to what danger it may be exposed; but the Lord knoweth all the evil which hath befallen every sinner in the world: so that in this there is a great disparity. (2.) God doth not search for sinners, as a shepherd doth. A shepherd seeks them where they are not, because of his ignorance, and perhaps may never find them. (3.) No man is gone from God's essential presence, because he is omnipresent, or in all places: though it is said, the Prodigal went into a far country, and was lost, yet he was not gone where God was not; it doth not therefore refer to distance of place, but to distance of the sinner's state. But in the affirmative, when we say, God hath lost the sinner,

1. We mean, he hath lost his love and affection: no doubt whilst Adam stood in a state of innocency, God was the object of his choice, love, and affections, but God lost his heart and chiefest affections when he had sinned, and so he hath lost the love of all mankind; for naturally they love the creature more than the Creator, nay, their sins above God.

What meant by God's losing sinners.

2. God hath lost that glory, that honour which man in his first state gave unto him: like as a son, who rebels against his father, honours his father no more (I mean so long as he abides in his rebellion against him) so sinners instead of honouring of God are said to despise him. "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30. "Ye have despised the Lord, saith Moses," Numb. xi. 20; they are called haters of God, contemners of God. "Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?" Psal. x. 13. So that the honour God ought to have from these creatures he hath lost.

3. God hath lost that service, that homage and worship which belongs to him: men, under apostacy, serve their lusts, serve sin, serve men, nay, serve the devil, and serve not God; they worship not their blessed Creator. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," Tit. iii. 3.

4. God hath lost that just and righteous obedience and subjection sinners should yield

unto him; they will not own him to be their sovereign, "Our tongues are our own, and who is lord over us?" When a master's commands are not regarded, or a ruler is not subjected to, or what he says is not observed, what says one? he hath lost all that is valued by him, or belongs to him, so whilst God's authority is contemned, his sovereignty abused, and his commands slighted; what hath he more to lose, or what greater loss can God sustain (to speak after the manner of men) by his creatures than this?

**Sinners
have lost
themselves.**

Thirdly, sinners have lost themselves.

1. They know not what they have done, they know not what evil is in sin, or what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from the Lord. "Know therefore, and see that it is an evil and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts," Jer. ii. 19. When they sin they little think they cast dirt (as it were) in the very face of God, and cross his will, and contemn and despise him in their hearts. Sin is a rebellion against God, sinners take up arms and fight against their Maker and would destroy his very being if they could; some have wished there was no God, or that they were above God; they know not what they do.

2. They know not what boundless evils are in their base hearts, nor what they would do, did not God restrain them. He hath lost himself sure, that hath lost the knowledge of himself. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" 2 Kings viii. 13, (said Hazael to Elisha) he, alas! knew not the seed of that great wickedness that was in his heart, yet did what the prophet told him, when he became king of Syria.

3. They have so lost themselves that they know not how far they are gone from God, or at what woful distance sin hath set them from the holy God, in respect to their state and condition; neither do they know what fearful vengeance hangs over their heads; nor will they believe it when it is told them that God abhorreth them, and all the religion, service, and worship they pretend to perform unto him; but this is so verily so, "The very prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." They know not their state and condition, will not believe they are enemies to God, traitors, and rebels, and that they are condemned and under the sentence of everlasting death and wrath, and liable to be cast every moment into eternal flames.

4. The wicked are so far lost (as to themselves) that they know not whither they are going; they little think or know whither that path they take will lead them; for they are blind, or in darkness: "And he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth," John xii. 35. Perhaps they think the way they go in, will bring them to heaven, when it is the highway to hell; the god of this world hath blinded their eyes.

5. They have lost themselves to such a degree, that they know not the way to return home to God; and from hence they take to by-ways, and following blind guides, who are lost as well as they.

(1.) Some think to return home by the light of their own natural consciences, which they call Christ within them. Now (1.) evident it is, that the light that is in all men, is at best but a divine quality: these therefore have lost the true Saviour; for is Jesus of Nazareth no real person without us? is he not, though now glorified, of our very flesh and bone? "Handle and see me, a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have." And this was after he rose from the dead. Is not the same Jesus that was crucified, now in heaven? or can the person of Jesus Christ be in the hearts of men and women? (2.) Is the Spirit of Christ in all? doth not he say, that the world could not receive the Holy Spirit? (3.) Is that light which is in all men any thing else than some remainders of the law of the first covenant, that was written in the hearts of mankind? and had not the Jews a clearer ministration of that law than the Gentiles, written in tables of stone? and if that law could not give them life, was not able to justify the Jews, who walked up in obedience to it; do these men think to be justified by that dark ministration of the law of the first covenant that was written in the hearts of the Gentiles? (4.) Do not these people seek to be justified and saved by the works of this law, or light within? O how far are they lost, who think this way to return to God.

(2.) Others think to return home to God by leading a sober moral life, doing to all men as they would be done unto, which indeed in effect is the same with the former; for the light in every man's conscience will teach him thus to do: and thus Paul acted also when he was a Pharisee, he kept a moral good conscience then towards God and man; but all that was nothing to him, when God revealed Jesus Christ to him: see Phil. iii. 5—8.

(3.) Others think to return to God by their prayers and tears, or by their repentance and reformation of life: some it may be feared think, if they cry, Lord have mercy upon me, on a death-bed, and acknowledge their sin, they shall be saved, though they never

truly believe in Christ, nor experience the work of regeneration. O how far lost are all these I have mentioned.

(4.) Some think to return to God by the power of their own depraved will, as if a man could change his own heart, or get rid (by any mere moral suasions) of that averseness that is in him to do that which is truly spiritually good, or make his own unwilling will yield and bow to the will of God, without the supernatural operations of the Spirit, as if arguments could prevail upon a dead man to awake and rise out of the grave. I hope many of this sort experience better things than they preach and argue for, or else sad will be their condition at last.

(5.) Some think they were born Christians, and in a saved state, because their parents were Protestants, or that they were made Christians by their baptism; nor is it any marvel when they are told, that "they were thereby made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." Woful doctrine, and a lamentable delusion: let all know assuredly, that if they experience no other regeneration than that they are told they had in their baptism in their infancy, they shall never see the kingdom of heaven. Were their hearts and natures then changed, or the seed of grace then infused into them? sure where the habit of grace is, it cannot be lost, and it will afterwards appear, nay, and that immediately also.

(6.) Moreover, some think if they do continue in that faith in which they were born and educated, they shall certainly go to heaven; these cry up the church, the church, when, alas, it is to be feared they know not what the church, the true church of God is, nor whether that which they are in, and cry up, be a true or false church.

(7.) Some other persons think to return to God, and be justified by their faith and sincere obedience through Christ's merits, making their own faith, gospel-obedience, the material cause of their justification at God's bar.

6. Sinners are so far lost that they are become a prey to Satan, and are under his power and influence, but know it not, though they are taken captive by him at his will: "And walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2.

7. They are so far lost and gone from God, that they are out of Christ's call by the word, they know not Christ's voice from the voice of strangers: true, if they are Christ's sheep, they shall hear his voice, but not till he gives them hearing ears, and calls unto them by the voice of his Spirit; until then lost sinners do not, cannot hear nor discern betwixt true doctrine and false, so as to hear and believe in Jesus Christ.

8. Sinners naturally are so far lost, as that they know not Christ's wholesome, sweet, and soul-fattening pastures, his flock nor fold; they know "not where Christ feeds, and where he makes his flock to rest at noon," Cant. i. 7, 8. They know not perhaps whether Christ's church be national or congregational, nor who his under-shepherds are; they know not Christ's true ministers from false teachers, men that feed themselves, that feed upon the sheep, but feed not the flock.

APPLICATION.

1. Sinners, know what you have done by sinning against God. O bemoan your lost state, and see what a condition you are in by nature, by the disobedience of the first Adam. O Adam, Adam, saith one, what hast thou done? Thus mayest thou say, O Adam, what a God is he that thou hast lost, and we in thee? and O how God lost us, and we lost ourselves, both by original and actual sins.

Sinners, labour to be convinced of the evil of sin, and the dismal state you all lost sinners are in thereby.

2. Tremble, ye great sinners, ye scarlet-dye sinners, and crimson-dye sinners: if the least sin expositeth a man to the wrath of God, and unto his eternal vengeance, what will become of you? Sirs, the sins of a wicked man that he thinks not of, or concludes perhaps are no sins at all, even his sins of ignorance, deserve eternal wrath. A man little thinks that his very best duties, his prayers, and that worship he performs to God are sins, and hateful in God's sight. "The prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, and the ploughing of the wicked is sin," Prov. xxi. 4. Their natural as well as their spiritual actions are sin, because they act not from spiritual principles, nor by a holy and righteous rule, nor to glorify God, or to a holy end, but in religious services are hypocritical, and in all their civil acts they inordinately pursue the world, to gratify their own lusts.

Some I know by ploughing do not understand it literally, but metaphorically. Sin is

their trade, as a husbandman's calling is to plough and sow, &c., so "they plough wickedness, and sow iniquity," Job iv. 8. Ungodly men must pray, though their prayers are full of sin, yet if they pray not they sin worse; it is the duty of all to pray. Peter put Simon Magus upon praying to God, "that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him," Acts viii. 22. But if sins of ignorance are so dangerous, and small sins so damnable in their own nature; what is the nature of great sins? If an unrenewed man's righteousness is abominable, what is his unrighteousness? If your best be so bad, what is your worst? Will evil thoughts and idle words damn the soul? what will horrid oaths, blasphemy, cursed imprecations, actual and abominable adulteries, and other scandalous sins do?

3. Sinners, for all this do not despair, for here is a Saviour come to seek and save lost and undone sinners. "Though your sins be as red as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though as red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool," Isa. i. 18. That is, if you close with Christ, if you believe in him, and are turned to God, or are brought home by the good Shepherd of the sheep.

4. O admire infinite love, infinite grace and mercy, that God should send a Saviour, such a Saviour, a great one, one that is "able to save all to the uttermost that come to God by him," Isa. xix. 20, Heb. vii. 25.

5. Know that Christ is come this day by his word, and by his unworthy servant to seek such as are lost, who are "without hope, and without God in the world;" and is not this good news to such that are lost? Are you sensible of your undone condition? are you lost in your own sight? If it be so, bless God, for certainly it is Jesus Christ that brings sinners to see that they are lost, as well as he came to seek such; it is he that opens the sinner's eyes to see his sin, and the state that he is in, and shows him the only way to escape, and be saved for ever.

6. You that were lost, who went astray like lost sheep, but now are returned to the great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls; what thankful hearts ought you to have, and how ought you to admire distinguishing grace: see that you love this Christ, live to this Christ. God hath appeared by his preventing grace to you; therefore let it be in your hearts and minds to ascribe all glory, honour, wisdom, and power unto God, and the Lamb, for ever and ever, Amen.

SERMON XI.

What man having an hundred sheep, &c.—Luke xv. 3—5, &c.

I HAVE opened, by way of exposition, every part of this parable, and have taken notice of several propositions, and have prosecuted two: I shall now proceed to speak unto the next.

Doct. III. That the Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and carry home his lost sheep, and will not give over until he hath found them, and carried them all home.

He will bring them into a state of grace here, and into a state of glory hereafter. In speaking to this, I shall do four things.

I. Show you what Jesus Christ doth, or the ways he takes in seeking and carrying home his lost sheep.

II. As also further discover, what a condition he finds lost sheep in.

III. Show you, why the Lord Jesus Christ came to seek his lost sheep, and will not give over seeking until he hath brought them all home.

IV. Apply it.

In seeking his lost sheep, divers things are comprehended, which chiefly refer to that state and condition in which he finds them.

1. Christ, in seeking his lost sheep, leaves that glorious place where he was, namely, the glory he had with the Father. Our blessed Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, was with the Father, considered as God, from eternity; but to seek his lost sheep he came into this world: and indeed to seek his own elect, who were lost in the first Adam, was one main reason why he came hither. "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost," Luke xix. 10. He must come where his lost sheep were, he it never so far a journey: a shepherd goes from the place where he was, in those parts where he hears his sheep are strayed, or lost in the wilderness: so the good Shepherd came into this world, where his sheep were all gone

What Christ doth in seeking his lost sheep.

astray. "I came forth from the Father into this world; again I leave this world, and go to the Father," John xvi. 28.

2. To seek his lost sheep, he did not only come into this world, but he did also assume man's nature, and so became Man. This was a wonderful condescension; "Who being in the form of God," Phil. ii. 6, i.e., the second Person in the Trinity, God by nature, very God, existent with the Father, yea, the very express image and character of the Father's person, which denotes a peculiar subsistence, distinct from the subsistence of the Father, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, it being his right by eternal generation, he being co-essential the same God; he judged it not usurpation, he the second Person being a subsistent in the same Divine nature and essence: "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men," Phil. ii. 6. Most willingly he took the nature of man into union with his divine Person, out of love to his lost sheep; not that he "Lost the form of God, or laid his Godhead aside;" no, that he could not do; but he veiled the glory of his Deity, in assuming our nature, to seek and save fallen angels; but he assumed into union with his Person: "For verily he did not take on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham," Heb. ii. 16. He united not his Person to the angelical nature, to seek and save fallen angels; but he assumed into union with his divine Person the seed of Abraham, that is, the very nature of his elect, or his lost sheep, that he might be fitted or capacitated to accomplish the great work he came about to seek or recover them. For as he was God simply considered, he could not do this, nor simply considered as man; it therefore behoved him to be both God and man in one person. For there was a high and fiery mountain for him to level, which stood betwixt God and his lost sheep, over which it was impossible for him to bring them home to God.

Perhaps you will ask what hill or fiery mountain was this.

I answer, the hill or mount of divine justice signified by mount Siuai, this burning mount he must quench, or make smooth and even with divine love, goodness, and mercy. My brethren, the law and justice of God was such a bar or mount of difficulty to the return of Christ's sheep, that unless Christ satisfies both, he could not bring one lost sheep over this high and soul-amazing mountain; and therefore he wrought out a righteousness for our justification, that suited with the nature of God, his law and justice. For as Adam's sin or disobedience, I mean his first sin was imputed to all his seed, or it was by his disobedience, "That many were made sinners," Rom. v. 18; so it is by the obedience of Jesus Christ, that all in him are made righteous, his obedience being imputed to all them that he seeks, finds, and brings home to God.

3. Jesus Christ to seek, recover, find, and save his lost sheep, laid down his life; for there was a dreadful lake into which his lost sheep were fallen, and out of which the great Shepherd must pluck them, or he could not seek them, so as to save one soul. Now this lake was God's divine wrath, which in the scripture is often compared to fire: now this fire had taken hold of every lost and undone sinner; and this fire, or divine anger, and burning wrath, the Lord Jesus must quench, by bearing of it on his own body and human soul, and so deliver or draw his sheep out of it, or else he could not bring them unto God. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust," 1 Pet. iii. 18; to that end. "That he might bring us to God." Observe it well, he could not bring us to God, unless he suffered for our sins, or bore that wrath that was due to us for our sins in breaking the law of the first covenant. The active obedience of Jesus Christ was not sufficient alone to justify sinners, because we had broken the holy law of God; and God being just (nay justice itself) will have full satisfaction by us, or by our Surety whom he had substituted in our room. And pray note, that to make expiation for sin, there was a necessary concurrence of the two natures in our blessed Redeemer; he must be man, for the Godhead was not capable of that submission and obedience which were necessary and requisite to expiate sin; and he must be man, that the sinning nature might not only actually obey (or pay the debt of actual obedience which we owed to the law) but also bear the punishment or penalty due to us for our sins; and so thereby acquire a title to the satisfaction which is made: for the meritorious sufferings of Christ imputed to believers, are grounded on the union of the two natures, which is (as one observes) as well natural, in his partaking of flesh and blood, as moral, in the consent of their will; as the apostle observes, "That he who sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all one," Heb. ii. 11: so (saith he) he that offers, must have communion in the same nature.

A fiery
mount be-
twixt God
and lost sin-
ners.

See every
valley filled,
and every
hill and
mountain
brought low.

Out of a
fiery and
burning lake
Christ draws
lost sinners,
by dying for
them.

Dr Bates's
Harna. p. 121.

And as his human nature was necessary to qualify him for his sufferings to bear God's wrath, so the divine nature was to make them sufficient; for the human nature considered in itself, could not make satisfaction; but the dignity of the divine person makes a temporal or short punishment to be of infinite worth and value in God's account. Besides, the human nature would have sunk under the weight of divine wrath, or have been itself consumed in those flames, had not the Deity been personally present, and in union, personally considered with it, to support and uphold it. This the good shepherd hath done in seeking and carrying home his lost sheep.

By virtue of Christ's resurrection, sinners return to God.

4. Jesus Christ, to seek and save his elect, or his lost sheep, rose again from the dead, by which God declared that he was well pleased, and fully satisfied by the payment his Son had made: the prisoner that was charged, carried to prison, and shut up in the prison-house for three days and three nights, is now by the great Creditor, or rather Creator, released, discharged, justified, and acquitted, and all his elect in him, from all sins, debts, dues, and demands whatsoever, both past, present, and to come, due to divine justice; so that all that are brought home, i.e., who are united to Christ, are for ever freed from wrath and condemnation: and the same blessing is secured for all the elect who are not yet called, Rom. viii. 1. My brethren, had not Christ been able to have raised himself out of that fiery lake (into which his sheep were fallen) and into which he plunged, that fire had never been quenched, both sheep and Shepherd had perished together. But he being God as well as man, it was impossible death or wrath could hold him down; nor could God in justice keep him in prison, seeing he had received a full satisfaction to his law and justice. This, my brethren, also we ought to know and consider well of, viz., that Christ in obeying of the law, or living in a sinless and unspotted life, and in his dying and rising again, and in his ascension up to heaven, did all as our head, and blessed Substitute, Representative, and Surety.

Christ subdues all the enemies of his elect, that they may return to God.

5. Jesus Christ, in seeking and recovering his lost sheep, must subdue and overcome all our spiritual enemies, who hath all God's elect under their feet: he therefore overcame the world in all its sinful snares, enticements, powers, and temptations. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," John xvi. 33. He overcame the world, and the god of this world, death, sin, and the grave; Heb. ii. 14, 15; so that he might bring his lost sheep to God, both in soul and body: for all these enemies stood in the way to obstruct their returning to God; he hath therefore "triumphed over principalities and powers," Eph. iv. 8. and led captivity captive, in his resurrection, and in his glorious ascension into heaven.

6. Jesus Christ doth not only thus in his own person seek and endeavour, in all these blessed transactions, the recovery of his lost sheep, but he substitutes and appoints his servants or faithful ministers to search also to find them out, and cry aloud to them, and to reveal or make known what he hath done to make their peace with God, and so to discover the only way by which they must come to God: one way therefore by which he seeks them, is by the preaching of the gospel; by this means externally he calls them, and strives to gather home his elect. The sheep of Christ know not any other way, but by the revelation of the gospel, of the only way and means of their recovery or restoration: faith is required of such that are saved; "But how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. x. 14. But though the preaching of the gospel is the external means Jesus Christ uses to seek and bring home his lost sheep, and which is the ordinary way he hath ordained to work faith in their souls, by which they take hold of him; yet it is not that will do of itself: for many are called who never are brought home: therefore he, whilst they call by outward preaching, also such that are his own sheep by a more special and powerful voice, I mean, by the influences of his Holy Spirit upon their souls, which is called his voice. "My sheep hear my voice," John x. 5, 27. Others hear it not, because they are not his sheep. Some only hear the voice of his ministers, they do not hear nor know the voice of Christ. Lydia being one of his sheep, "The Lord opened her heart, that she attended on the word that Paul preached," Acts xvi. 14. Christ's voice is powerful, it enlightens the understanding, and inclines and bows the will, and changes the affections; and thus Christ this way seeks his sheep, and by touching their hearts they believe and come to him.

Christ finds his sheep dead.

II. In what a condition are Christ's sheep when he finds them?

1. Jesus Christ finds all his lost sheep dead, spiritually dead, "dead in sins and trespasses;" Eph. ii. 1, and being dead, they must needs be deaf.

But as Lazarus, who was naturally dead, heard the voice of Christ, and came forth out of the grave, so those that are spiritually dead do hear the voice of Christ, his voice makes the dead to hear. "Verily, verily, I say unto, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live," John v. 25. He doth not refer to the day of the resurrection, to such that are dead in the grave, for that hour was not then come; but he means such whom he quickens and raises to a spiritual or divine life by his Spirit, "For the Son quickens whom he will," and he will call and quicken all his lost and dead sheep, first or last; they it seemed wondered at this saying, therefore in ver. 28, saith he, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice—and shall come forth," &c. This shows he spoke not of such a death before, but of a spiritual death, "This thy brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found," Luke xv. 34. The Prodigal son was dead, so long as he was in his lost and sinful state and condition.

Christ's sheep were in a horrible pit.

2. Christ's sheep were fallen into a horrible pit, and he could not bring one of them home, except he draws them by his almighty arm out of this pit. We were all naturally in a deep mire, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water," Zech. ix. 11. No water to wash away sin, no water to drink and refresh the soul; no, nothing but mire and dirt, and the horrid noise of an accusing conscience, of wrath, and divine vengeance, is to be heard in this horrible pit. He (saith David) "brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock," Psal. xl. 1. Now what is this horrible pit, but the state of deep alienation from God, in which all lost sinners remain before they are plucked out by Jesus Christ? and unless they are drawn out of the pit of unregeneracy, they will sink down into a lower pit, nor can they come forth of themselves. "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him," John vi. 44. This drawing is not the act of men, nor of the servants, but of the Master; not of ministers, but of the Father.

Christ's sheep were blind.

Jesus Christ finds his sheep blind. As sinners are said to be dead whilst in a state of nature, so also they are said to be blind. "Thou knowest not that thou art blind and naked," &c., Rev. iii. 17. The enemy has put out all their eyes, they are darkness, utterly void of spiritual understanding; therefore he opens their eyes to see the woful condition in which they naturally are, "That the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," &c., Eph. i. 18. None till then can see the horrid evil of sin, nor what a state of enmity they are in against God. "Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," Eph. iv. 18. And from hence also it is they cannot see the way home to God, but go every day farther and farther from him.

Christ's Sheep were shorn.

4. Christ's sheep have lost their fleece; he finds them shorn and naked; the enemy hath stripped them of their raiment, I mean of that righteousness and holiness they had in the first Adam: sinners naturally are "like a wretched newborn infant, cast out naked in its blood and filthiness, no eye pitying it," Ezek. xvi. 4, 8. Thus it is when Christ passes by, or comes to seek his lost sheep; therefore he casts his skirts over them, and clothes them with his own righteousness.

Christ's lost sheep caught in briars.

5. Christ finds his sheep that are lost in the briers, or in chains and fetters, and cruelly torn and wounded, and were "become meat, and a prey to every beast of the field," Ezek. xxxiv. 8. "Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," Acts viii. 23. Like as sheep caught in cruel thorns, and pricking briers, are as it were in bonds, as a man bound in chains and fetters, so is every sinner naturally caught, and held fast in the "Bonds of his own iniquity," Isa. lvi. 6; and cannot get out, ignorance is as a cruel bond, an hard heart is like another bond, and unbelief binds down every ungodly man and woman, like chains and fetters of iron. Hence the Psalmist says, "They wandered in the wilderness, sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron," Psal. evii. 4, 10. And in this woful condition are all Christ's lost sheep when he finds them, and he in compassion looses their bonds, and pours in his oil and wine to heal their wounds. "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the prison to them that are bound," Isa. lxi. 1.

Christ's sheep were a prey to evil beasts.

6. Christ's lost sheep were seized and made a prey of by dogs, lions, bears, and wolves; and they had torn them in a cruel manner. By these ravenous beasts are meant, the devil and his emissaries; Satan is called a hungry lion, and some wicked men dogs: and deceivers are compared to wolves, "grievous wolves,

which spare not the flock," Acts xx. 29. And by these are the lost sheep almost utterly devoured; but the Lord Christ rescues them out of the jaws of these cruel lions, wolves, and dogs, breaking the teeth of the old lion, fioness, and the lion's whelps.

7. Christ's lost sheep (as the fearful effects of original and actual sin) were filled with enmity and hatred against God, notwithstanding his great full of enmity and inconceivable love to them, in sending his Son out of his bosom to die for them, and in their stead, that he might recover them out of the hands of all their enemies, and bring them home again to God, from whom they had wandered. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. From hence they naturally show an averseness to return to God, and slight the Lord Jesus Christ. "We will not have this man to reign over us." They resist his word, vex his Spirit, condemn his authority, despise and slight his love, and refuse to come into his bands, and to return to his fold; and until the Lord Jesus changes their rebellious hearts, he cannot bring one of them home. Alas, lost sinners, though such be their woful state (as hath been showed) are not willing to be found, they love to wander; most wretched creatures, they love to skulk with Adam, hiding their heads in the bushes; they had rather abide in the wilderness, and have their sins, and continue in their blood and filth, and in the hands of the devil, than accept the love of their dear and blessed Shepherd: yet seeks them, and never gives over until he hath found them, and made them willing to receive and embrace him with joy.

8. Christ's lost sheep by sin were degenerated into dogs, wolves, bears, lions, and other ravenous beasts. Sinners are styled evil beasts, as their sensuality and brutish practices demonstrate, they having lost the properties of sheep, and having got the evil qualities or properties of ravenous beasts. Now the Lord Christ takes away or destroys these brutish qualities, and transforms them, restoring a sheep-like nature and disposition to them, making them meek, innocent, and harmless creatures, that so he might, in bringing them home to his fold, make them fit companions for his flock; and all these things he doth in seeking and saving of his lost sheep. So much as to the first and second heads of discourse.

III. I shall in the next place show you why Jesus Christ came to seek and save his lost sheep, and will not cease or give over seeking, until he hath found, and brought every one of them home to God.

I. Christ seeks them, and will until he finds them, because he loves them: this is the spring, and efficient cause of all his gracious actings towards them. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. xxxi. 3. In this text we see, that whatsoever

Christ doth in the beginning or drawing his sheep to him, it is because he loveth them. Why did he come into this world, and die the cursed death of the cross? was it not out of his endeared love to his sheep? "He loved me (saith Paul) and gave himself for me. Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. There was nothing in his sheep he could see, that could move him to come to seek them, or die for them.

2. He came to seek them, and will seek them until he finds them, and carry them home, because they are his sheep. "Other sheep have I that are not of this fold, them I must bring," John x. 16.

(1.) They are Christ's sheep by the election of the Father, thine they were, that is, thine, O holy Father, by election. And,

(2.) They are his sheep also by the Father's free donation. "Thine they were, and thou hast given them unto me," John xvii. 6. To seek them, die for them, bring them home, and eternally save them.

(3.) They were his by virtue of his cordial and conjugal love and affection, and from hence it is he seeks and will seek them until he finds them, because his lost sheep are to be his spouse, his bride, and dear consort for ever.

3. Because of that holy compact or covenant which was between the Father and Son from all eternity. The tenor of which is, that he should redeem all those the Father gave unto him, and bring them home; and from hence Christ said, "Other sheep have I that are not of this fold, and them I must bring." I must by virtue of the covenant entered into with my Father. See what God the Father spake to the Son. "That thou mayest say unto the prisoners, go forth, and to them that sit in darkness, shew yourselves." Again he saith, "Behold these things shall come from afar, and these from the North and from the West," Isa. xlix. 9, 12. Wheresoever the sheep were lost in any land or nation, whether North, East, West, South, the

Christ's sheep were filled full of enmity against God.

Christ's Sheep were degenerated into a brutish nature. Tit i. 12. Jer x. 84.

Why Christ doth seek his sheep.

Christ's love the cause of seeking his sheep.

They are his sheep.

By election.

By donation.

By conjugal affection.

Christ will seek his sheep, because of his covenant.

Lord Jesus was to bring them. "I will bring thy seed from the East, and gather them from the West; I will say to the North, give up, and to the South, keep not back: bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth," Isa. xliii. 5, 6. "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles." To what end? observe, "to open blind eyes, and to bring the prisoners, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Now the Son of God, as Mediator, having struck hands with the Father in that blessed covenant, before the world began, to bring home his lost sheep he will perform this his covenant, and will seek and search them out until he hath found them all.

4. He will do it because they were appointed or ordained to eternal life. "God predestinated all them that he foreknew to be conformable to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. 29. And this work belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ; he hath received abundance of the Holy Spirit to pour forth to renew or regenerate all those the Father predestinated. God the Father makes his Son their great trustee; he is the guardian of all God's elect, grace is their portion, and they must have it, because it was given to them in Christ before the world began; (2 Tim. i. 9), and the Lord Jesus is obliged to seek them out, and to give it to them. "All that the Father hath given me shall come unto me," John vi. 37. This purpose of God is absolute and not conditional; no unworthiness in poor sinners shall hinder the accomplishment of God's decree and purpose, as no foreseen works or worthiness was the cause of this purpose. Brethren, Jesus Christ, when he comes to seek and fetch home his lost sheep, He comes leaping over the hills, and skipping over the mountains, like a young hart. No mountain of difficulty on his part shall obstruct him, whatsoever it doth cost him, home he will bring them; nor doth he regard any unworthiness that may be in them; no, though they are enemies to him, and hate him, yea though as vile as sin and the devil can make them in their lost state, such as Manasseh and Mary Magdalene, yet home they shall be brought, the decree and purpose of God must stand. See Ezek. xxxiv. 6. "My sheep wandered throughout all mountains, and upon every high bill. Thus saith the Lord, behold, I even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out," verse 12. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep and will deliver them out of all places, where they were scattered in the cloudy and dark day. Again he saith, verse 16, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." This is God's purpose and gracious promise. "The election hath obtained, and the rest were hardened," Rom. xi. 7. The rest contemned God's special grace and favour, and so would these have done, had not divine grace took hold of them, and God by his eternal purpose prevented them by his love and grace, in sending of his Son to seek and save them. Brethren, there is none can hinder God in his eternal purpose. "Who hath saved and called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace given to us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. Whatsoever grace we receive in time, is according to God's eternal purpose before time, "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" Isa. xiv. 27. Again he saith, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. I have spoken it, and I will bring it to pass," Isa. xli. 10, 11.

Christ will seek his sheep, because of the purpose of God.

Christ will seek his sheep, because he is their shepherd.

5. Christ will, nay must seek, find, and bring home his lost sheep, because he is their shepherd, the good shepherd. What man that hath an hundred sheep, if he lose one will not seek that sheep? If no other shepherd will be remiss herein, or neglect seeking his lost sheep, be sure Jesus Christ, the good shepherd will not fail in this case.

6. Because he died, laid down his life for his sheep, he purchased them out of the hands of justice with the price of his own blood, and therefore will be sure take the pains to seek and search them out, and by his mighty power recover them out of the paw of the lion, and paw of the bear. If he gave himself up to death for them all, how much more will he do all things else that are needful for them? He that gave a thousand pounds for a purchase, will not refuse to part with five pounds to take up and make it sure to himself. And that blood that was shed for them, must be applied and sprinkled upon their consciences. They must therefore be sought and brought home to God by him, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity," Tit. ii. 14. Christ's design in redemption must be answered, it was not only to deliver us from the curse of the law, and out of the hands of divine justice, but also to redeem us from sin, to save us from sin and Satan, and from all enemies of our souls.

Because he died for them. Act. xx. 28.

None else
can seek the
lost sheep.

7. He will seek and save his sheep, because none else can do it; who can conquer the devil, or pluck them out of the paws of the devil? David was a type of Christ, who delivered a sheep of his flock out of the paw of a lion. Who but Jesus Christ can raise the dead? who else can open blind eyes, or draw them out of that deep and horrible pit, and change their hearts, or infuse sheep-like qualities into them, that were so degenerated as you have heard?

None of
Christ's
sheep can
be utterly
lost.

8. Christ will seek his lost sheep, because none of those sheep which God gave to him, can be utterly lost; the holy will of God cannot be frustrated. "And this is the Father's will which sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing." Nothing, no not one, not the least of them. O how faithful was Christ in doing his Father's will, it was his meat and drink, therefore he will be sure to fulfil his Father's will in this matter; for unless he seeks them, renews and calls them, they will be all lost for ever.

APPLICATION.

God's wis-
dom in bring-
ing home the
lost sheep.

1. I infer from what hath been said, that the restoration, recovery, and bringing home the lost sheep, is a clear demonstration of the wonderful wisdom of God, since divine justice put such a bar to their return, and must be fully satisfied, or they must all perish for ever. Such is the nature of sin, and such is the rectitude of the pure and holy nature of God, the guilt of sin must be transferred to Jesus Christ (even all the sins of the elect) or it cannot be expiated nor justice satisfied, so that a way might be prepared. Moreover, the law of God put a bar to sinners' restoration, in respect of the want of a perfect conformity to it, in point of actual obedience, and also such bearing the penalty or punishment due to us for our breach thereof, as would appease the wrath of God; so that sinners return to God in a way of righteousness, as well as in a way of mercy, grace, and sovereign love. And from hence it appears, that all the divine attributes shine forth in equal glory and harmony, in the redemption of God's elect; it is by the obedience of Christ that lost sinners are made righteous. "The just must die for the unjust, to bring them to God," 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Christ was wounded for our transgressions," Isa. liii. 5, 6. "He was made sin for us, that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. He died that his lost sheep might live.

It is a work
of infinite
love.

2. We also therefore infer, that the recovery of the lost sheep is a work of infinite love, it discovers the greatest love that ever was known or manifested. What, did God so love sinners, as to give his only-begotten Son to redeem these lost sheep with the price of his own blood, and Jesus Christ loved them so as to give himself a sacrifice for them. What shepherd, to seek his lost sheep, would die for them? "I lay down my life for my sheep," John x. 17.

It is a work
of infinite
power also.

3. We may also infer from hence, that the recovery of Christ's lost sheep is a work of almighty power; we needed a Saviour, a great one, or one clothed with Almighty power. Hence, as Jesus Christ "speaketh in righteousness, so he is mighty to save," Isa. lxiii. 1. he is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 24. Who but one that was strong and mighty to save, could raise the dead, subdue the devil, death, and all other enemies of our souls? O what grace is here, what pity, what love and compassion hath God showed in Christ! What is man, sorry man, lost and undone man, that God should be thus mindful of him? Nay, thus set his heart upon him, and find out, or devise such means to bring him out of a state of sin, death, and wrath? "Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24.

4. We may moreover from hence infer, that the ignorance of some men is very great, even such that think the lost sheep may return home by their own good deeds, and good duties, or by their obedience to the moral law, or by living an honest, sober, and just life, or by the power of their own wills, they forget (I speak of the last sort) into what an horrible pit man is fallen, and what a strong lion had the lost sheep in his paws, and how depraved man is in every faculty of his soul, and what enmity there is in his carnal mind," Rom. viii. 7.

2dly. Exhortation. This may also be improved by way of exhortation: sinners rejoice, the great shepherd is come to seek, to search for, find out, and to save his lost sheep, and he will not (you hear) give over until he hath found all his lost sheep: is not this good news?

Object. Perhaps you will say, it is not good news to all, because he seeks none but such sheep which the Father gave to him.

Answ. It is good news to all that see they are lost, to all that see they are sinners, undone sinners; as for such that are righteous, and never went astray in their own conceit, they do not need a Saviour, they being not sick they need not a physician, these indeed he came not to call; therefore if you are such that never went astray, or never were convinced, or are in a lost and undone condition, it is to be feared you may be some of them which he leaves in the wilderness. But you that are great sinners in your own eyes, may conclude you are some of them he is come to seek and to save.

3dly. Comfort. This may be also for comfort to the greatest sinners. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I (saith Paul) am chief." It is no matter how great thy sins are, or how long thou hast abode in a wicked course of life; though thy sins are as red as scarlet, if Christ be come to seek thee and thou fly to him, believing on him, "they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool," Isa. i. 18.

4thly. Admire, praise, and adore the holy and gracious God, in sending such a shepherd to seek and save his lost sheep; "one that is able to save all them to the uttermost, that come to God by him," Heb. vii. 25. Had he sent one of the prophets to seek and save us; what could he have done? could he have carried the lost sheep over that burning mountain of God's divine justice and fiery law? or could he have plucked them out of the burning lake of God's dreadful wrath and vengeance? or could any mere man conquer the devil, raise the dead, or triumph over the grave? No, no, none but he that was God as well as man, could do it.

5thly. Terror. O what terror may from hence seize upon such who slight this shepherd, contemn this Christ, and disregard all his love, and tread under foot his most precious blood, as if there was no worth nor virtue in it to wash away sin, or purge the conscience any more than the blood of any other person. Tremble you scoffers, that vilify the true Saviour, and trust to a Christ that cannot save you, a false Christ, a Christ that never died nor hath any blood to shed; a Christ within, which is nothing more than the law of the first creation, or some remainders of it: if that way, *i. e.*, by living up to that light, lost sinners could be brought home, be justified, sanctified, and eternally saved, Jesus Christ is dead in vain.

6thly. This likewise may tend to reprove all such who discover most horrible ingratitude and unthankfulness, who after all that Christ hath done to recover lost sinners, refuse to submit unto him, to close in with him, believe in him, go with him. How few are there who say with Rebecca in another case, when she was asked whether she would go with Abraham's servant, and become Isaac's wife, "She said, I will go." Ministers ask sinners will you come to Christ, cleave to Christ, go with him, follow your Shepherd whithersoever he leads you? Will you venture your souls upon him, deny yourselves, and take up your cross and follow him? But alas! how few say (and resolve in their hearts) to do this? What do you say, sirs, that hear me this day? Will you receive the Lord Jesus, hear his voice? Is it in your hearts to cleave unto him? Or will you remain in the jaws of devils, polluted in your sins, condemned creatures, and under wrath, and the curse, and so perish for ever?

7thly. This also should be of use to ministers, and may serve to admonish them to their duty, whose care and labour should be great, to do what lies upon them as their part, to seek after Christ's lost sheep. Let us learn of the great Shepherd; though we sweat at the work, and spend our strength and spirits; let us not think it too much, for he sweat great drops of blood, and poured forth his soul to death, to bring home his lost sheep to God.

Lastly. To you that are the sheep of Jesus Christ, "Who once went astray, but now are returned to the great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls," 1 Pet. ii. 25. O remember what the great Shepherd hath done, that he might bring you home into his fold! O take heed you never go astray any more, neither from Christ, nor from that fold where he hath by his providence put you; be content with your pasture, and be not headstrong, nor wanton, and so foolishly venture to leap over the fold, or break away in a disorderly manner, to get into a pasture that is none of your own. Are you not fed with wholesome doctrine? Is not the main design of the ministry in this place, to exalt Jesus Christ alone, and the free grace of God in him? Remember it was Christ that put you into this fold, and you entered into a solemn covenant to feed in this pasture; and what peace can you have to be in a pasture that is none of your own, nor you were placed in by the great Shepherd? A shepherd sometimes sets his dog to fetch out a sheep that is got into another pasture. So Christ may let out Satan to distress your consciences before you are aware, for such an evil, or afflict you sorely sooner or later some other way, that others may fear. Besides, dauncy

honest shepherd of another flock receive unruly sheep that have broke away from their neighbour's fold, which are none of his own, nor were by the owner committed to his charge? Would not this be looked upon to be a kind of theft, and a dishonest thing, and punishable by the law?

But to conclude, labour to be fruitful to Christ, and thankful to him, who has bought you with his own blood, and brought you home to God, that you may be to the glory of his grace, and live to him all your days.

SERMON XII.

And goeth after that which is lost until he finds it; and when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.—Luke xv. 4, 5.

THE point of doctrine which I am upon the prosecution of, is this,

Doct. That our Lord Jesus Christ came to seek his lost sheep, and he will not give over seeking until he hath found all his sheep that are lost.

I have proposed to do five things in speaking unto this proposition.

I have spoken unto the three first.

Fourthly. I shall now proceed to show you, what the finding lost sinners, or his lost sheep, doth denote or imply.

1. Christ's finding them denotes (as previous to it) his seeking them, and not giving over until he hath accomplished his design and gracious purpose.

Some shepherds seek lost sheep, but soon grow weary, and so give over, desparing ever to find them, and so search after them no more. But thus Christ doth not, he is not weary, nor will give over seeking, and this for two or three reasons.

(1.) Because this shepherd is God as well as man; "And the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not," Isa. xl. 28.

(2.) Because he knows where all his lost sheep are, i. e., the place whither they are strayed, and also what a state and condition they are in; and so do not other shepherds, who have lost some of their sheep.

(3.) Because Christ knows, and is sure that he shall find all his lost sheep; "He shall see his seed—and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," Isa. liii. 10. He therefore knows he shall not seek in vain.

2. Christ finds a lost sinner denotes, that the full time is come, in which his word shall be effectual, or his absolute design and purpose of grace shall succeed, in respect to the execution thereof, the design of his death, his end and purpose in sending the gospel. "For as rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater," Isa. lv. 10. Ver. 11. "So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." The Lord Jesus Christ hath gracious thoughts towards poor sinners, "For I know the thoughts I have towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give an expected end." Jer. xxix. 11. A poor sinner waits, perhaps, under the hearing of the word, year after year, and yet profits but little or nothing, but in hopes and expectation Christ will come at last; and until Christ comes to seek his soul and finds him, all his hearing and praying seems to be without success, but the purpose of Christ shall be accomplished, "Yea, saith he, I have spoken in, and I also will do it," Isa. xlv. 11. I will come near you, and find you out, Ver. 12. Yea, bring my righteousness near, and my salvation shall not tarry; though you are stout-hearted, rebellious ones, and far from righteousness.

3. The Lord Jesus finding his lost sheep, denotes the powerful convictions of the Spirit, which takes hold of a sinner's heart: when this is done, he may be said to find his lost sheep. "When the Spirit is come (that is, Christ by his Spirit) he shall convince the world of sin," &c., John xvi. 8, 9. Pray note two things here: (1.) That Christ's finding a sinner, is one thing; and (2.) the sinner's finding of Christ is another thing. When Christ finds a sinner, the poor sinner comes to himself (as it is said concerning the prodigal son that was lost) i. e., he sees that he is lost and undone, a vile and wretched creature. True, perhaps he may have some common feeling, or gripes of conscience before, but they go off again, but now they are more pricking, pinching, more strong and effectual, and more

abiding on his conscience : and when a sinner finds Jesus Christ, he comes to see his help, his cure, and only remedy : the first makes him see that he is sick, wounded, lost, and undone ; and when he hath found Christ, he sees, knows, and meets with his Physician.

4. Jesus Christ finding his lost sheep denotes, or doth imply, Christ and a sinner's meeting together : now the shepherd sees his lost sheep, and the sheep sees his shepherd ; they meet together as the prodigal son and his father met each other. As a sheep that is strayed away never seeth his shepherd, nor meeteth with him, but is alone "as a lamb, and in a large place," until the shepherd finds it ; so it is here, though a sinner hears often of Christ, in reading, and in hearing the word preached, yet he never meets with him until Christ finds him.

Christ and his lost sheep meet together.

5. Christ finding his lost sheep denotes the danger of such souls is over. A sheep or lamb in a large place lost in the mountains, is exposed to many dangers, and may soon become a prey to ravenous beasts, and be torn in pieces ; but when the shepherd hath found it, all those dangers are over : so when Christ, the good shepherd, hath found a lost sinner, and it is in his hands, his care is such, that neither sin, devils, the world, nor impostors, can devour or destroy it.

Christ's lost sheep when found secured from all dangers.

6. It therefore also implies the time of the manifestation of God's special love is come, and that such a lost sheep is one of those the Father gave unto Christ ; and because he was beloved from everlasting, Christ is now, according to his covenant with the Father, come to seek and receive him, and actually, manifest his love unto him, and to take care of him. "How is it Lord that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" The reason is because they were his sheep, and the time is now come that they shall know this : before he comes and finds his lost sheep, it is not known to be one of his sheep, or one of God's elect ; for before this time he lets such a sinner wander abroad ; but in his month he finds it, that is, either the time or month of affliction, or of convictions ; he ends it, some are found in or by afflictions ; the Lord sometimes takes hold of them, finds them, and brings them to see their lost state by the rod, by this or that affliction which he lays upon them : others he finds by the preaching of the word, by fastening the word, by powerful convictions upon their hearts. And may be the sinner at first is afraid to venture himself into Christ's hand (as a lost sheep when the shepherd hath found it, is afraid of its tender shepherd) the sins of a sinner's heart and life, original and actual, are all laid open before his eyes. "Come see a man that told me all that ever I did," John. iv. 29. The Lord Jesus was come to seek this lost sinner, and now having found her, see how she cries out. Thus the Prodigal son, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight," Luke xv. 18, 19 ; and being now afraid, he would become a servant, "Let me become as one of thy hired servants." This may not only signify his humility, but his servile spirit ; the spirit of bondage seized on him, and he would now do something to procure or deserve his father's love and acceptance. Lord, saith a lost sinner, I have gone astray from thee, and my sins are now set before mine eyes, and I am afraid to come near thee : the soul fears his life may go, he fears divine anger, and is in horror. O, saith he, what will God do with me, who have run from him, and have a long time gone astray ? I deserve nothing but hell and eternal wrath ; but no sooner doth Christ lay hold of him, and take him up in his arms of love and mercy, and lay him on his shoulders of infinite power, but he sees the compassion of his dear shepherd, "Who gathers his lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom," Isa. xl. 11.

Christ's love and care manifested to his lost sheep.

7. Christ finding his lost sheep, and taking it up in his arms, denotes irresistible grace, such grace that the sinner cannot resist or withstand ; not that he forces the will, for that is to destroy the nature of that noble faculty ; but he sweetly inclines it, overpowers it, and makes the unwilling will, (that was so naturally) to be willing in the day of this his power. Can a sheep, when the shepherd hath found it, and got hold of it, get out of his hand, (provided he be a strong man) or resist the design and purpose of the shepherd ? True, it may struggle a little at first, and make some resistance until it is overcome : so they through Satan's temptations at first, for a short time may make opposition, and struggle under those convictions of the Holy Spirit ; but Christ soon overcomes it in such a sweet and gentle manner, that it cannot longer resist his power. Christ doth not leave the depraved will of man (without powerful influences of his irresistible grace) to determine the whole issue of his design and purpose ; no, I will work (saith the Lord) and who shall let ?

Christ's lost sheep brought home by his irresistible power.

8. It denotes Christ's removing that enmity that naturally is in every sin-

Christ removes the

enmity in
our hearts
against God.

ner's heart against God, or his taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh, which is the promise of God in the new covenant: "I will take the stone out of their hearts, and will give them a heart of flesh."

Ezek. xxxvi. 26. So that Christ finding his lost sheep, is the only way and means by which his sheep comes to find him, and do experience his love, they being by his Spirit united to him; he clasping his arms of love and mercy about them, makes them willing to go with him, and follow him whithersoever he goeth. Thus Paul, no sooner had Jesus Christ found him (who had with a witness gone astray) but he cries out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. Christ finding his disciples Matthew at the receipt of custom, and Peter, James, and John, who were mending their nets, caused them to leave all and follow him: therefore also it implies effectual call, or their special vocation, or his working of faith in their souls; he helps the lost sinner to hang upon him, cleave to him, and trust in him alone for righteousness, pardon, and eternal life.

Into what
a state
Christ brings
his lost
sheep.

So much as the fourth general head of discourse.

V. Whither doth Jesus Christ bring, or carry his lost sheep, when he hath found them; I mean, into what state and condition, and unto what place?

They are
brought
from death
to life.

Ans. 1. He brings them from a state of death unto a state of life; the sheep of Christ before Christ finds them, lie under the sentence of death, with all the rest of mankind; nay, they were not dead in law only, but they were really dead, or without a principle of spiritual life; they lay in the wicked one, like carrion in a common shore, or as dead sheep in a filthy ditch, and he brings them to life. "You hath he quickened that were dead in sins and trespasses," Eph. ii. 1, 2. Having now a principle of spiritual life infused into them.

They are
brought to
a sense of
feeling.

2. He brings them to a sense of spiritual feeling: before, though a great mountain of horrid guilt lay upon them, and they are wounded at the very heart; yet being dead, they felt no pain, never cried out; but now the least sin is like a sword in their bowels, and they are forced to cry out, "Being pricked at heart, men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. And as the jailor did, they cry out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30.

Brought to
the sense of
seeing.

3. Moreover, he brings them (by infusing a vital principle into them) to the sense of a spiritual seeing: "Before they were darkness, but now light in the Lord." They see now the evil of sin, and how they have broken the law of God, and were under wrath and the curse, and come also to behold how vile and filthy they are, and so loathe themselves, crying out, "Woe is me, for I am undone," Isa. vi. 5, 6. And this is effected by their beholding the glory of Jesus Christ, their blessed Shepherd; who being come to seek them, he lets them see his glory.

Christ con-
fers lost
beauty.

4. Also by this means there is a beauty put upon them. Life infused into a dead person, restores lost beauty. O what a vast difference is there between a dead corpse, a man dead, and a living man? so a principle of spiritual life causes the soul to shine in heavenly liveliness, in beauty and glory, the image of God being stamped upon the soul by the Spirit.

They taste
how good
God is.

5. By this means likewise they come to taste and relish the things of God. Now they "Taste the Lord is gracious. O taste and see (saith David) that the Lord is good." Psal. xxxiv. 8. Alas, dead men cannot taste: as they cannot feel, nor see, so they cannot taste; no more can dead sinners, carnal persons, taste how good God and Christ is, and his word is, they cannot savour the things of the Spirit: but no sooner does Christ bring them to life, or infuse life into the dead soul, but he finds nothing so sweet to his taste as spiritual things are, especially Christ, and the love of Christ: the very word is "sweeter than honey or the honey-comb."

They are
brought out
of darkness

6. Christ brings his lost sheep from the power of Satan unto God; Satan had the rule in them before, and led them captive at his will. "They walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2. He effectually worked in them, governed and acted them; but Christ hath subdued that strong man armed, and hath rescued them out of his hand, and hath opened their eyes, and turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," Acts. xxvi. 18. This is Christ's work, though he be pleased to attribute it to his ministers, as the instruments that he ordinarily worketh by, or makes use of. Yet he is the great agent, "who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Col. i. 13. The darkness of ignorance, of unbelief, of sin and misery, to behold the wonderful light and glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. And hence we are said to

be called, or brought "out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. In his spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of grace, amongst his subjects and servants, where Christ dwells in the heart by his Spirit, and so we are united unto him, by faith that works by love.

7. Jesus Christ brings them from a state of spiritual bondage, into a state of liberty; he hath loosed their bonds, they were caught in the briars or fetters of sin and the devil; but he brings them into a state of gospel liberty. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage," Gal. v. 1. He sets them at liberty from the guilt of sin, from the power of sin, and from the curse of the moral law, and from all legal observations, rites, and ceremonies, even from all legal bondage, and slavish fear, and from God's vindictive justice, and his eternal wrath, and this for ever. "If the Son therefore make you free, ye shall be free indeed," John viii. 36. Glorious freedom, soul-freedom, and eternal freedom.

They are brought into a state of liberty.

8. He carries them home to God, who as a dear and tender Father embraces them in his arms. "Like as the Father embraced his prodigal son, and fell upon his neck and kissed him." He did not upbraid him for his former wicked and profane course of life; he doth not tell him how basely he had wasted his portion on harlots, and never returned until almost starved with hunger; no, no, not a word of this, but kisses him, and for joy makes a great feast, and calls for the best robe to be put upon him, and a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet, and commands the fatted calf to be killed, and says, "Let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost, and is found," Luke xv. 22, 23, 24. O take encouragement from hence to fly to Christ, to cleave to Christ; it is no matter how great your sins are, or how long you have lived in an ungodly course of life. If now you are helped to return home, or if Jesus Christ become to seek you, and finds you, he will carry you to his Father, who with joy and gladness will also receive you.

They are brought home to God, who embraces them in his arms.

9. Christ brings them into a state of union with himself, by which means they are not only made near him, but become also very dear to the Lord Jesus Christ, even as a bride is to the bridegroom. "But now in Christ Jesus, ye that sometimes were afar off, are made near by the blood of Christ," Eph. ii. 13. He brings them into the bonds of the covenant, the conjugal knot is tied, he betrothes them unto himself for ever. Nay, my brethren, he brings them into a state of likeness unto himself, he infuseth divine or spiritual qualities into them, and circumcises their hearts to love him, and delight in him, who before had lost (as you heard) all the properties of sheep, they loving then to wallow like swine in the mire of sin and filthiness.

Into a state of union with himself.

10. Jesus Christ brings them into a state of justification and reconciliation with God for ever, as God in Christ was reconciled to them, so they are now reconciled to God, and are pronounced spotless before the throne. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 1. This also implies a pardon, or free forgiveness of all their sins: such that are justified persons, are pardoned persons, their sins are forgiven, and shall be remembered no more.

Into a state of justification.

11. Jesus Christ brings them into a state of sanctification and holiness. "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness," 1 Thess. iv. 7. The Lord Jesus finds all his lost sheep very foul, polluted, or unclean, and he washes them. Sheep we know are subject to take filth, especially such that go astray, and they must be washed. Hence it is said, that his sheep "come from the washing, every one bearing twain, and none barren among them," Cant. iv. 2. They are not only washed in the blood of Christ, or sanctified by the Spirit, but are also made fruitful: they bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, the fruits of righteousness, when Christ hath found them and brought them home to God; before whilst they were in their lost condition, they brought forth no fruit to him, nor can they bring forth fruit until they are purged, sanctified, and thoroughly washed. "He saw them polluted in their blood," Ezek. xvi. 6, 7, like a new-born infant, and that was the time of his love; that is, that was the time of the manifestation of his love: "and then he cast his skirt over them, and covered their nakedness; that is, he put on them the robe of his own righteousness. "And then I washed thee with water, yea I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil," Ver. 9. He purgeth them from all original, and from all actual pollution whatsoever. "He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. They are not Christ's sheep that are not found and carried home, i. e., they are not called and justified, who are not sanctified.

Christ washeth all his sheep.

Christ's sheep brought into fat pastures. 12. Christ carries them into good pastures, where he makes them feed and lie down together, and leads them to still waters: those waters that run softly, gently, that cause the soul to possess inward peace and serenity of mind. "And they shall lie in a good fold, and feed in fat pastures," Psal. xxiii. 1, 2, Ezek. xxxiv. 14. This implies, they shall wander no more on the mountains of error and heresy; Christ leads them out of all idolatry and superstition, out of Babylon and all false worship, they shall no more be defiled with women, that is, by the pollution of false churches, or with harlot-worship; the church of Rome is called the mother of harlots. Are there no false churches but the Romish church? yea, there are, no doubt, she hath whorish daughters, though not such vile and beastly harlots as the mother is; all churches that sprang from her, or are of the like nature, in respect of their constitution, and that retain many of her superstitious names, garbs, rites, and ceremonies, no doubt they are her daughters. Were the gospel-churches national, or did they receive into those churches profane persons? no, no, they were a separated people, and a congregational, and a holy community, being not conformable to this world; and into such a church Jesus Christ brings his sheep.

Christ carries his sheep into his own fold.

13. And from hence it followeth, that he carries his lost sheep when he hath found them into his own fold, or into some true gospel church; and indeed no sooner hath Christ found his sheep, but they with the spouse, enquire where he feeds. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? Cant. i. 7. Why should I feed with false churches, who call themselves thy companions, or thy churches? It is said, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," Acts ii. 47. "Christ directs all his sheep, to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and to feed beside the shepherd's tents," Cant. i. 8.

14. And lastly, Christ will carry all his lost sheep home at last, to dwell in heaven with him for ever. "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, nor can any pluck them out of my hand," John x. 27, 28. I will bring them unto the actual possession of eternal life in the kingdom of glory: they shall be all kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation, which faith, as he is the Author of it, so he is the finisher of it also. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. By this kingdom doubtless is meant, that state of honour, dignity, and glory to come; and though the beginning of it may be on earth for a thousand years, yet it refers to that glory they shall possess in heaven for evermore.

APPLICATION.

First, from hence we may infer, that Jesus Christ, who is the Shepherd of his sheep, is the best of shepherds, or that there is no shepherd like to the Lord Jesus, he far exceeds all shepherds.

Christ a wise Shepherd. I. For wisdom. He is called the wisdom of God, the essential wisdom of God, being in him, "In whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily," Col. ii. 9. Denoting the personal habitation of the deity in, and union of it with the human nature. Moreover, he is the wisdom of God in a mystery shines forth in him, as Mediator, in his working out of our redemption. His wisdom appears as he is a shepherd.

(1.) He knows where all his lost sheep are, who are lost and scattered on the mountains, or in the wilderness of this world, other shepherds when their sheep are lost, know not where they are, but Christ doth. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee; no man shall set upon thee, to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city," Acts xviii. 9, 10. There were, it seems, many the Father had given Christ, that dwelt in the city of Corinth; and though Paul knew them not, nor were they yet called, but abode until that time in their lost state and condition, yet Jesus Christ knew them. "The Lord knoweth who they be that are his," and where they dwell, such wisdom hath he above all other shepherds. (2.) He knows what way to go, and what he must do that he may find them, and bring them all home. (3.) He knows them all by name, as he said to Moses, "I know thee by name," Exod. xxxiii. 12. Some think in the eastern countries, the shepherds gave name to all their sheep, and that our Saviour alludes to that, in John x. 3. "And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." Whatever your name is, by which ye

are called, Jesus Christ knoweth it full well. (4.) He knows the hearts, nature, state, and condition of all his sheep. (3.) He knows how to heal, to wash, to feed, to lead, and to govern them also.

2. For love he far exceeds all other shepherds; what shepherd ever so loved his sheep, as to lay down his life for them, "He loved us, and washed us in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. What love was ever like to this love? "As the Father knoweth me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down my life for my sheep," John x. 15. Christ would not only have us to know the sincerity of his love, but also the degrees or greatness of it, and therefore he often compares it to that love wherewith the Father loveth him, and also repeats his laying down his life; ver. 17, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again."

Christ exceeds all shepherds in love.

3. For power, he excels all other shepherds, he is the power of God; or him that God hath made strong for himself. In respect of his deity, he is the strong and Almighty God, and as Mediator God-man; all the divine attributes are united, and equally exert their power in the salvation of the elect. "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 4. Though he was the Son of God from eternity, yet as he was God-man, he was then declared and owned to be the Son of God, and was then known even by his resurrection from the dead, to be the Most High God; how else could he have raised himself? for he laid down his life, and took it up again, and now is exalted with power, majesty, and glory, at God's right hand, and "so is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him," Heb. vii. 25. No lion, no devil, no powers of hell and darkness, can withstand him; he is able to rescue his poor lost sheep out of the paw of the old lion. David was, in delivering his sheep out of the paw of a lion, a lively figure of Jesus Christ. "And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his Father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth, and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear," 1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35, 36. David was a valiant and powerful shepherd; but in this I say, he was a type of Christ, who hath subdued the devil, that roaring lion, and delivered all his lost sheep out of his mouth, who had taken them as a prey in his teeth. Jesus Christ is able to carry home 3000 sheep on his shoulders at one time, nay, 100,000. He hath vanquished all the powers of the infernal lake; "Hath spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," Col. ii. 25. Therefore no poor sinners need to fear, that Christ comes to seek and find, let their sins be never so great; for he it is "that speaks in righteousness, and is mighty to save," Isa. lxiii. 1.

Christ a strong and powerful shepherd.

4. "Jesus Christ excels all other shepherds in care and faithfulness." See here in this parable how he is set forth as to his care of one sheep gone astray, he will not lose one soul which the Father gave to him; what he did in seeking of all his lost sheep, is here expressed, as if he had done it all for one; he is so careful and so faithful that he will bring home every particular lost sheep; of all the Father hath given to him he will lose none, he will say at the great day, "Here am I, and all the children thou hast given me."

Christ a careful Shepherd.

5. For watchfulness. Though this is comprehended in what I said last, yet in some things it may a little differ: the most careful shepherd that ever was (save Christ himself) must sometimes sleep, and then the sheep are in danger; but Christ never slumbereth at all, he keeps always awake. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber," Psal. cxxi. 3, 4, 5. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep." "The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right-hand." O what a happy case are believers in. How safe are all Christ's sheep, who have such a watchful and careful Shepherd.

Christ a watchful Shepherd.

Secondly, We infer from hence, that none of Christ's sheep shall want anything which is good, they may all say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," Psal. xxiii. 1. (1.) They shall not want seeking if gone astray. (2.) They shall not want pastures to feed and lie down in. (3.) They shall not want folding. (4.) They shall not want healing, he forgiveth all their iniquities, and healeth all their diseases, as David experienced, Psal. ciii. 3. (5.) They shall not want strengthening, he will strengthen them out of Zion. "Be of good cheer, he shall strengthen your hearts," Psal. xxxi. 24. (6.) Nor shall they want quickening, for he will revive their sinking and drooping spirits. (7.) They shall not want comfort in their afflictions and tribulations; and, which is more than all, they shall not want his own gracious presence, for this Shepherd will never leave them. "Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20. He is with his

sheep day and night, he watcheth them "like as the vineyard of red wine," continually, that none may hurt, annoy, or devour them, Isa. xxvii. 2.

How to know who are Christ's sheep. Thirdly, Trial. It may be improved by way of examination or trial. Are you Christ's sheep? see to it. It behoveth us all to search and see whether we are his sheep or not; if you are his sheep, you are either such who are lost, and yet not brought home, or else such that are found, I mean, effectually called. Now none know they are his sheep until he hath found them. Election is only known by special vocation: though Christ knows who are his that are yet sinners and ungodly, yet we do not.

Quest. How may we know who are lost, or not yet found, not called or brought home?

Ans. I answer by asking you a few questions.

1. Art thou an ignorant person? dost thou not know (nor ever didst know) what it is to be lost, or to be undone, being in a state of wrath and misery? if not, be sure thou art one of them that are lost.

2. Art thou one that thinkest to return home only by calling or crying for mercy, "Lord have mercy upon me, Christ have mercy upon me?" If it be thus, certainly thou art lost, and in a woful condition: such that are called home believe in Christ, as well as pray for mercy; they see how justice comes to be satisfied for their sins, and see the way to the city of refuge, and run thither.

3. Art thou one that thinkest to return home to God by doing, I mean, by virtue of thy own good works, good duties, and good deeds, as prayer, hearing the word, repentance, and reformation of life, or by acts of charity? if it be thus, it appears thou art lost, and knowest not the way to return home.

4. Dost thou think that that light which is in thee, and in all mankind, or the law of God written in thy heart, is sufficient to guide or light thee home to God? if so, thou art in darkness and lost be sure; for what is that light but some remainders of the law of the first covenant light? and by the deeds of the law, or works and light of the law, can no flesh return home, or be justified in his sight.

5. Or art thou one that resteth on a form of godliness, without the power, "drawing near to God with thy mouth, when thy heart is far from him?" Isa. xxix. 13. May be thou art baptized and become a member of a church, and dost break bread, and art called a saint; but if thou thinkest this way thou art brought home to God, and dost rest on these external privileges, thou art certainly lost and undone.

6. Or art thou a profane person, or a carnal worldling, a drunkard, a swearer, a whore-monger? &c.; thou art lost if it be thus, or if thou livest in any one sin, allowing and loving of it.

7. Dost thou not love nor relish spiritual things, but only savourest the things of the flesh, and findest no sweetness in God, in Christ, nor in his word? if so, thou art lost.

8. Dost thou not love Christ's pastures, but rather treadest down with thy feet such good food that the sheep of Christ feed upon? or despisest thou prayer, hearing of the word, and other gospel-ordinances? be sure then thou art none of his sheep, but art one lost and undone, in respect of thy present state and condition.

9. Or dost thou thrust with the shoulder, and watchest occasions to reproach the sheep of Christ, branding them with the odious name of hypocrites, because of some slips and infirmities thou seest in them? dost thou bite and snarl at the sheep? then thou rather seemest to be a dog, than one of Christ's sheep.

10. Or art thou a self-righteous person, one that never went astray? if so, thou verily art one of them that Christ leaves in the wilderness, and none of them whom he seeks.

Now if thou art one of Christ's sheep, thou mayest know it by these following characters.

Who are Christ's sheep. I. Thou art one that knows his voice from the voice of strangers. "My sheep know my voice." Thou canst distinguish betwixt his holy doctrine and false or corrupt doctrine.

2. Dost thou know Jesus Christ? "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." They know the person of Christ, and the personal excellencies of Jesus Christ; they know his work and offices as he is Mediator, they know the beauty, the worth and preciousness, and the necessity of Christ.

3. Dost thou love Christ with a great, a sincere and superlative love? Is he "the chiefest to thee of ten thousands?" Cant. v. 10. Hath he thy heart? thy whole heart? Canst thou say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee, or in comparison of thee?" Psal. lxxiii. 25.

4. Dost thou love the sheep of Christ, all the sheep and people of God, not only those

who feed in thy pasture, and lie down in the same fold where thou art, but others also yea, all the saints, even such that differ in some things from thee? He that is a true Christian, loves all the children of God, all in whom he sees the blessed image of their heavenly Father: "By this we know we are passed from death to life; because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 14. "He that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him," 1 John v. 1.

5. Dost thou love to feed with the sheep of Christ, to feed, fold, and lie down with them? some like their pastures, the doctrine of Christ, the promises of Christ, but they do not love of his ordinances, nor will they come into his fold.

6. Art thou humble and harmless? Sheep are harmless and innocent creatures, they are not envious nor malicious persons. "Concerning malice they are children," Matt. xviii. 2, 3, or like little children; and they are also humble, and lowly in heart, having no conceit or high thoughts of their own wisdom, knowledge, or attainments; but are nothing in their own sight, and think better of others than of themselves.

7. Are you profitable persons? no creatures are more profitable to their owners than sheep, in respect of increase, and also in respect of their flesh and fleece: so Christ's sheep are more profitable to Christ than all people on earth, John xv. 8, they bring most glory to him, they bring forth much fruit, and are very useful to their brethren, friends, and neighbours; they do good to all, especially to the household of faith. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," Prov. xii. 26.

1. Dost thou know that thou wast once lost, and without Christ; and also that he sought thee first, before thou didst seek after him? also dost thou know when, and how thou wast first wrought upon? and dost thou find a great change in thee, and that thou art translated out of the kingdom and power of sin and Satan, into the kingdom of God's dear Son: if thou canst experience these things, no doubt but thou art one of those sheep Christ has found, and carried home to his Father's house.

One word to you that are yet in a lost condition.

What though thou art not yet called, not yet sought for nor found out, yet thou mayest have hopes Christ will meet with thee, because thou art where he hath found many heretofore, and where they found him; they did not presently meet with him, nor did he find them at the first call of the gospel. God called Samuel three times before he knew it was God that called him; therefore wait until his time is come. The poor lame man waited thirty-eight years at the pool before he found a cure.

So much at this time.

SERMON XIII.

He layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.—Luke xv. 5, 6.

WE have showed that Christ's finding a lost sinner, doth imply the work of God's Spirit in convictions and in regeneration. Yet the bare expression of finding his sheep, our Lord foresaw would not fully set forth or evince each act of his sovereign grace upon the soul of a sinner; and therefore he adds, the taking of it upon his shoulders, and so with joy carrying it home.

From whence we have noted this proposition, viz.

Doct. IV. That lost sinners cannot go home to God of themselves, they cannot go home on their own feet, but must be taken up in Christ's arms, and laid on his shoulders, viz., by the almighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ carried home.

When we read of the finger of God, it denotes the power of God's Spirit. "If I by the finger of God cast out devils," Luke xi. 20. But by the arm of God is signified the greatness of his strength, and most powerful operations. "To whom hath the arm of God been revealed?" Isa. liii. 1. That is, his almighty power exerted in working faith in the soul. So by Christ's shoulders is no doubt meant, his efficacious and effectual power put forth in regenerating and converting, or carrying home a sinner unto God, because the strength of a man lies in his arms and shoulders. Now this therefore comprehends (as I conceive,) two things.

1. The mighty power of Christ put forth in the first work of grace upon the sinner's heart.
2. The constant care of Christ in his supporting, upholding, and preserving of a believer

by his mighty power, to the end of their days. "Who are kept by the mighty power of God through faith, unto salvation." For the same power that works grace in us when we are first converted, must preserve us in a state of grace, until it is finally perfected. Hence Christ is said to be "the Author and Finisher of our faith."

In the prosecution of this proposition, I shall endeavour to do two or three things.

I. Prove the truth thereof by several texts of Scripture.

II. By divers arguments and demonstrations taken therefrom.

III. Improve it.

I. The first text is that in John xv. 5, "Without me you can do nothing." Irresistible power bringing home lost sinners. Can a branch graft itself into a vine, or being severed or cut off from the vine, bring forth fruit? No, all will say, either of these is impossible. So no man can by any power of his own, graft himself into the true Vine, it must be done by Jesus Christ alone; he it is that takes a sinner off of the old stock, the old root, *i. e.*, the first Adam, and by his Spirit unites it to himself. "Without me (that is, without union with me, or except ye be united to me, as branches are united to the vine,) ye can do nothing," ye can bring forth no acceptable fruit to God. Moreover, the branch that is grafted into the stock is passive, it is wholly the work of the husbandman. So a sinner's implantation into Christ, is the alone work of God, that spiritual Husbandman.

Without me, that is, without my almighty arm be made bare, my power exerted, or the power of the Messiah, who is called "the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God."

Another text is John vi. 44, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." This is not the drawing of ministers (as I have formerly noted) but of the sublime and irresistible influences of the holy God upon the heart, by which he inclines, bows, and subjects the stubborn and rebellious will to believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ. "My people shall be willing in the day of my power," Psal. cx. 3. Our Lord explains in ver. 65, what he means by drawing in verse 44. "And I said therefore unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." Unless the Spirit be given, a new heart be given, grace be given, faith be given, or divine power be given of my Father. To these two scriptures I may add another, John i. 13, "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Not of blood, that is, not by regeneration, or of the blood of Abraham in a lineal way, as if grace or the new birth was the product of nature, or by that legal covenant made with Abraham's fleshly seed as such. "We have Abraham to our father." They concluded they were the children of God, because they proceeded from the loins of Abraham. Not of flesh, not of the lusts of the flesh, say some; but I rather think he means by flesh, those legal privileges under the law, according to that of Paul, 2 Cor. v. 18, "Henceforth we know no man after the flesh," or esteem not, prefer not any man to be better than others because of their fleshly or legal privileges under the law, compared with what he says in another place, "Though I might have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law a Pharisee, and concerning zeal, persecuted the church; touching the righteousness which is of the law blameless," Phil. iii. 4—6. None of these great privileges availed him any thing; regeneration proceedeth not from hence. No man is a son of God by virtue of fleshly or legal privileges, or by means of his own works, or inherent righteousness. Nor of the will of man, or by the power of man's will, or by any act he is able to exert; for before grace or a vital principle is infused, all he can do are but dead works, and please not God. No man can do any thing to oblige God to adopt him to be his child, or procure that great blessing; no, such that have the privilege to become the sons of God, are regenerated by the Spirit. Hence he adds, "but of God," that is, they are born of God. Whatsoever may be the true sense of the former words, by these words it is plain and evident, that God is the efficient or great agent in regeneration, or the procreant cause of all those that are the sons and daughters of God. To be born of God signifies a reception of a vital principle from him, in a supernatural way. Another text that confirms this truth we have in Rom. ix. 16, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The grace of God in election and regeneration, was not of Jacob's will, nor is it of any man's own free will, because he chooseth or willeth to become God's child; for naturally no man can will any thing that is truly or spiritually good. It is not of him that willeth or runneth, not from any motion, act, or action, work, desire, inclination, purpose, or endeavour of any man foreseen of God, that he is either elected, renewed, or adopted, but alone of the free love, grace, and mercy of God. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but

according to his mercy he saveth us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord," Tit. iii. 5, 6. The Holy Spirit shed on us, and the effects of it in regeneration, are both ascribed to the free and rich grace, favour, and mercy of God, through Jesus Christ. Compare this with what our apostle speaketh in another place. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but all our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. iii. 5. As if he should have said, let none think that we are able or sufficient, or have power to change men's hearts, though God has made us able ministers of the New Testament; no, we cannot of ourselves without the divine Spirit, do so much as think one good thought, which is the lowest human act. We may see from hence the impotency of man's will unto anything that is truly and spiritually good. He doth not speak here of God as the God of nature, from whom indeed we derive our power of thinking what may be naturally or morally good, but as considered the God of grace, from whom, in a supernatural manner, by the influences of his Spirit we derive our power of thinking holy thoughts. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," 2 Cor. iv. 7. The efficacy of the Word preached doth not lie in the hearer, it is not in man, in his will, nor in his care and diligence under the word, nor in the power of the most able minister in the world, that the Word preached becomes effectual; no, no, but it is from God, it is he that gives the increase alone, and so makes one man to differ from another.

The last scripture I shall mention, is Phil. ii. 12, 13. "For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." We act as we are acted of God, and move as we are moved by him, in all that we do spiritually, that God accepteth. He bids them work out their own salvation; he speaks to believers whom God hath quickened, and called, justified, and saved; he means no more by working out their own salvation, than their diligent endeavour to discharge all duties of religion God requires in order to the finishing of their Christian warfare; it was Christ who wrought out our salvation, and he alone. Our works or actions work not out our salvation, neither are they the efficient, material, nor the meritorious cause thereof, as the papists argue, for eternal life is the gift of God. "Not of works lest any should boast." Nor doth Paul mean servile or slavish fear, when he says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," but with a holy, filial, or son-like fear of God, implying deep humility, submissiveness of spirit, and a reverential awe of the holy majesty of God, and sense of our duty to him, as to our Father, lest we should grieve or dishonour him. But lest they should think that they had that power which indeed they had not, or on the other hand, be discouraged for the want of power the apostle adds, "For it is God that worketh in you," &c. It is God that gives you a will to do, and helps you then to will and do that which is well pleasing in his own sight, and he will work within you powerfully, effectually, and efficaciously; so that sin, the devil, the world, nor any other thing, shall hinder you in doing that which he requires of you; no difficulties, obstacles, or impediments whatsoever shall obstruct the perfecting the whole work of your salvation, in order to a meetness for eternal life. Grace shall be victorious. "He has ordained us unto eternal life, and also that we should go and bear fruit, and that our fruit should remain," John xv. 16. So that on Christ's shoulders poor sinners shall be carried home to God, even every one of them that are given to him by the Father.

II. I shall further prove and demonstrate the truth of the doctrine laid down, by several arguments drawn from the scripture.

Arg. I. The first shall be taken from such texts which ascribe the whole work of redemption, regeneration, justification, and salvation to the will and free-grace of God. If the foundation, the rise and original of our salvation, was from sovereign and unconstrained love in God, there being no necessity laid upon him, either to love, elect, or redeem us. If it be free grace, favour, and rich bounty without merit, there being nothing in the creature deserving his love, either absolutely, or comparatively; and also of free grace simply, in respect of motive, there being nothing in us to move his affection; man being not only a lump of deformity, but also a cursed rebel against God. And if regeneration be wholly by the agency of the Spirit of Jesus, and justification alone by his righteousness, and perseverance be by Christ's faithfulness as our Surety; then it is the power of Jesus Christ alone, or upon his shoulders sinners are taken up, and carried home to God. But all these things are certainly so, therefore it is by the power of Christ alone, or upon his shoulders, sinners are taken up, and carried home to God, see Paul, Ephes. ii. 8. "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." May

be some may object, "Though it be by grace and the favour and bounty of God, we are said to be saved, yet it is by faith, and that is man's act, it is man that believes."

Ans. The apostle, on purpose to anticipate such an objection, adds, that faith is no of ourselves, but it is the gift of God, i. e., though men believe, yet the seed of that faith is God's gift or power to believe is given by God. "Faith is the fruit of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22; it grows not out of the garden of nature, it is more than a mere human faith, it is the faith of the operation of God, a faith of his working. See what he saith in another place, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tit. i. 9. We are called, renewed, and sanctified, wholly by the free grace of God, without any respect had to anything done by us, or wrought in us, as either a motive to it, or that which doth procure it.

Again, he saith, "Not by works of righteousness that we have done," &c. Tit. iii. 5. Moreover it is said, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ," Rom. iii. 24.

Rom. iv. 5, 6. But to proceed, the scripture calls regeneration the forming of Christ in the soul, nay, it is called a new creation, or a new creature, and our being created after the image of God. "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24. After God, that is, after his image. From hence,

Arg. 2. I argue thus, viz. If the work of grace, the work of faith and regeneration be the forming of Christ, or the image of God on the soul. If it be a new creation, or a new and most glorious creature, then nothing short of infinite power, or the Almighty power of Christ, can create or produce this great and glorious work on a poor, lost, and undone sinner. But all these things are so, they are thus described, therefore the carrying home of a lost sinner is Christ's work, or the product of his irresistible grace, they must be taken up by his arms, and laid on his Almighty shoulders. "This people have I formed for myself, they shall set forth my praise," Isa. xliii. 21. Can man, impotent man, create a fly, or a sorry worm, or put life into the meanest animal? no, no, much less can he create the image of God, or form Jesus Christ in the soul, and to say man is, or may be a co-partner, or a co-worker with God herein, is to give that glory to mere creature, which belongs to God only, which is abominable. I have, my brethren, often told you, that the new creation, or the creating us anew in Christ Jesus, is one of the highest and most glorious acts of God's divine wisdom and power.

Arg. 3. It is also called a new birth, or a being begotten of God, and born of God. "Of his own will begat he us," &c. James i. 18. "And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him that is begotten of him," 1 John v. 1. Now doth a child contribute anything towards its own formation in the womb? no, no, all must confess it is wholly passive in that case; and so are sinners wholly passive in regeneration, even as Adam was when God formed him out of the dust of the ground, otherwise the second birth in one main case answers not to the first, nor is it a proper metaphor or allusion.

Arg. 4. Shall be taken from that opposition which is made by Satan, and other powers of darkness, against this work of faith and regeneration, or the sinner's returning to God. Now evident it is, that all mankind naturally are in Satan's hands, nay, in his chains and strong bonds, he hath power over every lost sinner (as you have heard) "He rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2. "They are taken captive by him at his will," 2 Tim. ii. 26. And until he is subdued, disarmed, and his power broken to pieces in the soul of a sinner, it is impossible for one poor undone wretch to return to God. Will he be so kind by persuasions to release one of his prisoners? no, no, he retains his malice and irreconcilable temper against God and man. Or will he regard that great price or ransom that Jesus Christ laid down to atone for sin, and to satisfy divine justice? No certainly he regards it not, he hath all God's elect in his chains, in his deep dunghill, and there he will hold and keep them all until they are delivered, or redeemed by power.

And now, my brethren, pray consider, is a man in his depraved state, or in his natural condition, a match for the devil, with all his natural powers, or under the highest improvements of common light, knowledge, and attainments? none sure dare affirm, that any persons can deliver themselves. For if a man who is renewed, and hath the whole armour of God on, cannot encounter with, nor vanquish the enemy, without the special assistance and power of Christ: how unable is a weak and naked creature to do it? If a saint with all his spiritual weapons, is no fit match for Satan, certainly a sinner can do nothing to

save himself, or to subdue this cruel adversary. He that delivers a sinner out of Satan's hands, must therefore be clothed with greater power than Satan hath, he must be one that is stronger than he, and this indeed our Lord plainly declared to the Jews, when they blasphemously charged him "for casting out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils; or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first binds the strong man, and then he will spoil his goods?" Matt. xii. 29. Hence it appeareth a sinner's deliverance from Satan is the proper work of Christ; he is the person that is stronger than he, and so able to save us from the power of Satan. And this caused the apostle to give thanks to God "the Father, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness," Col. i. 12; it is Christ that "turns us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Arg. 5. My next argument shall be taken from the consideration of the woful state and condition lost sinners (by nature, by original and actual sin) are in; I told you that they are in a deep pit, an horrible pit, out of which no sinner hath power to come, no, unless he be drawn by an Almighty arm, he must lie there, and perish for ever.

The impotency of fallen man opened.

In opening the force and strength of this argument, I shall show you the weakness or impotency of undone sinners, lost sinners, to return to God of themselves, unless God's Almighty power be exerted, or unless Christ takes up the sinner on his shoulders. This weakness or impotency of sinners in returning to God, consisteth in three or four things.

1. There is in all men naturally, a privation of power to do that which is spiritually good, an absence, yea (as one notes) a total privation, an absence, not in part and degrees only, it is not only a suspension of acts, as may be when a man is asleep, but an absence, or want of radical power. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might," &c. Isa. xl. 29. It is not such an impotency as is in a branch in winter to bear fruit, but such as is in a branch that is cut off from the vine, nor is it such an impotency that is in a man very sick, but such as is in a man who is dead, all men are spiritually dead, and so have not the least degree of power to stir, move, or act in a true spiritual way. "When we were without strength," Rom. v. 6.

Clarkson's serm. p. 475.

2. It is not only a total privation, in respect of power, in one faculty only, but it is universal in every one of the powers or faculties of the soul; every part is impotent, and wholly depraved, the judgment is corrupted, the understanding is darkened, the will rebellious, the affections carnal, earthly, and sensual; the memory treacherous, thinking of those things it should forget, and forgetting of such things it should remember; the conscience asleep or misled, acquitting when it should charge, and charging when it should acquit: in this woful condition are all lost sinners, as you before have heard.

3. There is not a want of power or ability, or incapacity only, but also an utter incapacity to receive power, as in a dead branch: a branch that is green, and has sap in it, though cut off of a vine (though when it is incapable to bring forth fruit) yet may be grafted in again, and so become fruitful: but this is such an incapacity, as is in a dead, withered, and dry branch; or the incapacity is such as in "stones to become children to Abraham," or in dry bones to live, or to be joined together and animated, and be made the instruments of vital acts: for by these allusions is the state of lost sinners set out by God himself, "Son of Man, can these dry bones live?" The capacity is so remote, there is such a distance betwixt the power and the act, as nothing but infinite power can bring them together, even such a power that brought heaven and earth out of nothing. Hence it is said, we are his workmanship, created and have a new heart put into us, Eph. ii. 10.

See Mr. Clarkson.

4. Nay, it is worse yet, for there is not only such an incapacity as is in stones to become children to Abraham, or in dry bones to live; for there is not only in sinners an incapacity, as is by those allusions signified, but sinners resist, they being acted and influenced by the devil, and their own evil hearts: though they have no power to do that which is spiritually good, yet they have a diabolical power, by which they can and do oppose and resist the Holy Spirit. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," Acts vii. 51. Sinners are not able (and yet glory in their power) and as unable they are as unwilling: nay, as our author well observes, "They are not willing to be able," without power, and are unwilling to receive power, and so resist the glorious Agent, the Holy Ghost. It is not (saith Reverend Clarkson) only a physical, a want of power, but a moral privation, i. e., want of will, both unable and unwilling to be able, or to be made willing. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life," John v. 40. Our Saviour doth not mean, they had power, and would not exert it,

or might believe if they would ; but he showed them the pravity and rebellion of their will ; for in the next chapter he told them that they could not come, "Nor any man except the Father draws him, or except it was given him by the Father," John vi. 44, 65. Lost sinners are averse to God, and all things that are truly and spiritually good. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," &c. Rom. viii. 6. They are unable to be willing until that enmity is removed : like as some men have an antipathy to some sort of food which others love, they are averse to it ; if you bring it before them they are ready to sound and die away, they hate it, and are prejudiced against it ; it is in vain to persuade them to eat, or to be willing to feed on it ; no, no, they find it is against their nature : so it is with sinners, they have an averseness, an antipathy or enmity against God, and spiritual things. "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Brethren, sinners can no more by any power of their own, return to God, than a blackamore can change his skin, or a leopard his spots," Jer. xiii. 23. Therefore they must say, ver. 10, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." In conversion there is a twofold act, (1.) Passive, which is the act of God's Spirit, by which he infuseth a vital principle, and gracious habits, or divine qualities in the soul ; and in this act the creature is wholly passive like a patient : Christ, I say, infuses life in the dead soul, as he did in dead Lazarus. (2.) Active, whereby through the power of that grace, the sinner being quickened, is capacitated to believe, and return to God : being acted, we act ; for the Holy Spirit also influences the same principle, and so moves the soul, and the soul stirs, acts, and moves towards God. "Draw me, and I will run after thee," Cant. i. 4. What is this drawing ? Why certainly both in the soul's first motion to Christ, and in its further motions after him, the Lord putteth forth powerful influences of grace, beyond the arguments of the word, the suasions of his ministers, and the common working of the Spirit, attending the preaching of the gospel. "After I was turned I repented, and after I was instructed I smote upon my thigh ; I was ashamed, even confounded, &c. See here first the sinner's heart is turned, and then the sinner returneth, then, and not till then : if Christ sought us not first, and found us not first, and took not us up first by his arms and shoulders of divine power ; we should never seek, find, nor return to him. And now to descend to particulars.

Conversion is of God. 1. It appears' that conversion is Christ's work on the soul, it is he that first turns the sinner, he only is the Agent in regeneration, in which the seed of actual conversion is sown in our hearts.

Repentance God's gift. 2. More particularly it appears, that the sinner cannot repent until the gift or grace of repentance is bestowed upon him. "After I was turned I repented." Jesus Christ must first pour forth the Spirit of grace and supplication upon the soul, before it can in a true spiritual manner mourn for sin. True, men may get legal repentance, a kind of sorrow, or rather a horror for sin, from the fear and apprehension of God's wrath, and divine vengeance. Thus Judas repented and confessed his sin, in betraying of innocent blood, and went and hanged himself.

But no man of himself can repent evangelically ; for true gospel or evangelical repentance is the gift of God. "Him hath God exalted on his right hand as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins," Acts v. 31. And in another place Paul saith, "If God peradventure will give them repentance. It is if God will. Sinners must look up to Christ for grace to repent. "I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication." Well, and what will be the effects of this, or why doth God promise he will do thus ? See the next words, "And they shall look up unto him whom they pierced, and they shall mourn," &c. First they look, nay, shall look, grace bends their hearts, overpowers their wills, they shall believe, or cast a believing look up to a crucified Christ ; and then they repent and mourn for their sins, beholding what Christ hath suffered for them. O then they are in bitterness, as a man mourns, and is in bitterness for his first-born.

Faith is the gift of God. 3. Sinners have no power of themselves to believe ; they may obtain the faith of credence, they may get a human faith, or an historical faith, may believe the truth of God's word, believe that there is a God (the devils thus believe) they may believe there is a Christ who died for sinners, and may yield obedience to his external precepts, nay, reform their ways, and do many things ; but not obtain true faith, or the faith of God's elect, or the faith of the operation of God. "Who hath believed our report ? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?" Isa. liii. 1. Faith is not of ourselves, as you heard, "it is the gift of God." "No man can come to me, except it be given him of my Father," Eph. ii. 8. Do but see what the apostle saith

about the power of believing in Jesus Christ. "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead," &c. Eph. i. 19, 20. Now, my brethren, it is this way a sinner returns to God, it is by believing, by flying to, and resting upon Jesus Christ; and such who thus believe, attribute it to the power of God; not only to his power, but to the exceeding greatness of his power, nay, to the working of his mighty power, and that in the same manner that he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. Hence Jesus Christ is called "the Author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 2.

4. Sinners, unrenewed sinners, lost sinners cannot love God, until their hearts and natures are changed: no, but they contrariwise hate him, even wish there was no God: God is not in all their thoughts, they despise and contemn the Holy God. Sirs, divine love is "a fruit of the Spirit: the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," &c. Gal. v. 22. Moreover, the grace of love, Paul tells the Romans, "Is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," Rom. v. 5. It is a new covenant promise: "I will circumcise their hearts, that they may love me," &c. I will, as if God should say, take away the enmity that is in their hearts against me, and against spiritual things, and make them love and delight in me as their chiefest good, and the beloved object of their soul's affections. The old nature only loves and delights in vanity, in sin, and in the things of this world, and therefore a new heart and a new nature must be given to us before we can truly love God, Jesus Christ, and heavenly things.

Love to Christ is a fruit of the Spirit.

5. Sinners cannot hear the word of God to profit thereby, or so hear as to live, unless Christ inclines their hearts, or gives them a hearing ear; no man can hear to soul advantage, unless the Lord first open their hearts as he opened the heart of Lydia.

6. Sinners cannot pray acceptably, until Christ pour forth on them the Spirit of supplication. No doubt Paul prayed before he was converted, when he was a Pharisee, for the Pharisees gloried in their praying twice a day; but God took no notice of any of Paul's prayers until he was become another man, a changed man, a new man. "When I pray, I will pray in the Spirit," &c. "We know not what to pray for as we ought, but as the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us," &c., Rom. viii. 26.

The Spirit given before Sinners can pray acceptably.

7. A sinner cannot arrive to any sure hope of everlasting life, until quickened by Christ, and he received the Holy Spirit; such who have no God, no Christ, are without hope: "Christ in you the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. If a man be in Christ, Christ is in him; and "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. And if he be not in Christ, in vain is all his hope and confidence, "And if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17.

A lively hope is from God. Eph. ii. 12.

APPLICATION.

1. Inference. From hence we may see what woful work sin hath made, and what hurt it hath done to poor mortals, certainly there is no evil like the evil of sin, no plague like to this plague, which hath thus divested man of all power of doing anything that is spiritually good.

2. It informs us also of the woful state and misery of men out of Christ, and what a lamentable thing it is to be lost.

3. It informs us also of that great evil of original sin, how weak and impotent is man become hereby. What poor and despicable creatures are men and women naturally; nay, how great is their deformity. Man is nothing, nay, less than nothing. A non-entity has no sin; but man is most vile and loathsome naturally, in the sight of God, being filled with enmity and hatred against God, so that there is nothing lovely in him, nothing to draw out the heart of God to love him.

4. It may be of use by way of admiration; stand and wonder at God's infinite love, favour, and goodness to man. "O what is man, that thou art mindful of him, that thou shouldst magnify the man, and set thy heart upon him," Job. vii. 17, 18, Psal. viii. 4. To send his Son to take our nature upon him, and so become man to die for man; to be made a curse for so vile a rebel and enemy of God.

5. We may infer, if man be redeemed, reconciled to God, justified and saved, it must be alone in a way of free grace. God was perfectly happy in himself, the all-sufficiency and independency of God shows, he stood in no need at all of men, nor angels; and as to his essential glory, there could be no additions made to that; God

Free-will utterly dected.

had been as glorious as he is, if man had never been, besides, he was not obliged to man, he owed man nothing; but considering his sovereignty, he might have sent the whole lump of fallen mankind to hell, and have created another race of men more glorious and fit to be the objects of his transcendent love. Or why did he not manifest his pity to the fallen angels, who were more glorious at first than man? Or if men, vile men, lost men, are the subjects of his blessings, and objects of his love and compassion, why as one observes so many men?

Mr. Clarkson of free-grace, p. 26. he might have passed by more, and chosen fewer vessels of mercy; and if so, many are comprehended in his sovereign love. Why we, and not those in India, and few or none in England? why should we have the gospel here in this isle, and almost all the world lie in the darkness, either of Popery, Mahometanism, or Paganism?

6. Exhortation. O labour to exalt free-grace; God will have all the honour, all the praise, and all the glory of our salvation: we sought not him, asked not for him, found not him first, but he sought us. "I am sought of them that asked not for me, and found of them that sought me not," Isa. lxxv. 1.

Arminianism further detected. 7. This may be of use by way of reprehension to such who maintain free-will, and deservy and condemn God's sovereign grace and favour to his elect, and to them only.

First. This is that which these men affirm, viz., "That God loved all mankind alike, or with the same love, and gave his Son to die to save every individual person in the world."

Answ. 1. Why then did Christ leave ninety and nine in the wilderness? or wherefore did he not seek them all until he had found every one of them; for though all in one sense were lost, yet some think and believe they were never lost, nor need a Saviour, and such he came not to seek, to save, redeem, and call; they were sinners, i. e., such that saw they had no righteousness to trust to, even the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and lost sheep among the Gentiles, "whom he must bring," John x. 16.

2. Why did not our Lord pray for all, if he died for all, to save all, and loved all with the same love? "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine," John xvii. 9. There is an elect world, and a world not elected, here he means such that were not given to him, and therefore he prayed not for them. Now would Christ die for them, for whom he would not pray? true "he prayed for them also that were his elect," ver. 20, who then believed not, but should believe in after times, and he prayed for no more that they might be saved; for certainly all that he prayed for so shall be saved, because the Father heard him always; he asks nothing of God but what God granted to him.

3. If Christ died for all, why is not the gospel preached to all? or why have not all the same love manifested to them; if all were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more shall all be saved by his life, see what Paul affirms, Rom. v. 18. "And if God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things," Rom. viii. 32. If therefore God delivered up his Son to die for all, or every individual person in the world; shall not he freely give to them his gospel, his Spirit, and faith to believe, and whatsoever else is necessary to their salvation? Will a man give the greatest gift, and withhold the lesser, without which the greater can never accomplish the end for which he gave it? As for example, will a man give a million of gold to purchase an estate for another, and not give five pounds to take up that estate, and so make it sure to him? My brethren, there is greater disproportion between God's gift, of Christ to die for us, and the gift of the gospel, and grace to us, no greater gift, greater love than that of God's giving his only begotten Son to die for us; therefore I argue, the lesser gift, the gift of faith, &c., he will not be sure withhold from such and all such that he gave his Son to die in the stead and room of; but the gospel he doth not give to all, nor his Spirit, faith, and other gifts that are necessary to salvation, to many thousand in the world; therefore he did not give his Son to die to save them all.

2ndly. The Arminians affirm, that there is a power in the will of man, to incline him either to choose or refuse, to yield or resist, to embrace Christ and the operations of the Spirit, or reject him and all those operations.

Answ. We say the will of a natural man, or a lost sinner, may and doth resist the common emotions of the Spirit, and offers of grace; but that special grace which God puts forth upon the soul with an intent according to his own eternal purpose to bring it home to himself, and effectually to call or regenerate, they cannot, shall not resist.

3rdly. They say God doth put forth no other, no greater power in bringing home, or

converting such that are saved, than he doth on them that perish, and that the drawings mentioned in the scripture are only moral suasions.

Ans. 1. This is to deny original sin, i. e., the pravity of our natures, or the total corruption and impotency of the creature by nature; for if he will can incline by moral suasion, under the preaching of the word, as easily to that which is spiritually good, as to that which evil, our nature is not so corrupted as the word of God shows, and our own experience daily evinces. Why then did Paul say, the "carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. These men say, the will or mind of man may be subject to the word or law of God, though supernatural or irresistible grace be not infused to incline his will.

2. This also clearly shows, that they do not believe that man is "dead in sins and trespasses," Eph. ii. 1, but lies wounded and maimed only; and that he without being quickened by a vital principle, may apply the balm of Gilead, or oil of grace to heal and cure himself. They, it is true, say it is of God's grace the will is inclined, but not that God gives power to the will; no, but that the will had power before, to choose or refuse; only grace, or moral suasion, excites or stirs up the will, like as a man is roused up out of sleep, by a man's voice telling him the house is on fire over his head.

3. It follows from what they affirm, that a man is not regenerated and born of God, but of the will of man; nor doth God implant or infuse a principle of grace, or gracious qualities in the soul, especially in the will, to make it willing by his almighty power, removing that enmity and aversion that is naturally in it, for they say, the will needs no such principle or quality to be infused into it; the will can and does incline itself without any such thing. So that the Spirit's agency alone in regeneration is denied, and so regeneration itself, for God cannot be said sure, to give us a new heart, a new nature, or form Christ in us, if what they say be true. But if they experience no more than their doctrine leads them to affirm, certainly they are not new creatures, not regenerated, but only reformed men, it being no other thing that is wrought in them than the product of the natural powers of the soul. All they can say is this, viz., the Lord doth not convert us, renew us; but he helps us to convert and renew ourselves, or inclines us to use our own power.

4. Also according to them it may be said, By the will of man ye are saved through faith, and that of ourselves, it is not the gift of God; and it is of works, that so men may not boast, see Eph. ii. 8, 9; or if what they assert doth not let in boasting, nothing can. But pray remember ye are called and saved alone by grace, and all boasting of the creature is excluded. "Where is boasting then? it is excluded, by what law? of works? nay but by the law of faith," Rom. iii. 37.

5. It appears by what they say, God gives us not the habit of grace, nor power to us to act, and to do of his own good pleasure, but it is of our good pleasure, if we (when the gospel is preached) will believe and return to God, we may; we need not Christ to open our hearts; grace is given equally to all, and works physically in none, and that God will convert us and renew us if we will; but James says, "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth."

6. Moreover, it necessarily follows from their notions, that faith and repentance are not given to us, nor are they the gift of God: faith and repentance is given no more to such that do believe and repent, than to such who persevere in impenitency and unbelief. For the grace they cry up all have alike, viz., the gospel and the preaching thereof, and the power and arguments, and moral suasions to excite and stir up the natural powers of the creature; and so (as one well observes) Christ gave faith no more to Paul than to Judas; he gave repentance no more to Peter, than to Simon Magus, i. e., he gave it not at all; for he does no more for any, or gives to any more than this moral grace, and what that can do. True, as the same author notes, they talk of subsequent grace, and of the Spirit, which they after believing do receive; but this latter grace and gift of the Spirit comes too late to be accounted the cause of conversion: it concurs not with us until we are willing, and do believe; the determination of the will is before it in order of nature; and none have the Spirit and after-grace but such who exert their natural power to receive persuasive grace.

7. It appears by their doctrine, that the efficacy of grace, and of the death of Christ, and success of the gospel, depends upon the will of man; for after all that God doth, or designs to do, he leaves the whole matter to the will of man; the will determines the whole success, whether it shall be effectual, or ineffectual: so that from hence we may say, that we might be saved we may praise God and Jesus Christ, but that we are saved we may thank ourselves, and glory in our wisdom, care, and diligence. But doth not Paul

say, "The natural man discerns not the things of God, neither indeed can receive them, because they are spiritually discerned?" Their doctrine is evident doth detract from the glory of Christ, and exalts the creature, deservs free-grace, and magnifies free-will, and so overthrows the glorious design of God in the whole of our salvation, which is to abase sorry man, to humble the creature, that God alone may be exalted.

Object. But doth not the psalmist say, the tender mercy of God is over all his works?

Ans. 1. He speaks not of eternal, special, or spiritual mercies, but of his common mercies, which are extended to men and beasts, &c. For do God's special tender mercies appear to be over the fallen angels? they are the works of his hands.

2. If by tender mercies be meant his special grace in the gospel, are they extended to the heathen world? &c.

Object. But if it as you say, it is in vain for sinners to endeavour to do any thing, if they are so important.

Ans. Man ought to do what he can; he is able to go to hear the word, he is able to read, hear, and to cry to God; they may do many things.

2. But they are to acknowledge that Christ only can change their hearts, though they have power, if they exert it, to reform their lives.

3. Let them be in the way; faith comes by hearing; God doth work in and by the word: sinners will be without excuse, because they do not what they might do; besides, we take no power from man, which God hath given to them; but such that say men may believe to-day, repent to-day, if they use the means, and exert the power they have, may conclude they may use that power to-morrow, and so delay the great work of their salvation; but let them know to-day, the present time is that time God calls, "This is the acceptable time," Take heed you trust not to power, and to that grace which falls short of salvation, and will suffer you to fall at last into hell, though used, and improved.

Remember it is God that makes one man to differ from another.

To conclude; you that Christ hath brought home, rejoice, and see you do ascribe all the glory into him; say, not to us, not to us, but unto thee be the honour, and power, and wisdom, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

SERMON XIV.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends, and neighbours, saying rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, &c. Luke xv. 6, 7.

SOME understand by his home, his coming to heaven; but I see no reason to restrain it to that. I rather conclude, that our Lord intends no more than the bringing home, or the conversion of the sinner unto God; for it refers to the sinner's place, or that place whither he is brought when he is regenerated; before he went astray, or was a stranger, being estranged from God, or afar off; but now he is brought to dwell in Sion amongst the saints, for that is called God's habitation, or the place where he dwells. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," Eph. ii. 19.

The proposition I have proposed to speak unto from hence, is this, viz.

Doct. V. That the Lord Jesus Christ, and his angels in heaven, and also his saints on earth, greatly rejoice when one lost sinner is returned home or God, or truly converted.

He himself rejoiceth when he hath found the lost sheep, *i. e.*, when thorough convictions have taken hold of a sinner, or grace is infused: and when he is effectually converted, or the work is declared, and a confession of that work is made by him, and he is received into the church, the saints and people of God rejoice; the church is commonly called heaven.

In speaking to this point of doctrine, I shall,

1. Show you who they are that may be meant by Christ's friends and neighbours, also why so called.

II. Why he himself, and his friends and neighbours, do rejoice, when one sinner is returned home to God.

III. Apply it, and so conclude with this parable.

He calleth his friends and neighbours to rejoice; they are invited to rejoice with him: therefore it is their duty so to do, and they are ready to do it.

1. All expositors agree (that I have met with) that by friends and neighbours are meant the saints and angels, though some conclude it refers to them in heaven only, which I cannot agree to. Saints and angels are the friends of Christ.

See Mr. Noh. Roger's true convert, p. 197. and our annotators on the place.

1. They are called his friends, he himself calleth them so. "I have called you friends," &c. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

John xv. 14, 15. Abraham was called the friend of God. And believers call Jesus Christ their friend, as indeed well they may. "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem," Cant. v. 16.

Quest. Why are they called friends?

Ans. 1. I answer, friends have no enmity in their hearts one to another, but are in a real state of friendship. Hence we say, when two men that were at variance are reconciled, we say they are now friends; the saints are reconciled to God and to Christ, and so are friends.

Why Christ and his saints are called friends.

2. Friends know one another well, they are acquainted and intimate one with the other: so Jesus Christ knows his saints. "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." John. x. 14. He hath a special knowledge of his saints, a knowledge of approbation. "I know Abraham, that he will command his children," &c. Christ saith to hypocrites, I never knew you; that is, I never approved of you: moreover, every true Christian knows Jesus Christ, i. e., they have a saving knowledge of him, they know his person whom he is, and they know his personal excellencies, also they know his offices, work, and powerful operations on their own hearts: they have an experimental knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Friends have a firm and real love one to another, they are united together in all cordial affections, their hearts are knit to each other, as the hearts of David and Jonathan were one to the other. Their love is hearty, and also abiding. "A friend loveth at all times," Prov. xvii. 17. Christ continues in his love and friendship to them, and they abide in their love and cordial affections unto him, though perhaps not always so hot and fervent, through the flesh, and Satan's temptations.

4. Friends will stick one by the other, and endeavour to keep up the honour of each other: so Jesus Christ sticks to his people, and vindicates them under all undue charges, reproaches, and false accusations, and speaks honourably of them. "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie, and so he was their Saviour," Isa. lxii. 8. Also believers cleave to the Lord Jesus, and study his honour, or labour to exalt and magnify him and promote his interest in the world.

5. Friends give clear proofs of their friendship to each other, in special times when it is needful: so did Jesus Christ; witness his death; and so he still doth at all times, by succouring them in times of afflictions, temptations, and tribulation, and by strengthening, supporting, and comforting them at all seasons, but especially when they stand in greatest need of such succour, &c. Also they give proofs of their love and friendship to him in a time when others forsake him, they abide with him in times when he is reproached, his authority contemned, his name blasphemed, and his truth trodden under foot.

6. True and cordial friends will venture all they have, or spare nothing that is dear to them, to help and succour, save and relieve each other.

Thus Christ spared nothing, no, not his own life, to help, relieve, and save friends. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John xv. 13. And then the saints when called unto it, have laid down their lives in love to him, to vindicate his honour, name, and witness to his truth.

7. Friends will not soon take offences at one another, but overlook one another's faults; the Lord Jesus is such a friend that passeth by all the faults and infirmities of his people, and they will not be offended in him (though we read of some that were) "But blessed are ye that are not offended in me."

8. A man takes counsel and advice of his friend; if a man hath a friend that is an able counsellor, be sure if he wants counsel, he will go to him; so believers go to Christ for counsel. I bless the Lord that hath given me counsel. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel," Psal. lxxiii. 24. Christ is a mighty counsellor, and he gives good, safe, wise, and profitable counsel to all his friends that repair to him for it.

9. A friend imparts his secrets to his friends; and from hence our Lord told his dis-

ciples they were his friends. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord doth, but I call you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you," John xv. 15. And hence it is said, "The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him." "We have the mind of Christ." He unbosometh himself unto his friends.

10. Friends sympathize one with the other, they mourn together, and also rejoice together. "In all the afflictions of God's people, he is said to be afflicted." He was grieved for Israel; if one mourns the other mourns, and if one rejoiceth the other rejoiceth also; and so here Christ says, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep."

1. Neighbours. A neighbour properly is one that dwelleth near us, at the next door, or in the same street, so believers dwell near Jesus Christ. "What people have the Lord so near them?" We dwell near Christ's heart, and always in his sight, and have his presence.

2. Our Lord shows who is our neighbour, even he that shows greatest love and favour to us; so that he is indeed our neighbour, and he esteems such so to be to him, in that they show the greatest love and pity to him in his poor members, but no more as to this.

11. I shall give you the reasons why Jesus Christ and his saints and angels, do rejoice, when one sinner is converted and brought home to God, and that more generally under a six-fold consideration.

1. In respect of God the Father.
2. In respect of Jesus Christ himself, considered as Mediator.
3. In respect of the Holy Ghost, who is the more direct and immediate agent, in the conversion of a sinner.
4. In respect of Satan, who by this means loses his captive, and is vanquished, &c.
5. In respect of the poor sinner himself, considering what infinite good he receiveth hereby.
6. In respect of the ministers of the gospel, the saints and church of God.

1. In respect of God the Father, they rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, because, (1.) they know how pleasing and acceptable it is to him, or in his sight, to see one sinner converted, laying down his arms, and throwing himself at his feet, begging mercy at his most gracious hands. O how doth the heart of God pant after lost sinners; he longs to see them return to him. "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return to me. His soul was grieved forty years in the wilderness," Heb. iii. 7—10. This God speaks after the manner of men. Now as he is said to be grieved when sinners go astray, so he is glad, he is pleased when they return; and that which is acceptable to God, is matter of joy to Christ, as Mediator, and to his saints and angels. (2.) They rejoice because God's early love to such a poor sinner is made known or manifested in effectual calling, he being one whom the Father loved from everlasting, and sought out the way how he might discover it; and now his glorious divine love is accomplished, who gave his Son to die, and to fetch home his lost sheep; and so his love that was kept secret in his own breast, is now visibly known and magnified to the sinner himself. (3.) Because it is an actual accomplishment of God's gracious covenant and promises made to the Son from eternity, who said, "He shall see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," Isa. liii. 10; that is, he shall see all that the Father gave him brought home, renewed, born again, or converted, having the image of God stamped upon their souls; and this must needs be matter of joy to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to his saints and angels. (4.) It is, my brethren, the actual execution and accomplishment of God's decree of election, and of his eternal purpose in Jesus Christ. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9, that is, he hath brought into a state of grace and salvation, such that he had before appointed or ordained to eternal life. Men do not so much rejoice in what they do decree and purpose, though it be some great and glorious design, as they do when they see their decree, counsels, and purpose hath taken effect, and is accomplished. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. 29. &c. That is, such that he was pleased, as an act of his sovereignty, to set his heart, his love and affections upon, or approve of them, he predestinated to be renewed, changed, or converted to God. There was a twofold purpose of God in his decree of election and predestination. (1.) To bring all his elect seed into a state of grace here, or to renew his own image in them, which is the bringing home of a lost sinner. (2.) To bring them

Christ and his saints rejoice at the return of sinners, in respect of God the Father.

A twofold design of God in election.

all to glory hereafter ; that is, he has ordained the end, viz., eternal life, and also the means, and their meetness or preparedness for that great end, which is regeneration and holiness. "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and blameless before him in love," Eph. i. 4. Not chosen us to salvation only, but to be holy also ; "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will." Not sons or children of God before adopted, and actually regenerated ; no, but only predestinated to this gracious end and purpose : and now this being actually done, the Lord Jesus with his saints and angels rejoice, beholding now God's decree and purpose hath taken effect, in the execution of it.

2. The Lord Jesus and his saints rejoice to see one lost sinner converted, in respect of Christ himself.

They rejoice when one sinner is converted, in respect of Christ himself.

(1.) Because every sinner that is brought to God, or is renewed, is the travel of Christ's soul, not only in his bloody passion and agony, but in bringing forth or renewing the sinner by his Spirit : no woman can rejoice more to see the fruit of her womb, and sore and bitter travail, than Christ and his ministers rejoice to see the travail of Christ's soul, i. e., a babe of grace born to God.

(2.) Because now the Lord Christ sees his kingdom, by the addition of one soul, is increased and enlarged, and Satan's kingdom lessened or diminished ; for look as the church of God increaseth, the devil's synagoge decreaseth ; when Christ gets one soul, Satan loses one. Now what can be a greater ground for Christ and his saints to rejoice than this ?

(3.) Because every sinner that is converted, is espoused and married to the Lord Jesus Christ. "I have espoused you to one husband," 2 Cor. xi. 2. &c. This therefore must needs be cause of joy : and hence it is said, "As a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," Isa. lxii. 5. True, Jesus Christ knew that this and that sinner was given him by the Father from the beginning, nay, from eternity. But they, alas ! abide a long time in a state of enmity against him, and do not love him, but contrariwise hated him and his Father ; but now he hath gotten the love, the heart, and the affections of this lost and undone sinner.

Is it not grievous (think you) to the Lord Christ, to see such that he loved from everlasting, and shed his precious blood for, and came to espouse and to betroth to himself for ever, to hate him, despise him, yea, condemn his love, and abuse his patience, and great favour and kindness ? Certainly it must needs have such effects upon his tender heart.

A young man when he sees himself slighted, and set at nought by one that he loveth as his own soul, cannot but be greatly troubled ; but when he hath obtained the love of the person that is the object of his affections, he cannot but be glad, and rejoice, even so doth the Lord Jesus Christ. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life," Prov. xiii. 12.

(4.) Christ and his saints and angels rejoice, because the conversion of a sinner is the success of his labour ; not only in his dying, but also in his interceding. Jesus Christ did not only bleed for sinners, but he also pleads with God for them, that they who are his may be brought home. "And he made intercession for transgressors," Isa. liii. 12. My brethren, the Lord Jesus intercedes to bring sinners into a state of grace ; and also when they are brought into such a state, or are renewed, he intercedes with the Father that they may be kept or preserved from falling, or abide in that happy condition to the end. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," that is, not finally fail, or that the seed thereof, or the sacred habit may not fail. Every man rejoiceth to see his work prosper and succeed well that is in his hands, and so doth our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus Christ with his saints and angels, rejoice at the conversion of a lost sinner, in respect of the Holy Ghost. Brethren, each person of the blessed Trinity has their special and peculiar work in the salvation of sinners : the Father loves the sinner, elects the sinner, finds out a ransom, a Saviour, and Surety for the sinner, and entered into a covenant with him from eternity, and sent him into the world, anointed and authorized him to be the only Mediator, and upheld him in doing all his work, and accepted of his undertaking for them, and in their stead, &c. And Jesus Christ bath his work also, who hath wrought out a complete righteousness for all them whom he covenanted with the Father, to bring home them he died for on the tree ; "the just for the unjust : " and he exercises all his offices effectually, also to this very purpose. Moreover, the Holy Ghost hath his proper and peculiar work, which is to renew, quicken, call and regenerate, and effectually to sanctify all those the Father elected, and the Son redeemed, or died for, eternally to save from wrath and hell. And now to see the Spirit, that great and glorious agent, doing of his work, which tends to per-

Joy in heaven when a sinner repents, in respect of the Holy Ghost.

fect and actually to accomplish the whole work of the sinner's redemption, and so make Christ's blood and mediation effectual to the soul, is doubtless no small cause of joy and rejoicing to Jesus Christ, and to his saints and angels. "The flesh profits nothing (saith our Lord) it is the Spirit that quickens," John vi. 63. Christ's flesh alone, had it not been united to his Godhead, could not have profited us any thing; neither doth his flesh in dying profit any man, without the Spirit makes his death and merits effectual unto them; the blood of the sacrifice must not only be poured forth, but also be sprinkled upon the people, &c. From hence therefore Christ and believers rejoice to see the Holy Spirit discharging of his work, in making Christ's death effectual to a poor sinner.

(2.) As the Father rejoiced to see the Son glorifying of him, which was the grand design of the Son in all he did, so Christ and believers rejoice to see the Holy Ghost glorifying of the Son. "He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you," John xvi. 14. The Spirit makes Christ famous, exalts, and lifts up and magnifies the Lord Jesus, he sets the crown upon Christ's head, considered as Mediator: now this was that which our Lord prayed for, "glorify thy Son;" and it was the will, purpose and grand design of the Father thus to do, and therefore both Christ, saints, and angels, rejoice to see the Holy Spirit doing of it, in the conversion of a sinner.

(3.) To see the Holy Ghost bowing the rebellious will, enlightening the dark mind, changing the carnal and earthly affections, giving light to such who sit in darkness, is ground of no small joy; to see the carnal heart made spiritual, the worldly heart made heavenly, the proud heart made humble, a lustful and unclean heart made chaste, holy, and undefiled; to see a passionate heart made meek, an envious heart made pitiful and ready to forgive; to see an hypocritical heart made sincere; in a word, to see a man born again, born of the Spirit, brought forth the second time, not into this world, or Satan's kingdom, but into the kingdom of God's dear Son here, and into the kingdom of glory, is matter or ground of great joy.

Joy in heaven when one sinner repenteth in respect of Satan.

4. Christ, his saints and angels rejoice when a poor lost sinner is returned to God, in respect of Satan, who triumphed over the sinner while he abode in his hands, and under his power.

(1.) They rejoice to see Satan's design defeated, and his work destroyed; he came to deliver sinners from the power of Satan: this was the purpose of Christ in coming into the world; "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8. Or dissolve the frame of his kingdom, or overthrow his design; and when one sinner is converted, his power on that soul is destroyed, and he thrown out of that heart, in whom before he ruled, and had the dominion.

(2.) Is it not matter of joy to them to see Satan grind his teeth, to foam, and bitterly to rage, to behold his prey taken from him by almighty power, and he cannot avoid it nor help himself; no, though he raiseth all the powers of the infernal lake, to hinder or withstand it. How doth this torment the devil? I will work (saith the blessed God) and who shall let? What enemy on earth, man on earth, or devil of hell? No, let Satan do his worst, when Christ comes to seek and carry home a lost sinner, he will do it. Sure, the returning of a lost sinner makes hell sorrowful, it fills devils with shame and horror, and therefore heaven and all that dwells above rejoice.

(3.) To see a man, a poor feeble mortal, in the power and strength of Christ, to trample Satan under his feet, and to triumph over him in the name of the Lord, is matter of great rejoicing to Jesus Christ, and his saints and angels.

(4.) To see Satan fly from a poor sinner, and to quit the field, and yield himself conquered, not being able to stand his ground, faith like a shield causing all his fiery darts to rebound back, and a saint, with the sword of the Spirit, conquering hell, and all the powers of darkness, is certainly cause of unspeakable joy.

Joy in respect of the sinner himself.

(5.) Christ, and his saints and angels, rejoice when one sinner is converted, in respect of the poor sinner himself, who is brought home.

(1.) To see a poor naked wretch, one who lay wallowing in his blood, cast out to the loathing of his person, like a new-born infant, now clothed with a glorious garment; is not here cause for Christ and his friends to rejoice?

(2.) To see one condemned to die, lying in a deep dungeon, or in a horrible pit, now set at liberty, and brought into a glorious palace, he being one dearly beloved: what cause have all his friends to rejoice, to see this? Why thus it is here, a poor sinner beloved of God, and one comprehended in his eternal decree of election, that lay long in a horrible pit, bound in chains, and condemned to die, is now brought into the king's chamber: thus the sponse speaketh, and every believer may say, the king hath brought me into his chamber, what follows? "we will be glad and rejoice with thee," Cant. i. 4.

(3.) To see a poor creature polluted and covered all over with horrid filth, most loathsome to behold, now washed and made clean, he being one God's heart was set upon; what cause is this of joy and rejoicing to Christ, and all that dwell in heaven.

(4.) To see one that was a child of wrath by nature, made a child of God by grace; one that had upon him the very image of the devil, now having the image of God, is surely great cause of joy to Christ, his saints, and angels.

(5.) To see one that Satan, that hungry lion had in his jaws, or one that was a slave and vassal of sin and the devil, set free for ever, is great ground of joy considering the nature of this freedom. "If the Son therefore make you free, ye are free indeed," John viii. 36. That is, you have real perfect, glorious, spiritual, and eternal freedom, from citizenship of heaven, free access to God, and are freed from sin, the law, wrath, death, and hell.

6. To see a poor man out of his wits, or deprived of his senses, stabbing and wounding himself, tearing his clothes, and feeding on husks with filthy swine, brought to his right mind, having his senses restored to him again, and healed of all his wounds; what cause of joy would this be to all his friends? Thus, my brethren, it is here; the prodigal, it is said, when he came to himself, said, "I will go home to my father." He was not himself before, but like a man out of his wits, as hereafter, when I come to speak to that parable, I shall, God willing, show you. Alas, were not sinners out of their wits, would they do and act as they indeed daily do? Will men in their right mind destroy themselves? "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Will a man in his senses stab his own soul? choose brass counters, and refuse precious pearls, refuse good and choice food to feed on ashes, husks, and grains that swine feed upon; or willingly yield himself up to be devoured by a cruel lion? Or would he contemn God, or refuse God and Christ, and all the good that is in God and Jesus Christ, from love to his sins and filthy lusts?

(7.) To see a man resisting the Holy Spirit, warring and fighting against his Maker, daring God to damn him, flying in his very face, and in actual rebellion against him, now reconciled and brought into sweet acquaintance and friendship with him; is not this cause of joy to Jesus Christ, his saints and angels? to see a vile rebel come in and humble himself to his prince, acknowledging all his by-past treasons, and abominable indignities cast upon the King of heaven and earth, loathing and abhorring himself, and repenting in dust and ashes.

(8.) To see a poor sheep that cost the Shepherd the price of his own blood, bought so dear, to go astray, and expose itself to a thousand dangers, now brought home to his own fold; is not here cause of joy to the Shepherd, and to all his friends and neighbours? "rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep."

6. There is cause of joy in respect to ministers and members of the church.

(1.) Christ and his angels in heaven, and saints on earth rejoice to see a lost sinner return home to God; because poor ministers succeed in their great work, as instruments in the hand of God; hereby it appears that Jesus Christ is with them, owns and prospers them. What can be greater encouragement to them, or tend more to strengthen their hands and hearts? Was it not matter of joy to Abraham's servant, to see how God had prospered him in his message, when he had prevailed with Rebecca to consent to go with him, to become Isaac's wife? Ministers are Christ's spokesmen to persuade sinners to receive and embrace the Lord Jesus, and espouse him, who by them is pleased to tender his love unto them. Do not ambassadors of peace rejoice when their embassy is received, and the king's enemies are brought to accept of terms of peace? A minister is Christ's ambassador, and when one sinner is converted under his ministry, he succeeds in his embassy. This also puts a glory upon the word and blessed Gospel, which is an instrument of God's power, by which he commonly is pleased to work faith in the souls of sinners. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth," Rom. i. 16. "It pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." "The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword." Now God owing after this manner his own ordinances, Jesus Christ rejoices with his saints. Moreover, the saints seeing their number increase, and others made fellow-heirs and fellow-citizens with them, they rejoice also.

APPLICATION.

1. See how acceptable the conversion of sinners is to Jesus Christ.

2. And is grace received such cause of joy to others? O thou what cause hath a sinner himself to rejoice? It is said Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ to them, and they believed and were baptized, both men and women, "and there was great joy in that city."

3. From hence also we may infer, that we ought to rejoice with them that rejoice, or at others good.

4. Moreover, what cause have parents to rejoice, to see their children converted. It is matter of joy to see our enemies converted, and them that hate us: but O how much greater cause have we of rejoicing, when our dear children, or dear relations are renewed, changed, or brought home to God, and made happy for ever?

5. By way of exhortation. Sinners who would not return to God, if it be cause of such joy to God the Father, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Holy Spirit, and to ministers, and to the holy angels; then labour to return to God! attend upon the word, cry to him to help you to believe. Certainly the conversion of sinners is a very great thing, it is matter of the highest moment.

6. Ministers also may from hence be stirred up to do their utmost in order to the conversion of sinners: let us not be weary, neither faint in our minds, nor be discouraged, though we meet with reproaches from men, opposition from Satan, and many things that tend to grieve and wound our souls, from the people of God, as the prophet Jeremiah, and the apostle Paul himself did, which made the first to wish his "head was water, and his eyes a fountain of tears," Jer. ix. 1, 2. "Report, say they, and we will report." But if it be so now with some of us, yet let us not be discouraged, since God hath appointed preaching as his great ordinance, for the bringing home, or conversion of lost sinners.

7. We may infer, if the conversion of sinners causeth such joy to Christ, his saints and angels, then when sinners repent not, believe not, that must needs cause grief and sorrow to them. Christ is said to be grieved, because the Jews believed not, or because of the hardness of their hearts: also the Holy Ghost is grieved; "Grieve not the Holy Spirit," Eph. iv. 30. Angels are grieved, ministers are grieved when sinners contemn God, slight Christ, resist the Spirit, vilify Christ's ministers, and proceed in their ungodly ways, and refuse to return: and the devils rejoice.

Lastly, O how happy are you that God hath called home, who are brought to believe, and are in Christ's hand, and born by his power unto salvation; you, of all people, have cause to rejoice, for your names are written in heaven.

So much at this time, and thus I close with this blessed parable.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

LOST GROAT OPENED.

SERMON XV.

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbours, saying, rejoice with me, I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in heaven, in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.—Luke xv. 8, 9, 10.

The introduction. My brethren, it is worth your consideration to note, that our blessed Saviour is very intent upon the main or chief matter contained in the former parable, viz., of the lost sheep; in that he seconds it with this of the lost piece of money: nay, the third time he confirms it, in the lost son.

We seldom or never find him repeating the same thing in different parables; therefore let me caution all not to think or speak lightly of these parables, or think our Lord used needless representations, expressions, or allusions herein, nor that this parable has but

little in it, or that we ought not particularly to attempt to open the several parts thereof, but only mind the chief scope thereof, which is the same with that which goes before (as our late annotators intimate) but certainly he foresaw that the parable of the lost sheep could not fully hold forth some things about the state of lost sinners, or about the seeking of them; therefore he proceeds to this. A sheep is one thing, and a piece of silver is another; also a man doth not light a candle to seek a sheep that is lost, as a woman doth in seeking a lost groat; the one is sought in the clear light of the day, but the other may be lost in a dark house, and cannot be found without lighting a candle: by which is showed, that sinners cannot be found by mere natural light, or by the light in all men, but by a supernatural light, which is signified by an artificial light, i.e., that of a candle.

Why our Lord might add this parable to the former.

I find but few writers besides Mr. Rogers, who have spoken unto this Parable, but he endeavoured to open every part thereof, whom I purpose not to follow; neither do I think it needful to be so particular on many things as he is, but only to open those things in it which could not be comprehended in the precedent parable: all that I purpose to speak to this, shall be comprehended in one discourse.

See Mr. Neh. Rogers True Convert, an exposition of this chapter of Luke.

But to proceed.

Our Lord, it is evident, like a wise master of the assemblies, endeavours by a second, nay, by a third blow, to drive the nail, that the matter might be fixed upon their hearts, i.e., the business of his seeking of lost sinners. Therefore the main scope and design of this parable is the same with the former, though part of the matter contained in it is different, viz.,

1. It is to justify his practice in his conversing with great sinners, and in his endeavouring to bring publicans and harlots to repentance. The scope of the parable.

2. To reprove the pride and confidence of the vain-glorious Pharisees, who thought themselves righteous, and not in a lost state and condition; and in this and the precedent parable, he seems to grant or suppose it was so, i. e., that they were not lost, but were like pieces of silver in the possession of their owner, they being God's covenant people; he doth not say, that they were not lost, but (I say) he seems to yield to them as if it was so: as if he should say, let it be granted that you are silver or gold, not lost nor corrupted, but are righteous persons; yet these great sinners, you conclude, are lost. "And what person having ten pieces of silver, if one be lost, will not seek it until found."

3. His design herein is to show his great love to such sinners, and so to encourage them to hope for pardon, or to move them to seek for faith and repentance.

4. And also under this parable he shows, what little worth or value is in sinners, as they are in themselves, though they may be some of God's elect. So much as to the scope.

Secondly, as to the division thereof.

1. You have the matter or narration.

2. The application.

3. The confirmation.

The division of the parable.

1. In the matter or narration, you have an agent described.

(1.) By her sex, a woman.

(2.) By her substance, she had ten pieces of silver.

(3.) What had befallen her, she had lost one.

(4.) Her actions, or what she did thereupon.

1st. She lighteth a candle.

2ndly. She sweepeth the house.

3rdly. She seeketh her lost piece diligently.

4thly. Her good success, she finds it.

5thly. How much she is pleased thereby, "She calleth her friends and neighbours together, and desires them to rejoice with her, because she had found the piece that was lost."

2. You have the application of this, "Likewise there is joy in heaven, in the presence of the angels of God, when one sinner repenteth."

3. The confirmation, "I say unto you." This shows the certainty of it, or that indeed it is so, or a great truth, i. e., "there is joy in heaven," &c. I, the truth itself, the true witness, do say it; that which is spoken by the lip of truth itself, none can doubt of.

In the next place I shall open each part thereof.

What woman? the woman here no doubt signifies the same person mentioned in the foregoing parable, that had the hundred sheep, which we have proved refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is often in the scripture set forth by

The parts of the parable opened.

the feminine gender, by the name of wisdom. "Wisdom hath built her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars. She hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, and she hath sent forth her maidens," Prov. ix. 1. 2. 3. Expositors generally agree, that by wisdom here is meant Jesus Christ, who is called the wisdom of God; and by her maidens, are intended the ministers of the gospel.

But because it belongs to women, or their maids, to light a candle, and to sweep the house; our Lord made use of this allusion, to set forth what he must do in seeking lost sinners; and, as Mr. Rogers says, I see no reason to judge but that Christ is meant thereby, as corresponding with the preceding parable, because these ten pieces of silver are said to be the woman's. Now who hath any property in sinners, to call them his, but God, or our Lord Jesus Christ? for may an angel say they are mine? or can a minister say they are mine? no, neither of them can plead any interest in these pieces of silver, or have any property so as to call them theirs; but the Lord Christ may call them his, "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Jesus Christ created the world, and all things therein. "By him, and for him they are, and were created," Rev. iv. 11. And he, as Mediator, is heir of all things, all things are put into his hands to do with them, or dispose of them as his own.

"Having ten pieces of silver." Our annotators tell us, that each piece was the quarter part of a Shekel, and of our money it is seven pence half-penny, commonly called a groat, I suppose according to the Roman account, a small piece of little value.

1. By the ten pieces of silver, expositors say, is meant the same species of creatures with the hundred sheep, even all mankind.

But something is here supposed (as I hinted) by way of seeming concession to the Pharisees, which really is not so, viz., that the woman had not lost the nine pieces, or none but one; for all mankind, or every individual man and woman is lost in the first Adam, though the Pharisees and the greatest part of the people of the Jews (they being God's own covenant-people under the law) thought they were not lost, nor did they judge any among them were vile and undone persons, but profane and notorious sinners only.

2. By the piece that was lost, is meant all God's elect; and they only are said to be lost because they alone are brought to see and confess themselves to be lost and undone sinners, and so it holds parallel-wise with the lost sheep.

"Pieces of silver;" this may denote, that man was once (as first created) of some account with God, like as silver is among men and women.

Why a sinner is compared to a piece of silver.

(1.) For as silver is a choice sort of metal: so, my brethren, man was once a choice sort of creature, and highly valued by the Almighty.

(2.) Silver stamped for coin, has the image of Cæsar, or the image of the prince (whose money it is) stamped upon it, so man, as choice silver coined for God, at first had the image of God stamped upon his soul.

(3.) Money also hath an image stamped upon it by regal authority, even so also by the authority of God, the King of heaven and earth, God's own image was stamped upon the soul of man.

(4.) Money may be defaced, marred, corrupted, or counterfeited by some traitorous person or persons: so Satan and sin, those cursed traitors to the God of heaven, have defaced, marred, corrupted, and counterfeited the king's coin, and to such a degree, that mankind, (I mean all ungodly persons) are become as reprobate silver, as the prophet Jeremiah shows, "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them," Jer. vi. 3.

(5.) Silver that is corrupted, and mixed with base metal, will not pass for current coin, but it must be melted down, refined, and stamped anew: so every man and woman in the world are so corrupted that they will not pass for current coin with God, no not one piece, until they are melted down, refined, changed, and new coined, and by the Holy Spirit, have the image of God stamped upon them.

From hence by the way let me note,

Man naturally as himself, is but of very little worth.

Doct. 1. Though man was good silver in himself, yet being compared to a groat, it followeth from hence, he is but of very little worth or value; for being corrupted, mixed with base metal, and abominably counterfeited, he is become like a false piece of money, a brass groat, or rather lead.

What is man naturally good for? what is sinful man worth? even just nothing, nay less than nothing; therefore when our Saviour compares him in this parable to silver, he alludes to what man was at first, as he came out of God's hand.

Let me a little confirm this by God's word.

1. Man naturally is like to unsavoury salt, or salt that hath lost its savour, which (our

Lord saith) "is good for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men," Matt. v. 13. Indeed not fit to be cast on the dunghill, because it tends to make land barren.

2. Man is called an unclean thing. "We all are as an unclean thing," Isa. lxiv. 6. "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, they are altogether become filthy," &c., Psal. xiv. 1, 3. And again, saith the sacred text "How much more abominable and filthy is man," Job. xv. 16. Sin hath made man most loathsome and abominable in the sight of God. "The heart of the wicked is of little worth, though the tongue of the just is as choice silver," Prov. x. 20.

3. My brethren, man is compared to a worm, and what is of less value than a worm? "how much less man that is a worm?" Mr. Broughton reads it in English, "and the son of man, a vermin." The word, saith Mr. Caryl, signifies, both great and small worms; are vermin or a worm bred out of corrupt flesh, a carrion worm? and what is more hateful and loathsome than such worms? man is a very poor thing, being compared to dust, to vanity, and to a lie. "Men of high degree are vanity, and men of low degree are a lie," Psal. lxii. 9. "And nations before him are as nothing, and counted to him less than nothing," Isa. xl. 15. Man deserves not to be called a groat; no, he is less than a brass counter.

(1.) Look upon his original, he is from the earth, as worms are.

(2.) Look upon him in his natural state; he liveth upon the earth, on earthly things, as worms do.

(3.) Look upon him as corrupted, and as proceeding from fallen Adam; he is a worm bred out of corruption.

(4.) Look upon as to his natural powers and ability, and he is as helpless as a worm, he cannot save himself: a worm may save itself from danger, as soon as a man can save himself from sin, wrath, and hell.

(5.) Man as a worm, must shortly return to the earth, and be housed in the earth as worms be. O how is man by sin degraded! having lost himself, he is compared to a groat, a leaden groat that once was God's jewel, a most noble and excellent piece in God's sight, made at first but a little lower than the angels.

Again, sinful man, lost man, compared to a small piece of corrupt silver, reprobate silver; then let me note,

Doct. 2. That the grace, love, and goodness of God, is infinite to sorry man.

Will God set his heart upon man, love a worm, a filthy creature, and send his own Son to seek and save him that is of no worth and value, as in himself? and what is the nature of the love of Christ, to come to seek the lost groat; what admirable condescension is this, man who is no better than reprobate silver, or than a corrupt, a poisonous and filthy thing, an enemy, a traitor, and a rebel against God. Wonder O ye heavens!

Doct. 3. We may also infer, that the excellencies of grace which flow from Jesus Christ are to be admired.

When Christ finds one of these corrupt pieces, a base and vile creature, worse than lead, he by his Spirit and heavenly grace makes it as choice silver, or a most excellent piece, he refines it; nay, changeth it into pure gold, though it was but corrupt silver when he found it. "How are the precious sons of Sion comparable to fine gold, esteemed as earthen pitchers!" Lam. iv. 2. My brethren, Jesus Christ doth not leave the piece as he found it; no, its being lost, denotes its natural pollution and corrupt state, but he changes the state, the nature and the hearts of sinners, and makes them more pure than gold, and also stamps his own image again upon every piece which he finds.

Doct. 4. And from hence also we may infer, that all we have, or do receive, is of grace, of rich grace, of free grace.

There was nothing in sinners that could move Jesus Christ to love them, to seek them, and come to save them, but his own pity, grace, and love; we are of no more worth than a base counterfeit leaden groat.

But to proceed. "If she lose one." I have, in speaking to the foregoing parable, showed you what it is to be lost, how sinners have lost God, and God hath lost them, and how they have lost themselves, and also the woeful state of such; so that I shall say no more to this now.

My brethren, if one piece, one sinner be lost, Jesus Christ soon hath it upon his heart to seek for it; also consider, it is better to be one of those pieces which are thus lost, than one that looks upon himself never lost, but in the hand of Christ, or safe amongst his treasure, as the Jew did. There is one thing to be noted which may afford comfort to lost sinners (as it is hinted in this parable) viz., the piece of money lost was in the house, i. e., it is in the world, it is not lost in the bottom of the sea, it is not in hell, amongst them that

are irrecoverably lost, there is hope, and ground of hope, of finding a piece of money lost in our house.

Was it lost in the sea, there was no ground to hope ever to find it again. So sinners that were alive in this world, at present they are in a lost condition, yet they may be found; but those that are in hell are lost for ever.

It is lost, i. e., it hath lost its beauty, its purity, its excellency, it hath lost the image of God.

What is meant by the candle.

“Doth not light a candle,” &c.

Quest. What may be meant by the candle, and by lighting of it?

Christ himself as Mediator is like a candle lighted to seek lost sinners.

Ans. I answer, 1. Christ himself, Jesus Christ is the light of the world; and when he came into the world, this candle was lighted. True, in some sense, as he was the light of the world from the beginning, so he was partly lighted (as soon as Adam sinned) in the promise of the seed of the woman, and he gave light to all that were in the house, or that believed under the law; but he never gave so great light as he did when he came into the world.

The gospel or word of God is a candle.

2. The gospel may be meant by this candle, and it is lighted in and by the ministration of it, through the divine influences of the Spirit upon the soul.

exix. 105.

Christ lights the candle of the gospel, sends his word and the ministry thereof to that nation, kingdom, city, or place, where any of his elect are scattered and lie lost, to seek and search for them, but he himself is the chief and prime light. “I am come as a light into this world.”

Also the spirit of a man is as a candle.

3. The candle also may refer to man's spirit, “The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly,” Prov. xx.

27. Hence also David says, “Thou wilt light my candle, he will light my darkness,” Psal. xviii. 28. By both these, nay, all these candles, Jesus Christ seeks his lost groat, i. e., lost sinners; he sends his word, his glorious gospel, and puts it into the candlestick of his church, not only to light believers, but also to light sinners; he enlightens also their understanding, or lights their spirit by the light of the Holy Ghost, that so he may find his lost piece of corrupt silver.

From hence I observe,

Doct. 5. The gospel is, or may be compared to a candle, or a light which Christ hath lighted to give light in the night of this world.

This I shall open parallel-wise in a few particulars.

How the gospel may be compared to a candle that is lighted.

1. A candle is not a natural light, but a light contrived or devised by man. So Jesus Christ, as Mediator, was the contrivance of the infinite wisdom of God, he is not that natural light that is in all men (considered as he is Mediator) though he may be said to be the light thereof considered as Creator.

tor.

2. What could any people do in a house in the night time, had they not the light of a candle, lamp, or the like? if they have lost anything, they cannot without light find it; work they cannot, and therefore a candle was contrived and made to give light in the night time. So, and in like manner, what could we do in this dark world, was there no Christ, no gospel? what darkness should we be in as to our souls? for the light within all men is but like the light of the moon. Moreover, had not God been graciously pleased to have lighted this heavenly candle, Jesus Christ could not have found one lost sinner. Besides, it is by the light of this candle we must work, and do all which we have to do to glorify God.

3. Darkness is grievous, especially that darkness that may be felt, like the darkness of Egypt. So the spiritual darkness the souls of all men are in naturally, is very grievous “They being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance which is in them,” &c. Eph. iv. 18. What is more lamentable than to dwell always in a dark dungeon and never see light? and this being considered, is it not strange “that men should love darkness rather than the light?”

4. Such who walk in darkness, our Lord says, stumble, as we also find it by woeful experience. So such that never saw the light of Christ, and of his glorious gospel stumble.

5. A candle is a light of acceptance, it is capable to receive light, but it is not a light of information; a candle must be first lighted before it can give light. So the spirit of man is a light of acceptance, it is capable to receive light, but it is the Lord that must light our candle by his Spirit. “There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty setteth him understanding,” Job. xxxii. 8.

6. A man "that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth." Even so sinners who are in spiritual darkness, know not whither they are going; they perhaps think they are going to heaven, when they are going the direct way to hell.

7. A man in a dark house knows not what company he hath with him, the house may be full of toads and venomous creatures, and thieves may also lurk in some corners of it, who may soon murder him. So sinners who are in darkness, know not what horrid guilt and filth is in their hearts, nor what cursed and abominable thieves they harbour in their house, as sin, the world, and the devil, who alas! are ready to cut the throats of their precious souls, nay, and have mortally wounded them already.

8. "Light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to see the sun," Eccl. xi. 7. And natural light is sweet and pleasant. O then how sweet is it for the eyes of the soul to see the light of the Sun of righteousness, or to enjoy the spiritual light of this candle!

9. Men should endeavour to work while they have the light, they know not how long it may be before darkness may cover them. Our Lord saith, "I must work while it is day," John ix. 4, or while it was light. Alas! who knows how soon God may remove the candle of the gospel, or blow out their candle, and then they will be in darkness for ever.

10. Light maketh things manifest, and whatsoever doth make manifest is light. What a discovery doth light make of things which those who are in darkness see not. So the light of Christ in the gospel, by the Spirit, maketh many things manifest, or discovers their nature, or what they are which those that are in darkness see not, nor do they know.

(1.) Thereby the evil of sin is discovered to all believers, as the worst of all evils, and plague of all plagues.

(2.) The woeful state and condition of mankind by nature, is also made manifest by this light.

(3.) The vanity, and emptiness of this present world.

(4.) The deceitfulness of our hearts, and the filth and corruption that is therein.

(5.) Also by this light we come to see the infinite wisdom, love, mercy, power, justice, and holiness of God, and all the other attributes and perfections of his ever-glorious and most adorable majesty.

(6.) As also his eternal counsels and purposes of his will about our salvation in eternity, and that blessed covenant that was between the Father and the Son about our redemption.

(7.) It likewise discovers the great glory, beauty, and transcendent excellencies that are in our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the necessity of him, and of union with him, and of faith in him. In a word, all the mysteries of grace, treasures of grace and glory, are made manifest by this candle, or by the light of the gospel.

11. A candle is of great use to kindle a fire, and oft-times it is made use of to do that. So the candle of the word, and blessed gospel, God makes use of to kindle a fire in our souls, which burns up all the combustibles of sin and self, which we find naturally to be in us; and hereby a holy flame is also kindled in our hearts of faith in, love to, and zeal for our Lord Jesus Christ; by which means we are warmed, and have divine heat in our souls, and whereby our hard hearts are melted, and we comforted under all cooling and heart-chilling providences; "Is not my word like fire?" Jer. xxiii. 29.

12. Light dispelleth darkness; so doth the light of the gospel dispel, scatter, and drive away all inward darkness arising from sin, ignorance, and temptations, also the darkness of all errors, false doctrine, and damnable heresies, and human traditions, and superstitions whatsoever.

USE. 1. These things being so, learn to prize the gospel. What a woeful condition are they in who never saw nor had the candle lighted among them; bewail the Pagan, the Mahometan, and Popish world.

2. "Live up in all things according to the light thereof," and let this candle burn all night in your chambers, I mean all your days in your souls.

3. And search your hearts by the light thereof, having your candle first lighted in you by God's Spirit.

But to proceed.

"And sweepeth the house,"

Quest. What is meant by the house?

Ans. Mr. Rogers understands the church of the Jews is meant here, by house; but I conceive that cannot be, because many of God's elect were not lost in that house. Christ came to be a light to the Gentiles, for among them were many poor sinners which he came to seek.

What the house is where this candle is lighted

2. Because Christ did not come to be a candle or light to that national and typical church, but to remove that external church-state, and to gather a pure Gospel-church out from amongst them and the Gentile nations. Therefore by the house I understand is meant this world, as Christ is called the light of the world; "I am come a light into the world," that so he may seek in all nations where any of his pieces of corrupt silver are lost.

Why this world is called a house. 1. A house is erected or built by some man; so God, the master builder, who built all things, built this world, he laid the foundation, and hangeth it upon nothing, but is the great pillar thereof himself, by his almighty power.

2. A house, (I mean a rare and magnificent house,) is the contrivance of man's wisdom. So this world is the wise and glorious contrivance of Almighty God.

3. A house that is wonderfully large, hath, or may have a multitude of inhabitants in it; so hath this world.

4. A house of a noble person hath many vessels in it, some of gold and silver, and some of brass, wood, and earth, some for honour, and some for dishonour. So in this world there are some men and women, who are vessels of gold and silver, I mean, holy and gracious persons, whom God compares to gold and silver, and to precious stones; and also some who are but wood, or like mere earthen vessels of little worth in God's sight.

5. A house in the night, if there be no light, no candle nor lamp lighted, is a very dark place. So this world, during the whole night of its continuance, had not God sent Christ and the Gospel to give light to it, would have been a dark place, even nothing but thick darkness.

6. Sometimes in a house a piece of money may be lost, and oftentimes is, and it cannot be found without lighting a candle. Even so, and in like manner, in this world, all God's elect, (signified by this lost goat) before they are called, lie among the rest of undone mankind, and they cannot be found unless Jesus Christ comes a light into this world; no, not by the Son of God himself, unless he be incarnate, and as Mediator, be set up as a glorious light, that by his own mediation he may seek them; and that he might seek and find them, he lights up the candle of the Gospel, *i. e.*, the ministry thereof, and also by his own Spirit lights up our candle, I mean, inspires our spirits, and gives us understanding, &c.

"She sweepeth the house."

What is meant by sweeping the house. 1. Note, There may be, and oft is, much filth in a great house that may cover a piece of silver. So in this world there is abundance of sin and wickedness, which does cover all God's elect until he comes to light a candle, and sweep the house.

2. Note, A bare lighting of a candle, without sweeping the house, sometimes will not discover a lost piece of silver. No more will the bare preaching of the Gospel find a lost sinner, until Christ comes with his broom of convictions, and the cleansing influences of his Spirit, to purge the filth of sin, and the filth of the world out of his heart and conscience.

Quest. What may be meant by sweeping the house?

Ans. 1. By the broom, or sweeping the house, may be meant the dismal judgments which Christ sometimes brings upon the world, which, though it be a plague and judgment on the wicked, yet it is in mercy to his elect ones, it is that he may seek them by his rod, and that way he many times finds and brings home several of his chosen: for like as a besom is to sweep away the dust and the filth, yet the woman in sweeping designs to spare, nay, to find her lost piece of money, and not sweep that away; even so Jesus Christ sometimes brings the besom of afflictions, and sore judgment upon the world, to sweep away the filth or wickedness of the earth, yet he doth not design thereby to sweep away or destroy his elect seed; no, but to find them, and bring them home by the rod.

2. It also may (as I hinted) intend powerful convictions. God's amazing judgments do often awaken the conscience of a secure sinner, and these convictions, like a broom, may come upon the soul under the word, and sometimes under the rod; for many are brought home by afflictions, who would not perhaps attend upon the word.

(1.) When the broom comes, it stirs the dust and makes it more discernable; before it may be but little dust or filth appeared in the house. So under convictions a poor sinner sees the filth of his heart and life. "Come see a man that told me all that ever I did," John iv. 29, Acts ii. 26, Acts xvi. 30, 31. "And when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and cried out," and thus also did the jailer.

(2.) Also, under severe judgments, the wicked are discovered to be more vile and abominable, they sin the more, and blaspheme the God of heaven, and grow worse thereby; but such that belong to Christ discover their sin, find out their sin, and are humbled, and give glory unto God.

(3.) Also the broom of church-discipline may be here meant, for the church is in the world, though not of the world. This way much dust and filth is swept away, and Jesus Christ discovers his lost piece; for when the sentence of excommunication passeth against a sinner in Zion, and it doth him good, he being thereby brought to repentance, and his soul humbled, it discerneth that he is one that is a true Christian; but if that censure tends to harden him and he grows worse, this broom sweeps him quite away as filth.

God says that he "will search Jerusalem with candles." He hath more candles than one by which he searches us, he will discover one way or another who are his, and find them all out, either by sweeping providences, or sweeping convictions, or by a sweeping discipline. Therefore I will not exclude the church from being at all meant by the house, which is said to be swept.

"Seeking diligently until she find it."

How Jesus Christ may be said to seek lost sinners, we showed in the preceding parable (to which we refer you.) Christ came from heaven to this end, and took our nature upon him; to this end he became a light unto the world, that he might seek his lost piece of silver. *i. e.*, his elect. He sends the gospel to this end, and sets up that candle; also he sends his ministers as burning and shining lights, to seek and search out lost sinners. John Baptist is called a shining light. He sends likewise his Spirit to convince those who are lost of their sin, and of that woeful condition they are in whilst they abide in the first Adam, and as under the law sentence, and also "To convince them of righteousness; of sin, because they believe not in him; and of righteousness, because I go to the Father," John xvi. 8—10. Christ is discharged of all our sins which were laid upon him. Justice having nothing to lay more to his, nor our charge, as to vindictive wrath, nor the law of God; he is therefore exalted at God's right-hand, and there makes intercession for transgressors; and that way he also seeks his lost pieces, pleading with God the discharge of all believers, or of all that come unto him by virtue of his own perfect obedience and meritorious sacrifice. Also he sends afflictions, and severe providences upon this and that person the Father gave unto him, using his rod as well as his word, that so he may find such he came to seek and save. He also lights up their candle, *i. e.*, informs their judgments, enlighteneth their understandings, and with his broom he sweeps towns, cities, families, and nations, where any of his elect are; and all this is to find his lost pieces of silver, for so he accounts them, as they are his Father's choice, and his own choice, whom he came to espouse, and make the joy of his heart, and the delight of his eyes for ever.

How Christ seeks diligently to find lost sinners.

Now put all these things together, and it will appear to all, that he seeks them diligently; he seeks, his Spirit seeks, and his ministers seek, and he sets conscience to seek also, and he never gives over seeking, until he hath found all them the Father gave unto him.

1. He is constant in seeking them.
2. He is unwearied in seeking them.
3. He spares no labour, no cost, no time, that he may find them.
4. He uses all manner of ways and means, in order to this gracious end and purpose.
5. He hath covenanted with the Father, that he will seek them, even with the price of his blood, so that he may find them.
6. He hath promised his Father, and promised his elect, that he will seek them until he hath found them. "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven back, and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was sick," Ezek. xxxiv. 16. "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40.

7. He comes over all mountains of difficulties and opposition, and over all mountains of their sins and unworthiness, that he may seek and find them.

8. Nay, and he also causeth them to seek and search after him; he inclines their hearts, bows and bends their rebellious wills, changes their earthly and carnal affections, so that he may find them. All which fully shows, that he diligently seeks them.

"And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost."

The reasons why Jesus Christ, and his saints and angels rejoice, when one sinner is brought to believe and to repent was largely opened in the precedent parable. Consider,

1. God's angels are his friends, and our friends and fellow-servants. Rev. xix. 10.
2. Angels are often made use of for the helping and strengthening of the poor sinners, and of believers; they do many a friendly office, and "minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation," Heb. i. 14.

3. Angels are much employed to help and succour Christ's poor ministers: an angel brought Elijah meat, and bid him eat, 1 King. xix. 5, 7. An angel talked friendly with Daniel, and gave him skill and understanding: an angel brought Mary the tidings, how she should conceive and bring forth our Lord Jesus Christ: an angel awakes Peter, and delivered him out of prison, Acts xii. 7: an angel discovered to John those wonderful things contained in the Revelations; nay, angels appeared to the shepherds, and told them the joyful news of the birth of our Saviour, and they also strengthened him in his bloody agony.

Quest. Why are angels so friendly to Christ's ministers?

Ans. 1. Because of the great love they have to Christ, whose servants angels are; they know how Christ bled for his elect, and that he loves them dearly; and therefore what assistance angels can give to ministers, they are ready to afford them, John iii. 29.

2. Because they are the friends of the Bridegroom, and are also employed by him to minister to the saints, and especially to ministers, who are Christ's spokesmen.

3. Because angels know the work of ministers is hard and difficult, and that it is God's work, and that they are workers together with him.

4. Because Satan, or the evil angels do what they can to hinder ministers in the work: now the good angels strive to counterwork the spirits of darkness, against whom they continually war, and so strengthen and encourage Christ's ministers.

5. Because the holy angels know that ministers are hated by the evil angels above all men in heaven or earth, they being their greatest enemies, and striving to overthrow their bellish kingdom.

6. They know how acceptable it is to God, to see sinners converted, and that the whole design of Christ is not answered in his death, until this is done. Now these things being so, it is no marvel, Christ calls upon them to rejoice with him, at the conversion of one sinner.

"Likewise I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels, when one sinner repenteth."

Hearers
should make
application
of sermons
they hear.

1. Our Lord applies his own mysterious doctrine, to teach people how to make application to themselves, of what they hear.

2. This is also all that our Lord said by way of explaining this parable, the rest he left to his ministers inspired by his own Spirit to open.

3. It is also to confirm the truth of what he had spoken, "I say unto you."

"In the presence of the angels."

Angels are spirits, and their name signifies their office, messengers; by nature they are spirits, and have no material bodies, they are endowed with great knowledge, wisdom, and affections also. "They rejoice." But they know not all things, no, not our hearts. "Thou Lord, knowest the hearts of all men," Acts i. 24. No angel nor devil knows more than by curious observation besides what God reveals to them. "Man (saith one) knoweth much, angels more, God only knows all." Some think that God may reveal the conversion of sinners to the spirits of just men in heaven, as well as to the angels. Our annotators seem to be of the same mind, but other worthy men will not admit of this. I will leave it to every man's own conceptions: ye know it is said, "Abraham is ignorant of us," &c., though an answer might be given to that.

Be sure no mere creature in heaven, as a creature, knows what is done on earth: vain and abominable therefore is the practice of the Papists, in praying to the virgin Mary, and to other saints and angels in heaven. And in vain do such come to God by Jesus Christ, or pray to him, who believe he is no more than a mere creature, and not the Most High God.

APPLICATION.

1. I infer, Here is a great cause for sinners to rejoice, and to be encouraged to seek Christ, because he seeks them. When Christ by his word or rod, is come to seek them, that is the time in which they ought to seek him, and not to doubt of finding him.

2. It may teach sinners also kindly to take rebuke from God, and bear afflictions, because that way Christ sometimes seeks and searches after them, to do their souls good.

3. Also let ministers learn from hence, to be diligent in their work, in seeking and striving to bring sinners to repentance, since their great Master himself is so diligent about this matter.

4. Let us all admire the great love of God, in setting up and lighting of such a candle, as Christ and the gospel is, in this dark world.

5. It may also inform us, that whatsoever light God hath set up in this dark world, it

is for the sake of sinners that are lost, I mean the elect of God, who only are effectually brought to see their lost condition.

6. Let all be exhorted to prize the gospel, which is God's candle to give light to such who are in darkness. O what would become of England, should God take away this candle, or suffer wicked men, and impostors, to corrupt the sacred truths thereof!

7. What encouragement is here for ministers to labour, since angels rejoice to see their success, though there is no calling that men meet with more enemies, and more trouble and disgrace in following; yet none is more honourable, nor esteemed of by Christ, and honoured by the angels.

8. Comfort to believers; as Christ hath found you, so he thereby designed to refine you, new make, change, and anew stamp his glorious image upon you; so that you are now pure gold in his sight, nay, his jewels, who before were like brass, lead, or reprobate silver, Mal. iii. 17. That he might make you glorious pieces, he sought you, and his image shall never be lost in you, nor you be plucked out of his hand. Amen.

So much as to this parable.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

PRODIGAL SON OPENED.

SERMON XVI.

A certain man had two sons.

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself unto a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks, which the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him, &c.—Luke xv. 11—16.

WE have in this chapter three parables, all showing or holding forth the same thing; the two first I have already spoken unto, viz., the lost sheep, and the lost groat, and now by God's assistance, I purpose to speak to the third, viz., The lost son.

In two respects they do all agree.

1. The sheep was lost, the groat was lost.

The son also went from his father, and was lost.

2. Moreover, they again agree, the sheep was brought home, the groat was found, and the son returned again to his father.

Some will tell you the reason of these three parables is,

1. That a sinner is compared to a sheep, because of that innocent and harmless nature in which man was first created.

2. That sinners are compared to a groat, because God's image was stamped on man in his first creation, and by sin that image was defaced.

3. Sinners are compared to a son, because of that near relation man stood in to God by creation; Adam is called the son of God. Luke in his genealogy saith, speaking of Enos, "which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." Luke iii. 38. And indeed all men by creation are the children of God, but by sin and transgression, rebels and children of the devil.

Secondly, some of the ancients also (as one denotes) as Augustin, Gregory, &c., say, that in those three parables we may spy a threefold cause of man's fall and apostacy from God.

1. In the sheep's wandering, Satan's suggestions to our first parents.

2. In the lost groat, Eve's yielding to Satan's temptations.

3. In the son's wilful departing from his Father, Adam's voluntary revolting and wasting all his substance; but I think these are too far fetched, nor may they be at all intended by them. I shall therefore proceed. And,

1. Speak a little to the main scope and drift of our Saviour, in speaking of this parable.

2. Open all the parts thereof.

3. Raise divers propositions from several of the principle parts, or things contained therein.

The scope of the parable opened. First. To the chief scope, it is the same with both the precedent parables, viz., it was to rebuke the pride and arrogance of the Pharisees, who over-valued their own pretended legal righteousness, and reflected upon our Lord for keeping company with, and showing so much love and favour to publicans and sinners, they concluding they never had transgressed God's commandment, but had faithfully served him.

2. It sets forth man's woeful, actual, and wilful departure from God.

3. His miserable condition, by original and actual transgression.

4. To set forth, and to magnify the great grace, love, and unspeakable compassion of God the Father to the greatest sinner, who by Jesus Christ returneth by an unfeigned faith unto him.

5. To show the envy of the Jews and Pharisees, at God's extended grace and favour to the poor Gentiles, and to such who have been great sinners.

So much as the scope thereof.

But before I proceed to open the parts, let me note one thing by the way, from our Lord's bringing in a third parable to the same end and purpose, i.e., to show the sad and woeful condition of undone sinners.

Duct. That to bring sinners to a sight and full sense of their sins, and of their wretched condition, is no easy thing, so as truly to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. A little to prove this; and 2. To show the cause and reason thereof.

Men are not easily brought to see their lost state and condition. 1. This appears by Adam's hiding of sin, and making such frivolous excuses about what he had done, when God laid his sin before him. "The woman which thou gavest me, she gave me, and I did eat:" and also by Eve's plea and excuses, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

2. In that besides the light of conscience, or law written in the heart of all men, which convinceth of sin (I mean, of sin against God as a Creator) he saw need to give his people Israel a written law, that so they might the more effectually be convinced of sin, and of their woeful state thereby.

3. And more especially, in that Jesus Christ doth employ so great and mighty an Agent to this very end, viz., the Holy Ghost, which he said the Father would send in his name. "And when he is come, he shall convince the world of sin," &c., John xvi. 8, intimating that none else could do it effectually. Alas! what can conscience do? What can ministers do? Nay, what can the law do in this matter, unless it is by the Holy Spirit brought home and set upon the conscience? Paul never was thoroughly convinced "till the commandment came," Rom. vii. 9; that is, till the law was opened, and the spirituality of it discovered to him by the Holy Ghost.

4. David, though a converted man (when fallen under great sin) was hard to be brought to the sight and sense thereof; no, he like others, was ready enough to pass a sentence against another man: "His anger was greatly kindled against the man, who had taken the poor man's lamb," 2 Sam. xii. 3, 7, but was not convinced that he had done the wicked thing, until the prophet Nathan told him positively, "thou art the man."

5. Nay, Peter repented not, nor saw his abominable evil, in denying his blessed Lord, until our Saviour looked upon him. O what a powerful look was that! No sinner indeed is thoroughly convinced, until the Lord Jesus does cast a convincing look upon him: as

much as to say, Peter, what hast thou done? Ah this is worse than to have mine enemies to crucify me.

Quest. How comes it to pass, sinners are so hard to be convinced of sin, and to believe in Christ for righteousness?

1. Reason. It may be because sin is such a bewitching thing, it is of a bewitching nature, and has got deep rooting in the sinner's heart and affections; man is naturally wedded to his lusts, to self-love, and to self-righteousness.

Reasons why sinners are so hard to be convinced.

2. Reason. It is through their great ignorance, and deep alienation from God; "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," Eph. iv. 18.

3. Reason. Because they understand not the nature of God, the justice and holiness of God, nor the nature of the law of God, neither what a righteousness it is which they must have, or be found in to their justification before him, or in his sight. The Jews being blind in respect of those things, how hard was it for them to believe their state was bad, and they guilty sinners, and that their righteousness was good for nothing.

4. Reason. Because mankind are born under a covenant of works, and so think they must be justified, and saved by doing, and not in a way of believing, nay, and that doing a little at last will serve, though they do but cry, "Lord, have mercy upon them, miserable sinners," is sufficient, especially if they can but shed a few tears, or a little reform their lives. What said one lately? she doubted not of her salvation, for she had (she said) done nothing to deserve God's wrath; though the least sin or evil thought is a breach of the law, by which all are liable to eternal vengeance.

5. Reason. It is because the devil hath such hold of poor sinners, and power in and over them, who is so grand an enemy to the salvation of man; all men naturally are in his chains and fetters, and he also is so subtle a deceiver that he beguiles them.

6. Reason. It is also from the deceitfulness of sin, and of the heart of man. But no more as to this.

1. See the folly of such who think they need no other means or power to convince them of sin and righteousness; no, nor to cleanse them from sin, and eternally to save them, and the light within them, and in all men.

2. It may also convince such of their woeful blindness, that think they can return to God when they list, even at the last, and that man's will under the bare preaching of the word can do wonders.

3. It may also tend to stir up all to cry to God, that he would send his Spirit to awaken their sleepy and misled consciences, and thoroughly convince them of their natural condition.

4. And also to attend on the means of grace, whilst the Holy Spirit strives with them.

5. Moreover this justifies ministers in declaring the same things again and again, the same truths though from different texts.

Secondly, to proceed to the parts of this parable, which I shall divide into two general parts.

1. The state of the prodigal before grace, or his returning to his father.

2. His state upon, and after his returning.

"A certain man had two sons." This certain man represents the great God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; neither let any wonder that God, who is an infinite and immense Spirit, should be compared to a man; for our Lord in another parable directly calls him a man, "My Father is an Husbandman," John vi. 1.

"And the younger said unto his father," &c.

By these two sons there is a great difference among expositors, though all agree about the Father.

(1.) By the elder son, some think our Lord means the holy angels, and by the younger mankind; the good angels (they say) abode always at home with God, but man having all his stock put into his own hand, spent it, and run out all by sin: this is a truth. But the angels cannot be meant here by the elder son; because they are not angry nor grieved at the returning and hearty welcome of any lost sinner that comes to Christ; but contrariwise, it appears by the sequel of both the preceding parables, they do greatly rejoice at the sight thereof; but it is said the elder son was angry to see what entertainment the father gave to his younger brother.

(2.) Besides, they that think the holy angels are meant by the elder son, do also say, they are intended by the ninety and nine sheep that never went astray, or by the nine pieces of silver that were not lost: but this we have refuted, though if the first be grant-

ed the last cannot well be denied.

(3.) No doubt all these three parables refer to one species of creatures, and in all of them mainly our Lord designed to rebuke the pride of the Pharisees, for thinking they never went astray, or broke God's commandment, or did ever displease him, so as to need repentance.

2. Some conclude, by the two sons are meant the Jews and the Gentiles; the Jews by the elder, and the Gentiles by the younger.

3. Some affirm, by the elder son the Pharisees are only meant, and by the younger Publicans and great sinners amongst the Jews.

My brethren, I humbly conceive,

^{Who the}
^{elder son is.} (1.) By the elder son, more generally the Jews are meant, and more particularly the Pharisees and all self-righteous persons that were amongst them.

(2.) By the younger son I understand the Gentiles, and more particularly great sinners.

1. The Jews kept at home, and were the peculiar people of God under the law, or people in covenant with God; also God was called their Father, by way of that national and legal adoption, God chose and took them for his people.

2. He called them his first-born, which must refer to that legal adoption. "Israel is my first-born." The Gentiles are called the younger son, because not called or brought to partake of the privileges of sons until Christ came, or after the Jews had rejected Christ and the gospel: for if their being called sons doth refer only to what they were by creation, one was not older nor younger than the other.

3. Nor can I see why Publicans and sinners should be called the younger son, if sons only refer to the Pharisees and the Publicans; though one would have the word younger to signify fools; but all younger sons are not fools.

Object. "The elder son told his father, He had never transgressed at any time his commandment;" how can this be said either of the Jews in general, or of the Pharisees in particular?

Ans. I answer, it is spoken in respect of what some of the Jews, and particularly the Pharisees, thought of themselves, they concluded they never went astray and were never lost; and so thought they never had broken, or transgressed the law of God. Is not this much with what the young man said, "all these things have I done from my youth, what want I yet?" Matt. xix. 20. And doth not Paul say, that when he was a Pharisee, "as touching the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless?" Luke. xviii. 21. Phil. iii. 6. This was the opinion they had of themselves, and he that thinks he is blameless, thinks he never transgressed God's commandment: and our Lord might so far yield to them, partly that they might in judgment be further blinded, or perhaps that he might not provoke them at this time.

Object. But doth not the father say to his elder son, "thou art eye with me, and all I have is thine;" how can this be said either of the Jews in general, or of the Pharisees in particular?

Ans. 1. I answer, the Jews I told you were all along in covenant with God under the dispensation of the law of Moses, and were accounted a people near to God, while others were said to be afar off.

2. God gave all he had to give (or thought good to give as an act of sovereignty) to the Jews, the elder son; "He gave his statutes and his judgments to Israel, he hath not dealt so with any nation," Psal. cxlvii. They were God's visible church; his worship, his tabernacle, and temple was theirs: "To them was committed the oracles of God," Rom. iii. 2. Nay, see what Paul further says, "Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," Rom. ix. 4. Now pray, what had God more to give under that covenant, or under the dispensation of the law? the worlds must be taken with restriction; for the elder son saith, his Father never gave him a kid, there is somewhat more given to the returning prodigal than ever the elder son received.

"And the younger of them said to his Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me; and he divided to them his living:" that is, let me have that which thou art pleased to give me, and which will please me to receive. Give me; a saucy and irreverent manner of speaking to a Father; give me, not pray father, if you please give me, or I humbly intreat you Father; no, but Father give me.

^{Sinners}
^{show they}
^{have no reve-}
^{rence to God.} Doct. 2. From hence note, carnal men, or the men of this world, carry it towards God unreverently, they have not that holy awe of God upon their hearts which they ought.

"Give me that portion that falleth to me;" God disposeth unto the sons of men what

things they have, as he pleaseth, and according unto his own sovereignty; and though no man deserveth anything, yet wicked men think there is a portion for them.

“And he divided unto them his living,” ver. 12.

God gave the Jews their portion, and the Gentiles what they have; he divided unto both what they possess.

The Gentiles desire to have what falls to them in this life, they desire a portion here, a present portion; wicked men would have all in their own hands, or in their present possession, do not desire God to keep it for them, nor a portion in another world, not a portion for their souls, but a portion in this life; they desire such things as suit with their own carnal hearts, and God giveth to them accordingly; he answereth them according to the idols set up in their hearts. Hence the psalmist says, “the wicked men have their portion in this life,” Psal. xvii. 14; as Abraham told the rich man, that he (when on earth) received his good things; from hence also our Saviour saith of the rich, they have received their consolation,” Luke xvi. 23.

Wicked men, or man in his natural state, love not God, they design to leave him, his family is too strict for them; they love not religion, nor do they value another world; they would have their heaven here.

Wicked men love not the worship of God and religion.

Quest. What a portion is it, which the younger son desired (or which a mere natural man would have) which also God divided to them?

Ans. 1. Even such things which the Gentiles have, and men naturally do enjoy, and account as their portion, viz., riches, honours, pleasures, any, all kinds of earthly things.

What God gave to the prodigal.

2. Also God gave them the blessings of natural light, they have the works of the law written in their hearts, Rom. ii. 14, 15.

3. They had the knowledge of natural things, and in such things they exceeded all other people of the world. The Greeks sought after wisdom; that is, natural wisdom, they covet learning, or the knowledge of all human arts and sciences; and these things God gave them as their portion. They desire the knowledge of the creature, and the natural knowledge of God, and no more.

“And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country,” ver. 13.

Quickly after he had what he desired, away he went: what things graceless man hath tend to carry his heart from God, or alienate his soul more and more from God; like Israel of old, Jesurun waxed fat and kicked, “thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness,” Deut. xxxii.

Wicked men having what their carnal hearts desire purpose to depart from God.

15. Well, and what then: “Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.” See the evil nature of the things of the world, and how ensnaring they are to the carnal heart of man: “Their bull gendereth and faileth not, their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf,” Job xxi. 10, 11. They spend their days in pleasure. But see the effects of these things, ver. 14. Therefore they say unto God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. As they go from God further and further, so they desire God not to come near them, to trouble or disquiet their consciences.

“He took his journey into a far country.”

Quest. What is meant by this far country?

Ans. The regions of sin; they take sinful courses, gather up all together which they have, heap up riches, setting their hearts upon them; and the more a man's affections are set upon the things of this world, the further he goes from God: man was born in a state of distance from God, not as to place, no, that cannot be; no man in this respect can be at a distance from God, nor go from him, who is an infinite, an immense, and an omnipresent Being; it is or going from God, for he is every where present, but a moral, his heart or soul departs from him: God and sinners in this sense must needs be at a vast distance from one another; forasmuch as God and sin, are most contrary, or directly opposite, God's way is holiness, a wicked man's way unholiness; so that he that cleaves to sin, and goes away from God, yea, and every step a wicked man takes, is a going still further from God.

Hence he that returns to God must have his sins turned from him; the one is done by the sacrifice of Jesus, and the other as the effect of that sacrifice by the Spirit.

Pray observe, the Prodigal went far from his father; that is, the sinner that goes on in an evil course, or in sinful practices, is gone far from God.

1. He is far from thinking of God; God is not in all his thoughts; that is, he is in none of his thoughts, or not at all in his thoughts: God and his ways are grievous to a wicked man.

How sinners may be said to be sent from God.

2. Far from union with God : " Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7.

3. Therefore he is far from having any sincere love and affections unto God : for where enmity and hatred is in a man's heart to any thing or person, it is impossible there should be love to that thing or person.

4. He is far from desiring after God. That which we hate we desire not : they say to God, depart from us.

5. And far from having communion with God. " Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee ?" Psal. xciv. 20. What fellowship hath light with darkness ?

6. Far from having any likeness to God ; naturally man is more like to the devil ; sinners resemble Satan more than the blessed God.

7. Far from adhering to any advice or counsel to return ; no, they are gone so far, that they are out of the call of ministers, they cannot hear them ; and out of the call of godly parents, they cannot hear them : nay, which is worst of all, a sinner is gone so far from God, that he cannot hear when God calls and cries after him.

8. Far from discharging of any acceptable worship or service, to the glory of God ; God hates all their spiritual duties ; the prayers of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord. Thus a sinner is gone far from God.

9. Yea, so far as he knows not the way home to God. " What iniquities have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me ?" Jer. ii. 3.—" Ye who sometimes were afar off," Eph. ii. 17.

Doct. Observe, it is the nature of sinners to fly from God, to go from God, or sin is a departing from God.

Every wicked man goes farther and farther still from God : and be sure the farther he goes from him, the farther it will be to return.

" He went unto a far country."

This denotes his choice and voluntary act ; a wicked man sins freely, he sins with a full resolution and purpose of heart, but so cannot a godly man sin ; " ungodly men love darkness rather than light ;" many are like Ahab, they sell themselves to work wickedness.

" And wasted his substance," &c.

Quest. What may be meant by wasting his substance.

Answ. 1. He wasted his precious time ; that is part of that treasure which God gives to wicked men ; much of his choicest time he might, like a fool, waste and consume to his great hurt.

2. He perhaps wasted much of his outward treasure or earthly riches : for that was part of the portion which he desired : this he might consume and spend on harlots.

3. He might waste his common gifts, and natural powers, parts, and abilities : sinners sometimes lose their wisdom, and exercise of their human reason, and act like fools or madmen : all ungodly persons have lost their spiritual sense, and act more like brutes than rational creatures, and render themselves odious to mere moral man.

4. He might waste, or sin away his conscience, or lose the natural and useful qualities thereof, which reproves for sin, and oftentimes puts a check upon, and stops the sinner in his way and evil courses.

Doct. A profane sinner is a great waster. He wickedly spends and wastes what God hath given him. " They consume it on their lusts," Jam. iv. 3.

" And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land," ver. 14.

1. Some think by the famine, here is some public and sore judgment that befel him and the whole country, I mean, the ungodly world ; let it be what it will, (1.) His soul is now distressed, he is brought into straits. (2.) You have the occasion of it, a mighty famine. (3.) His great sense, he began to be in want. I conceive the outward wants and straits the Prodigal was brought into, hold forth the distresses, and in a word, the inward troubles which rise sometimes in the mind and conscience of an ungodly sinner.

2. Therefore by the mighty famine, doubtless is meant, strong convictions of sin, and apprehensions of God's wrath, not evangelical convictions, but such that rise from the powers of natural conscience, the law of God, and common grace, which many sinners are under, and which sometimes greatly tend to terrify their minds ; so that now all the food their poor souls fed upon, or hopes which they trusted to, is cut off, and they find a famine in their souls.

Doct. The delights and pleasures of sin are but short ; God can soon embitter, by the sharp convictions of natural conscience, all the sweet and flesh-pleasing enjoyments of sin, and of this world.

What meant by the famine.

A man may have guilt fretting like a tormenting sore, gnawing, or afflicting or terrifying like death, as in the case of Cain, Pharaoh, and Judas; and yet these may not bring him to himself, nor can they bring him home to God.

Doct. Sin may bring men into straits, but those straits may not bring them from sin to God.

Natural conscience, and legal convictions may distress a sinner, and put him to pain, and stop him for a time in his evil courses; nay, it may tend to reform his life, but it cannot make him a true penitent, nor change his heart.

“And he began to be hungry.”

This shows that he now began to find a great need of comfort, or of food, something to eat, for fear of perishing.

This denotes that a sinner under convictions, may fear he shall perish; wrath, and hell seem to take hold of him, hunger causes desires, so a sinner may desire to be saved under his straits in afflictions, convictions, and fear of hell, who hath not one drachm of saving grace.

“And he went and joined himself unto a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine,” ver. 15.

By this citizen expositors do conclude, is meant the devil, whose habitation is among men that are ungodly, and who are gone far from God; he is the chief citizen, and hath divers sorts of work to employ such in, who adhere to him, and close with his temptations and suggestions; he hath trades that suit with all men's natural tempers, he doth not send all to feed swine, or their sensual appetites; he sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light, and appears a white devil, a religious devil, and can teach the doctrine of voluntary humility, and persuade men to go naked or bare foot, &c.

Who the citizen is, the Prodigal joined himself to.

Quest. How may he be said to join himself to Satan, had not he done that before?

Answ. What though he had, yet his conscience being now awakened, Satan was afraid of losing him, and therefore bestirs himself no doubt, and by suggestions strove to divert his thoughts, and scatter his fears; and by joining himself to Satan, may be meant his closing in with those fresh and new temptations and suggestions which were darted into his mind; every time sinners do embrace or yield to Satan's temptations, they afresh join themselves to him, or renew their covenant with death and hell. Satan's great business is, when convictions of sin and wrath have taken hold of a great sinner, to quench that fire, if possible, by one means or another, to divert his thoughts. Thus he sent Cain to build cities, and Felix to send away Paul, that he might hear him preach no more, and this poor wretch he sent to feed swine, knowing by his former practices, his natural and sensual inclinations.

Quest. What may we understand by Satan's fields, and swine?

Answ. 1. Satan's fields are the ungodly, the multitudes of the wicked, met together to gratify their carnal hearts, and sensual lusts; these are Satan's fields, where nothing grows but what comes up naturally; they are fields untilled, not plowed up, nor sown.

2. By swine I understand may be meant two things.

(1.) That vain, wicked, and profane fellows, and impudent harlots, are Satan's swine, and indeed they may in many respects be compared to swine; and since the Holy Ghost calls them swine, we may safely conclude, that they are partly here intended. “Cast not your pearls before swine,” Matt. vii. 6, saith our Lord. Some wicked men are compared to lions, some to dogs, &c., and others to swine, because they have the evil qualities of those brutish creatures.

Wicked men are swine.

Doct. From hence I note, that profane and sensual men and women are, and may be compared to swine.

1. Swine are an unclean sort of creatures, they love to wallow in mud, filth, and miry places. So this sort of ungodly mortals love their brutish lusts, and to wallow in the mud and mire of filth, and all abominable pollution, sin, and uncleanness. And as it seems pleasant to swine to wallow in the mire; so it is natural and pleasant to these sinners to wallow in all beastly sins, lusts, and filthiness.

Why some wicked men and women are compared to swine.

2. Swine are craving, and very greedy creatures: they have, as one observes, no measure in eating and drinking, they will eat until they burst; so these wicked and ungodly persons are so greedy and unsatisfied, they set no bounds nor measure to their lusts, though they consume all they have: some are mere epicures, gluttonous persons, and others, like swine, will drink until they can neither stand nor go, and wallow in their filthy vomit.

3. Swine, if washed, will soon return to their wallowing in the mire again; so if any ungodly person is outwardly reformed, or washed from the gross acts of wickedness, their natures being not changed, commonly at one time or other they return again to their former evil and filthy courses; so that in them (as the apostle noteth) the old Proverb is made good, "The sow that was washed is returned to her wallowing in the mire again," 2 Pet. ii. 22.

4. Swine feed on husks and grains, and tread pearls under their feet; so these brutish creatures feed on the trash, the husks, and grain of this world, and contemn, nay, tread under their feet the pearls of grace, or all heavenly and spiritual things.

5. Swine feed also on acorns, but never look up to the tree or oak from whence they fall; so these brutish animals, i. e., ungodly sinners, feed upon those things that God gives them, but never in a due manner look up to God with thankful hearts, from whence they come. Though there is one disparity between natural and metaphorical swine, swine never retain their nature, and it is impossible for them to cease being swine; but metaphorical swine may have their brutish natures changed; it is impossible for them by the power of divine grace, to become sheep and lambs of Jesus Christ. This shows the fearful and lamentable effect of original and actual sins, and what a brutish and base nature sinful man hath in him, and what a vile contemptible creature he is in God's sight; also the vast difference there is between a converted person, and a brutish sinner; the one God esteems as his jewels, or his choicest treasure, and the other to be in his sight, but as mere swine, filthy and abominable.

2ndly. By swine some think also may be meant the Prodigal's own brutish or sensual parts, or sensual appetite.

(Quest. What may be meant by feeding these swine?)

Ans. In respect had to the first sense, Satan sending him to keep company with profane and graceless company, and to converse with them.

1. He may be said to feed them by his gratifying their desires, in going amongst them, either to taverns, alehouses, playhouses, whorehouses, &c. This is to feed Satan's swine; such that yield to them, consent to their enticements, may be said thereby to feed them.

What is meant by feeding of swine.

2. They feed them by drinking, sporting, and carousing with them.

3. May be he fed them by diverting them with profane and idle tales, or filthy talk and stories; for such things those wretches feed upon, and it is as meat and drink unto them. For as the gracious discourse or converse of a godly man, feeds heavenly born persons, so filthy and profane talking feeds the wicked.

4. Perhaps he fed them by spending his money on them, or in their company.

5. And be sure he fed them in gratifying their base and brutish lusts, as such do who keep company with harlots, &c.

Thirdly. As swine may refer to his own sensual appetite, it may mean, that Satan prevailed with him to let loose the reins of his lusts, and to deny himself of nothing his sensitive part did, or could desire, the devil thinking that way to allay the storm that was rising in his conscience, he perceiving he might be in some danger of losing him by means of that famine, or sore convictions that he felt within, or dread of his future state; for no doubt but it doth denote his fear of perishing for ever. Nay, and from what I say upon this account evident it is, that many a wretched prodigal hath under convictions and sore gripes of conscience, thus joined with, or closed in with Satan's suggestions, to go and feed swine, in both those respects, by which means also for a time, those convictions have gone off.

But no more at this time.

SERMON XVII.

A certain man had two sons, &c.—Luke xv. 11, 12.

I AM, my brethren, upon the opening of several parts of this parable, and have passed through and opened the 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, verses; I shall now proceed.

Ver. 16. "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him."

You have heard that Satan sent him to feed swine. O what contempt doth our Saviour cast upon ungodly sinners! in that he doth not only compare them to brutish creatures, but to some of the worst of that sort, even to swine, creatures the most nasty and filthy: and then, secondly, What contempt doth he cast upon the service of sin and Satan; it is the feeding of swine, a low and base employment; and as for his wages he is allowed nothing but husks, though almost starved; if for his services he hath anything to eat, it is but husks, such that the devil's swine feed upon.

Christ casts contempt on wicked men, in calling them swine.

Doct. The service of sin and Satan is a base service.

What folly is in wicked men? how blind and deceived are they? they are of a low and base spirit, ungodly, and profane persons; though called nobles, are but such the devil sets to feed swine; nay profane and brutish princes of the earth, are but hoggards; while they serve their lusts, they do but keep at the hog's trough, and feed swine.

1. This may tend to eclipse their glory, and lower their topsails; what signify all their sensual pleasures, and all their bragging and boasting of their grandeur and glory? see what base servitude they love, and are contented with.

2. Who would be in love with the service of the devil? who but fools would serve such a master? What! debase their noble soul so far as make it feed swine; a soul that was created in the image of God, and capable to feed upon heavenly manna, nay, upon Christ, and upon God himself! and shall it be sent by the devil to feed swine, and live upon husks, which swine do eat!

Quest. What is meant by husks?

Answ. You may be sure by these husks, is meant the best that Satan hath to feed his servants. By husks, all generally understand the vanities of this world, as riches, honours, and pleasures, or "the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" whatsoever is of this world, and not of the Father are husks.

Solomon calls them vanity, "all things are vanity;" our Lord calls them husks, hog's meat.

2. Some indeed think by husks, also is meant the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees, which was frothy, without substance, and like grains or husks, and then according to them, the prodigal, when the famine was sore upon him, became religious; that is, he left his former loose life, and got among blind Pharisees to get bread of his own, an external and an internal righteousness to feed upon; but all this was but husks, and such food that Satan's slaves feed upon. But I rather adhere to the former sense, because it is said he was sent to feed swine, which must certainly refer to brutish creatures, and brutish lusts.

The doctrine of the Pharisees but husks.

The husks were such things which the swine did eat, not serpents' meat, nor wolves', nor foxes'; Satan hath meat for them, they are all of his herd, and fed by him. But those things that ungodly, sensual, and profane persons feed upon, love and esteem, he fain would have filled his belly with; and it is easy to know what those things are.

"Filled his belly;" that is, eat to satisfaction: but alas, neither riches, honours, or sensual pleasures, can give real peace and satisfaction to a man ready to perish, nor satisfy the precious craving soul in the time of famine.

What is meant by not filling his belly.

1. Because God alone is the only good and proper object of the soul; he is the soul's centre, like as a stone flung out of a sling, rests not until it comes to its proper centre, nor the needle till it comes to its centre, the loadstone; or as Noah's dove found no rest until she returned to the ark: so the soul of man can find no rest nor satisfaction in anything, until it returns to God.

Why none but God can satisfy the soul.

2. The things of this world are only suited to the external part of man, viz., his body, but are no more proper food for the soul than wind, husks, ashes, or gravel stones, can satisfy a hungry stomach.

3. The soul is an immaterial being, and therefore material and external things can never fill or satisfy its desires. Angels may as soon be pleased and satisfied with an earthly palace, external music, and honours from men, as the soul of man can be satisfied with these things.

4. The soul is immortal and eternal; that is, it was created; it was not from eternity, but it can never cease to be, nor shall it be annihilated: therefore mortal and transitory things, delights, and pleasures can never fill its desires, or satisfy it. The more a man hath of any earthly things, the more he desires, whether it be riches, honours, or pleasures.

5. These things are unnatural food to the soul, as flesh is unfit, or unnatural food for sheep, but give it to a dog, and it suits his nature; but sheep, and many other creatures,

will starve and die before they will feed upon it. Therefore was that man a fool, that "bid his soul eat, drink, and be merry," because he had gotten abundance of earthly riches, corn, wine, and oil.

In vain therefore did the poor prodigal labour to fill his belly with these husks: and woe unto them who never meet with God, never return to God, they must be eternally miserable if there was no hell to torment them; for the punishment of the loss of God, would render them eternally wretched, when all such things are taken from them, which tend to please the sensual appetites.

What is meant by no man's giving to him. "And no man gave unto him;" that is, no man can give that to a hungry soul, which can fill it, or give rest, peace, and satisfaction unto it. If the soul sees its wants, if the conscience be wounded, should a king give that man his crown and kingdom, yet it would and must he said, no man gave unto him. Spira's soul felt a famine and if any man should have offered all the gold and silver in the world, or all earthly pleasures, yet he would have said, no man giveth to me: no doubt the prodigal had, as to the quantity of husks, no lack: but such was the quality of them, they could not fill his belly. Men may have as much silver and gold as Solomon had, and as many fair houses, vineyards, orchards, pools of water, men-servants, and women-servants, and men-singers, and women singers, and as many wives and concubines, and conquer as many kingdoms as Alexander the Great, and yet have no satisfaction, cannot fill his belly, but may cry "all is vanity." No man giveth to me.

Secondly, As to the other sense, *i. e.*, that by husks is meant the doctrine of the Pharisees, or any religion, any righteousness external or internal, any notions, principles, or practices, short of Christ the "Bread of life," or the Food of his Father's house, none of them could fill his belly, or give him peace and satisfaction, when a famine rose in his soul; all are but husks or chaff; all false doctrine, errors, heresies, and human traditions, devised rites and superstition, may fitly be compared to husks or chaff: "and what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord." If therefore the prodigal joined in with Satan's delusions, and became religious in any false way of worship whatsoever, he found no more satisfaction in any of those ways, than he did in the enjoyment of the sensual things of this world.

"No man gave unto him." No man but the Man Christ Jesus can give a hungry soul to fill his belly; all false professors. all heretics and self-righteous persons, who boast of their great enjoyments, joy, and satisfaction, are but like one that being hungry, "dreameth he eateth, but lo, when he waketh, his soul is hungry! or as a thirsty man, that dreameth he drinketh abundantly; but lo he waketh, and his soul is thirsty," Isa. xxix. 8. All who are not united to Christ, planted into Jesus Christ by the Spirit, but are under the law and covenant of works. All are under the curse, and are guilty before God and stand charged with original sin, and with all the guilt of their own actual sins: how then can they have peace or satisfaction, when God discovers this unto them, by raising a famine in their souls?

Thus I have done with the state of the prodigal in his lost and undone condition, before he returned to his father.

"And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants in my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish for hunger?" ver. 17.

"And when he came to himself:" those powerful convictions of the Holy Spirit, which the prodigal was now under, are termed a coming to himself, intimating as if he had been beside himself before, or deprived of all his senses, and so indeed are sinners.

Doct. All ungodly sinners in the world, in a spiritual sense, are deprived of their senses, or are without understanding.

Wicked men are beside themselves. Sinners are bedlam lunatics, or void of true sense and reason, as I shall. God assisting, briefly demonstrate in a short parallel.

1. The reason of such who are mad, is impaired, they are deprived of their understanding: so all unconverted men are deprived of true spiritual understanding, or void of spiritual reason, "their understanding being darkened," Eph. iv. 18.

2. A mad man is furious and rageth, so many wicked are furious and filled with rage against the godly, as Saul saith, he was mad against the saints; "being exceeding mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities," Acts. xxvi. 11. So all envious, malicious, and unchaste persons are mad and outrageous on their filthy lusts.

3. A mad man acteth like an idiot, or natural fool delighting in mischief, they hurt and wound themselves, and therefore are not trusted with a weapon: so an ungodly sinner is mischievous, he seeks to destroy his soul, and draw others into sin, to ruin them

also; nay he seeks sometimes to ruin a whole kingdom for want of understanding, by sucking in and spreading of damnable heresies.

4. Such that are beside themselves, are usually bound, lest they attempt to do further hurt and mischief; so God binds or puts into chains, or restrains ungodly men, limits their power, lest they should make an utter spoil, or totally destroy his people, and their innocent neighbours.

5. A mad man will spit in the face of his dearest friend; so wicked men as it were spit in the very face of God, as the Jews spat in the face of Jesus Christ, and also spit in the face of his ministers, who seek their good.

6. Such that are beside themselves, tear their very clothes, and refuse any garment to cover their nakedness; so wicked men delight to go naked and utterly refuse the robe of Christ's righteousness to clothe their poor souls.

7. A mad man knows not a friend from an enemy, but uses a friend as an enemy: so wicked men take the godly to be their enemies, and use them as such. "Hast thou found me O mine enemy?" said Ahab to Elijah, 1 King. xxi. 20.

8. A mad man hath not wisdom to direct his way, nor is he capable to receive good counsel: so wicked men for want of wisdom to choose their way, run into a lion's den, and are not able, being deprived of true understanding, to receive instruction, but despise it.

9. Mad men will eat nauseous things, hurtful things, nay poisons, if you give it to them; so do wicked men, they, like the Prodigal feed on husks, on gravel, and ashes, nay eat poison; sin is the ratsbane of the soul, which they are greedy of, they drink in iniquity, as the fish drink water.

10. A mad man cannot judge of the nature of things, of time and occasions; he will be angry if the sun shine upon him, or if the wind blows: so a wicked man knows not his time, nor the nature and worth of spiritual things, neither the worth of the soul, nor of Christ, but is angry with the ways of God, and cannot abide the heat of his own accusing conscience; he would be saved, but he walks in the way to hell, and is offended at those troubles that befall him, and at those that reprove him.

11. It is a great cure to recover one that is raving mad, or to bring him to himself; so it is the work of Almighty God to bring a sinner to himself, or to his right mind, as this poor Prodigal was brought at last.

U S E.

1. Wonder not if you are abused, and have violence done you by wicked men; alas they are mad, or beside themselves!

2. Pray that God would bind the wicked with cords and fetters, nay, and we have cause to bless God that he doth do it; for else there would be no living for the godly in the world, it abounding so much with mad men.

3. Let us also learn from hence to pity wicked men; mad people are objects of great pity.

4. Bless the Lord that hath brought you, who were besides yourself, to a right mind; many never come to themselves, but die distracted, never are sensible of their state until they come to hell. "And when he came to himself," &c.

Quest. Do you state the beginning of his conversion here?

Ans. There is a twofold work of the Spirit upon a lost sinner; the first is conviction, "He shall convince the world of sin," &c. John xvi. 8. The second is, regeneration; now it was the first of these operations the Prodigal was under when it is said, he came to himself.

1. From hence note, no legal convictions, or what work soever passeth upon the sinner before the Holy Spirit reproveth or convinces him of sin, and of his undone condition, doth, or can bring him to himself; that is, unto a thorough sight and sense of sin, and of his folly and madness.

2. Also note, that the effectual and special convictions of the Spirit do bring a sinner to himself, or to his right mind.

"And he said, how many hired servants in my father's house have bread enough?" &c.

By hired servants I understand are principally meant such who, like the Scribes and Pharisees, work for life, or who are mercenary, who work only for the sake of the reward, and not from a principle of faith in, and love to God in Jesus Christ: no doubt he called to mind what a portion his elder brother had.

Quest. But had the Jews and Pharisees bread enough and to spare, and were they in his father's house?

Ans. 1. Yea, the Jews had bread enough and to spare, they had the moral and

ceremonial law, the worship of God, the covenants, the types, the prophecies, and the promises; they had not only the moral law as a rule of life, but also as a school-master to lead them to Christ; and in the ceremonial law, and in the types and prophecies they might (provided their eyes were opened) have seen the Lord Jesus Christ, or have found the bread of life, and have been sweetly fed and feasted therewith. Had not all God's children, all believers under the law, store of bread, or true spiritual food? yea, plenty of good things; the Jews and Pharisees had in God's house (I mean in the church of Israel) great plenty; but they had neither eyes to see it, nor faith to feed upon it, but became mere mercenary wretches, thinking that they could be justified by their own righteousness, and understood not the end and design of God in his giving the law; "they being ignorant of his righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness," &c. Rom. x. 3. I might add also,

3. That the convictions of the Spirit are gradual: a poor sinner may not at first see so clearly the difference there is between the law and the gospel, as afterwards.

"And I perish with hunger."

Now he saw he was distressed indeed, his convictions were never right, thorough and effectual until this time: now he saw he was undone, and must perish and be damned for ever, unless he goes home to his father by Jesus Christ, and feeds upon that which is bread indeed. His natural conscience was awakened before, being under his sore afflictions and dismal straits; but those convictions for a time went off, or were near stifled, by his joining himself to that cursed citizen, or by closing in with Satan's temptations, either in striving to fill his belly in a way of sensual pleasures, or by cleaving to some false way

The Holy Spirit only convinceth of sin and misery.

to seek food and satisfaction for his distressed soul.

The effectual convictions of the Holy Spirit bring a sinner under the spirit of bondage: the prodigal is filled with fear of perishing: thoughts of hell, death, and eternal wrath, seem to terrify him; he might not yet be convinced of righteousness, nor of judgment. Some say, this sense of his perishing state was the effects or fruit of sharp afflictions. I will not deny but God may make use of afflictions to bring a sinner to himself; but no afflictions whatsoever, no more than the bare hearing of the word preached, without the powerful convictions and illuminations of the Holy Ghost, can have any such effect upon his heart and conscience.

"I will arise and go to my father."

Something is here implied that is not expressed, viz., That he had not only convictions of sin upon him, but also the knowledge of that blessed way to the Father which is the Lord Jesus Christ. "I am the way," &c. "No man cometh to the Father but by me."

John xiv. 6. The Spirit doth not only shew our disease, but also our cure; not only our sickness, but the physician; not only our sin, but a Saviour.

We have here two things to be considered in respect to the poor prodigal.

(1.) His conscience effectually awakend and his judgment informed. (2.)

His resolution, "I will arise." He was till now without any hope, he was down in the valley of despair, or had not sought Christ, but on the bed of sloth: but now he says with the spouse, "I will arise;" if I abide here in these regions of sin and Satan, I perish for ever, be now, with David, thought on his ways, and resolves to turn his feet homeward, or towards his father's house.

"And will say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee," ver. 18.

Consideration is the fruit and the effect of special convictions, and that begets a firm resolution; until a sinner finds it thus with him, there is no hope of true and thorough conversion: but where convictions are strong, or when the Spirit hath begun effectually to work upon the soul, that man comes to a full purpose of heart, he resolves and determines in spite of devils, earth, and hell; he will return to God. Moreover, consideration doth not only put a sinner upon resolving to return, but also upon the uttermost endeavour in the use of all means God directs in order to his returning, "I will arise and go to my Father," not only rise, but endeavour to go, which doubtless doth denote some knowledge he had of Christ. "Go to my Father," may be he yet scarcely could say, God was his Father in the Spirit of adoption; but if he had not some knowledge of God as a Father, in and by Jesus Christ, he could not have had any encouragement to think of going unto him; for out of Christ God "is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29.

1. He doth not say he will go to his brother (as one notes) or to his Father's servants, or to his harlots, or to his old companions, no, but to his Father.

Mr. Rogers. p. 189.

There is no help, no succour, no relief for a poor sinner, but in God; and such that

would find it must go to him, in and by Jesus Christ, and this a convinced sinner sees. Though a man, my brethren, hath been a notorious sinner, and consumed all that God gave him on harlots, yet God puts it upon his heart (by his Spirit, when he begins to work upon him) to call him Father. The apprehension that God is a Father, a gracious Father, works most sweetly on a returning sinner, though the habits of grace are all at once infused in the soul, yet the work in order of nature is a gradual work.

1. He came to himself. 2. He considers his perishing condition. 3. He is enlightened so far as to know, that in God are all things he wanted. 4. He resolves to leave his sins, and all his former courses, and his wicked companions, and to go home to his Father.

“And say unto him, Father.”

He resolves upon prayer, takes up a full purpose of heart to cry unto his Father for pardon, and humble himself at his feet, and confess all his faults and abominable iniquities. Thus it is with a sinner when God begins to work upon him by convictions; he considers that God in Christ is a Father, a reconciled God, a merciful God; and having a deep sense of his sins, and sight of pardon in Christ, he resolves to pour forth his soul unto him. “I will say,” &c. There is a purpose, a resolution wrought in the soul before it sets about the work; a soul’s returning to God is a considerate and a deliberate act of the will, nay, of the whole soul, it is no rash, unadvised, or inconsiderate undertaking. “I have sinned against heaven.”

Sinners ought to confess their sins, to God, nay, and in that they have sinned against heaven, that is, against the God of heaven, heaven being here put for the God of heaven.

“And before thee.” This must needs refer to God, before thee, or, as in ver. 21. “In thy sight.” The Prodigal did not commit all his sins in the presence or sight of his earthly Father. But every sinner commits all his sins before, or in the sight and presence of the great God.

Doct. God’s eye is upon every man, he sees and beholds their hearts, as well as their actions.

“Against thee, thee only have I done this thing, and in thy sight,” Psal. li. 4.

All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,” Heb. iv. 12.

“Thou knowest my down-sitting, and up-rising; and thou understandest my thoughts afar off.” Psal. cxxxix. 2.

Again the Psalmist saith, “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance,” Psal. xc. 8.

1. God is omnipresent, he is every where. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” Jer. xxiii. 24. No man sins but God is present, he beholds him, and looks on whilst he commits all secret acts of wickedness, which is more than if the eyes of all men and women in the world were present, and beheld him.

It is he that made the eye; “And shall he that made the eye, not see? and he that made the ear, shall not he hear?” Ps. xciv. 9.

1. God doth not carelessly cast his eyes upon sinners; no, but he observeth and marks diligently all their iniquities, and every circumstance, and all the aggravations of their sins; “He pondereth all thy paths,” Prov. v. 21.

2. Nay, he keeps (as it were) a book of remembrance of all the sins and iniquities of men and women. “He hath written them in a book, and they are before him,” Isa. lxv. 6. Though the sinner has forgot them, yet God hath not. “I remember what Amalek did,” &c.

3. He hath them so before him, that he will bring them one day forth, and lay them all before the sinner, Eccles. xii. 14.

4. Yea, he will set them all in order before them; he will, as it were, sort their sins, set their sins of commission by themselves, and their sins of omission by themselves, also all sins against God, and all sins against men. Moreover, their heart evils, all the pollutions and lusts of their heart, and all the sins of their lips, and of their lives, he will set before them; likewise how they sinned against light and clear convictions, also in times of prosperity, and in times of adversity; sins against mercy, and under merciful providences, and in times of affliction, or under judgments. “I will set them in order before thine eyes.”

5. He will also recompense them according to their doings, and sentence them to hell for them.

Encouragement for great sinners.

Sinners ought to confess their sins to God.

All things opened in God’s sight.

What an observer God is of men’s sins.

6. God will not only bring their known and open sins into judgment, but also all their secret sins, even the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open. O think of this ye that forget God, and tremble before him! What a black indictment wilt thou have one day drawn up against thee? O fly to Christ that they may all be blotted out.

“Before thee, or in thy sight.” This wounded the poor prodigal to his heart, and this is the cause of the greatest grief to all convinced sinners, viz., that they have sinned against God, sinned in God’s sight. “How shall I do this great wickedness (saith Joseph) and sin against God?” It is one thing to be troubled for sin, as it is against us, or as it exposeth the sinner to God’s wrath, and to hell-torments, and another thing to be grieved for offending of God, violating his law, resisting his authority, abusing his mercy and patience, crossing his will, grieving of his Spirit, despising his love, contemning his goodness, slighting all his favours, and promises of grace here, and glory hereafter.

“I have sinned.” When the Spirit thoroughly convinces a sinner, he will then confess his sin to God. Thus David cries out, “I have sinned,” 2 Sam. xii. 13, when he was convinced by Nathan’s parable. Thus the woman of Samaria cries out, “Come see a man that told me all things ever I did,” John iv. 29. She confesses all her evil. “I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord,” Psal. xxxii. v.

Sometimes indeed it is required, that persons confess their faults one to another, but not as the papists say; for abominable is their auricular confession, none can forgive sins but God; that is, as to his vindictive wrath and justice, or as sin is against the holy God.

SERMON XVIII.

And am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.—
Luke xv. 19.

True convictions humble the sinner. I OBSERVE from hence, that the convictions of the Spirit of God tend to humble and abase a sinner, they make him poor in spirit, and lay him at the feet of God; they wound him, and bring him under self-abhorrence.

2. I infer also, that a legal spirit doth at first much attend such convictions, he is for doing something to procure his Father’s favour; he did not yet see how he comes to be accepted in Jesus Christ; and thus it was with them St. Peter preached unto, “What must we do?” Acts ii. 37.

The prodigal under the spirit of bondage. 1. It is not the sinner’s unworthiness, that he should plead to obtain favour with God, but the worthiness of Jesus Christ, and the free promises of God.

2. It is not our merits, our deserving, no, but the merits of Christ.

3. He should not say, make me as one of thy hired servants, that I may work for life, or do something that I may be accepted in thy sight; but, O Lord, give me faith, and the Spirit of thy Son, a filial, and not a servile spirit; the spirit of adoption, and deliver me from the spirit of bondage. O help me to believe; I am wounded, father, be pleased to apply a proper plaister.

4. It is not our obedience, not what service we can do, but the obedience of Christ. The Lord Jesus was indeed God’s hired servant, he has nothing but what he worked for, or obtained by his hard labour. How oft is our Lord called God’s servant? and none ever were employed in such difficult service as he was, nor service which brought such honour to God, and good to men. “He took on him the form of a servant,” Phil. ii. 7, not of a master. “Though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things he suffered,” Heb. v. 8. My brethren, Jesus Christ hath done all that service which procured our justification and acceptance with God.

5. But the prodigal seeing his own unworthiness, shows that he was thoroughly convinced of sin, and of his woeful condition thereby; but in desiring to become as an hired servant, it shows that great darkness was yet in his understanding; though his conscience was thoroughly awakened, yet his mind was not effectually illuminated, and no marvel, seeing he was not yet returned to his father.

“But was yet a great way off.” Convictions tend to humble a sinner, though faith may be wanting to comfort him.

6. We can never be so worthy in ourselves, but justice will have something to lay to our charge, until we fly unto Christ; nor ever so unworthy but mercy and the free-grace of God will relieve us, if we plead the atonement and satisfaction Christ hath made. I do not believe he was yet converted, because he did not know whether his father would pardon him or not.

Unworthiness nor worthiness should hinder any from believing in Christ.

“And he arose, and came to his father: but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran to meet him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

We have here two things to be considered.

First, the actings of the prodigal towards his father, or a sinner's actings towards God.

Secondly, God's actings towards a sinner.

First as to the sinner, which is twofold, 1. What he said. 2. What he did: he said, he would arise; and he arose and went, &c.

Secondly, the actings of his Father, or the blessed God.

(1) “His father saw him when he was yet a great way off.” (2.) “He had compassion.” (3.) “He ran to meet him.” (4.) “He fell on his neck and kissed him.”

A little briefly to all these by way of explanation.

1. He said he would arise, that denotes his resolution and purpose (as you heard) to look homeward.

2. He rose and went, &c.

1. His rising signifies his using or attending on the means of grace which God hath appointed, in order to faith and union with him; i.e., he now prays in good earnest, he reads, he hears, and meditates, and doth endeavour to his utmost to make a progression Christ-ward, and God-ward; they are the soul's motions, actings, and desires after God in Christ; like as the spouse, “I rose to open to my beloved, I sought him,” &c., Cant. v. 5. And as David resolved, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after,” &c., Psal. xxvii. 4.

What the prodigal's rising signifies.

2. It may denote his leaving his former evil practices, and evil company: he now strove to follow on to know the Lord.

Doct. Such who see the want of God's favour, or the want of Christ, will endeavour to set forward to meet with him.

Such will attend upon all ways and means God hath ordained in order to a sinner's meeting with him.

Secondly as to the acting of his father, or God's actings towards a lost sinner.

1. He saw him: he saw him as Christ saw “Nathaniel under the fig-tree.” No doubt he was reading or praying when under the fig-tree. God sees all men, he is (as I have showed) everywhere present; but God sees all the motions and workings of our hearts towards him, or all our endeavours after him in prayer, hearing, &c., with special observation and purpose of mercy.

“When he was yet a great way off.”

Some sinners may be under great awakening of conscience, and convictions of sin, and may pray, hear the word of God, and look after God, and yet may be a great way from God. And indeed thus it is with every sinner, until he obtains a real union with Jesus Christ: he may have a sense of sin, and of the want of a Saviour, and may sigh, cry, pray, and pour forth many tears before the Lord, and yet God and he be at a great distance. Nothing but God's drawing near to a sinner, by the divine influences of his Spirit, can bring them together: the Holy Spirit is the bond of union; it is not the sinner's approach to God, but God's drawing near to him which doth the work.

“He had compassion.” Those, my brethren, that God doth thoroughly convince of sin, and whom he wounds, and that find themselves sick and undone sinners, his bowels move towards, as he wounds them he will heal them. Those that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

“And ran to meet him.” A poor distressed, wounded, and sin-sick soul, God doth not only pity, but he makes haste to apply the remedy unto. “I wound and I heal, I kill and I make alive.”

God wounds and heals.

Methinks the actings of God towards the prodigal, are much like those actings of his towards the prophet Isaiah, who when he had that glorious vision of God and of his infinite holiness, and saw his own vileness, and that he was undone; one of the Seraphims it is said, flew to relieve him “Then flew one of the Seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar; and laid it upon my

mouth, and said, lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away," &c., Isa. vi. 6, 7. O see the bowels of God to a convinced and undone sinner, one that sees he perishes without Christ! Ah, saith God to the angel (if I may so speak with reverence) there is my poor servant Isaiah, in a distressed condition; his heart is ready to break, and his spirit fainteth, flee presently, make haste and touch his lips, I will relieve him. So here, the father ran: if any expressions may move upon a sinner, and melt his heart, they sure are these, and those which God uttered by the prophet Jeremiah; "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," Jer. xiii. 18. Ver. 10. "Is Ephraim my dear son, is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." O what a God is this God! what affecting and soul-melting expressions are those? Can your hearts forbear breaking out into tears?

"He ran." Should you see a father run to embrace a vile and rebellious son that is returning home, would not every one say, O what a tender and compassionate father is this? The reason why God is said to run to meet and embrace a broken-hearted sinner, I purpose to show you hereafter in the prosecution of one point of doctrine taken from hence.

"To meet him." If God doth not meet a sinner, or move towards a sinner by his Spirit, the sinner can never meet him. A sinner may look towards God, cry to God, but cannot go home until God meets him: it is more than half way, the sinner cannot step one step towards God, until God meets him. Can that which is dead move itself? Sinners are dead, or without a principle of divine life, naturally; and when life is infused, that principle must be stirred up, and the soul must be influenced by the Holy Spirit.

My brethren, in the two former parables we have an account of the wonderful love and compassion of the Son of God. Jesus Christ fetched home the lost sheep on his shoulders, and he found his lost goat; but it is the Father that ran to fetch home his prodigal son, his lost son.

Our Lord Jesus Christ by this shows the great and wonderful love and compassion of God the Father. The Father and the Son have equal love and pity towards perishing sinners: what the Son doth, the Father doth, and the Holy Ghost doth also; nay, it is the Spirit indeed who is the immediate Agent that meets and brings lost sinners home to God: the Father, and the Son act and work in, and by the Holy Ghost.

Now, and not till now, was the prodigal converted; this was the happy hour the Father's compassionate look pierced his heart, which denotes the infusing of a principle of grace into his soul. When the blessed God, and a convinced sinner meet, or when the sinner sees the pardoning grace of God in Christ, and is helped to put forth an act of faith on Christ, and sees the smiles of God in his promises, the work is done: before he knew not whether his Father would receive him or not, pardon him or not; and where there is no sense or sight of the pardoning grace of God, there can be no act of true faith; though the convictions of the Spirit are a great ground of encouragement to any sinner: for if they are special convictions, they will never go finally off, but end in regeneration.

Let me from hence observe this proposition, viz.,

Doct. That the conversion of a sinner is wholly an act of God's free sovereign grace.

"And he fell upon his neck, and kissed him."

It is by God's looking upon, and meeting with a poor sinner by the influences of his Spirit, and manifestation of his love and favour. "Kissed him."

1. This act denotes God's infinite love and affection to him.

2. That God was reconciled to him in his Son Jesus Christ, and had pardoned all his sins.

3. And not only so, but also a clear manifestation to him of his Fatherly love, and inconceivable favour to him.

It was a custom amongst the Jews, when there was a breach between brother and brother, father and child, or betwixt one friend and another, upon their reconciliation to each other, to kiss one another: we read of several sorts of kisses.

1. A kiss of submission or subjection. "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and thou perish from the way," Psal. ii. 12, and 1 Sam. x. 1. Thus Samuel kissed Saul, to denote his subjection to him when he was anointed king. It also denotes adoration or worship; they kissed the calves or idols, to show they adored and worshipped them, Hos. xiii. 2.

3. "A kiss of affection;" which is commonly used in these parts of the world, and it

is common for dear relations thus to kiss each other; and thus Jacob kissed Rachel, and Laban Jacob, &c.

3. A kiss of reconciliation: Joseph's kissing his brethren might not only signify his affections, but that he was reconciled to them, and had passed by all that wrong they had done to him.

4. We read of a holy kiss used amongst the primitive Christians, and was inoffensive in those eastern countries, where friends so frequently used that custom, 1 Cor. xvi. 20, and Rom. xvi. 16. But I do not think it is expedient amongst us so to do, between men and women, except on some special occasion, as on their departure, or long absence.

We also read of carnal or whorish kisses, likewise of an hypocritical or flattering kiss; thus Joab kissed Abner; and a traitorous kiss, thus Judas kissed our Saviour when he betrayed him.

Prov. vii. 13
2 Sam. xv. 5
2 Sam. xx. 9
Prov. ii. 6.

5. Of a spiritual kiss; "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," &c., Cant. i. 2. Let him reveal the doctrine of his free-grace and love to me.

The Father kissing his returning prodigal, or God's kissing a returning and believing sinner, doth signify his special favour and reconciliation to him.

"And the son said unto him, father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," ver. 21.

The love of God manifested to a convinced sinner, works notable effects in such a person, the prodigal resolved he would acknowledge his sin, before he knew whether his father would receive him or not, pardon him or not. But those resolutions sprang from a legal spirit, for then he was to become as an hired servant; but now not one word of that, no, he had now learned better, having received the Spirit of adoption.

1. The first effect that the sense of God's pardon works upon a believing sinner, is a hearty confession of sin. "Father, I have sinned."

Doct. True grace upon the manifestation of God's love in forgiveness, produceth a hearty confession of sin.

Yea, the highest expressions of love and mercy do not hinder a believer from making this confession.

2. It works admiration in the soul. O that God should run to meet me, embrace me, kiss me, pardon such a vile and so abominable a wretch as I have been!

3. An abhorrence and detestation of himself, and of sin, thus it was with Job and Isaiah, "I abhor myself and repent," &c., Job. xlii. 5. "Woe is me for I am undone," &c., Isa. vii. 5.

4. Wonderful contrition, and sorrow of heart; "Peter wept bitterly." And it caused "David to water his couch with his tears," Psal. vi. 6.

5. It works deep humiliation in the soul. "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." Faith hath always this blessed effect, i. e., in sense of pardon; it tends not to lift up, but to humble a poor believer. "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn," &c., Zech. x. 10. All repentance and humiliation for sin before faith, tends to pride and self-exaltation; it is legal, and not regarded by the Lord, nor accepted in his sight; but it is the sense of love and pardon that melts and humbles in the very dust.

Let me speak a little to the first of these effects, viz., that of confession.

1. Show what kind of confession it doth produce.

2. Give you the reasons of it, or why they make such a confession.

What a confession of sin a converted person makes to God.

1. It is a confession or acknowledgment of sin, with great compunction of spirit in the sight and sense of pardon; it doth not only open our lips but our eyes; the heart breaks forth when divine grace is poured in, the fear of hell may break the hard heart, but it is divine love and mercy that melts it. This compunction is according to the greatness of the sin committed. Why did David confess his sin with so much sorrow, and Peter and Mary Magdalene weep so bitterly, but because their sins had been very grievous and abominable?

2. It is a confession of sin, as it is against God; "I have sinned against thee, and in thy sight." And thus David cries out, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," Psal. li. 4.

3. It is confession of all sins, original and actual, secret and open. Ver. 5. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Paul cries out of "that body of sin and death," Rom. vii. 24. The woman of Samaria had all her sins set before her, she is ready to confess all her sins to God that ever she did. "Who can know his errors?" Psal. xix. 12; saith David. Job confesses the sins of his youth: a hypocrite is ready to confess public sins, but not his secret sins, his heart sins; but a sincere believer confesses all his sins.

4. He confesses his sins with great hatred, abhorrence, and indignation. "What indignation hath it wrought in you?" 2 Cor. vii. 11. The more God is pleased with him, the more he is displeased with himself for offending him: like a traitor pardoned by his prince, who sought to take away his life but a few days before; O now he hates himself. So it is here; "God being pacified towards him, he is ashamed and confounded in his own eyes," Ezek. xvi. 60, 61.

5. It is a confession of sin with all its aggravations; no lessening or extenuation of sin now, no excuses about it; not like Adam, "The woman thou gavest me, she gave it me, and I did eat." Legal and servile confessions are commonly deceitful and with extenuations. But see David, "Forgive me my sin, for it is great."

Secondly, Why do forgiven persons, pardoned sinners, confess their iniquities?

1. God requires this of them, "Only acknowledge thine iniquities that thou hast transgressed against the Lord," Jer. iii. 13.

2. Pity in us is not opposite, but only subordinate to pity in God. Divine love (saith one) doth not destroy but increase duty; it is a sign of an hardened villain, who being pardoned by his sovereign for the greatest treasons, wipes his mouth as if he had done him no wrong at all; such men seem to be religious, who boast of forgiveness, but think it below them to confess their transgressions.

3. It flows from the nature of divine love, and sense of God's infinite mercy, considering well the way by which we come to have remission of sin. O saith such a soul, this pardon comes swimming to me through the Red-sea of my Saviour's blood; though my pardon is freely of grace to me, yet it cost my Lord dear.

4. The nature of pardon itself hath this tendency in it; the more pardoning grace God shows, the more humility and confession of sins it produceth in our hearts. "Where much is forgiven, there is much love." And which way can it be better manifested, but by the tears of hearty sorrow and confession? remember Mary Magdalene.

5. Because sin is so hateful and odious to God, shall not we confess those sins by which we have so dishonoured him, since such confessions tend to his glory, being so great and many, yet are all forgiven?

6. Because herein God hath promised us the sight and sense of pardon. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," 1 John i. 9. It may be doubted whether his sins are pardoned, who never confesseth his sins to God; it appears God cannot let us feel the pardon of our sins to the glory of his justice and faithfulness, if we do not confess our sins. Where is there any promise of the sense of pardon, without grace move us to a confession? or was any man thus ever forgiven his sins, that never confessed his sins?

7. Because it tends to the glory of God, that which makes for God's glory, we should always greatly study. "Confess my son, and give glory to the Lord God of Israel," Josh. vii. 19.

(1.) We hereby acknowledge God's omniscency, that he sees and knows all our former and latter sins and wickedness.

(2.) Hereby also we acknowledge he is a holy God, and hates sin; we confessing it with utter abhorrence.

(3.) It tends also to the glory of his justice; we acknowledge that we deserve his wrath and severe displeasure, though he hath received satisfaction for our sins in his Son.

(4.) We give glory to God also, in respect of his infinite love and mercy, by our confessions and acknowledgements of his free-grace, in pardoning all our horrid sins and wickedness committed against him.

8. Because God doth embitter sin to us, he makes sin to appear exceeding sinful in our sight; he makes us to see the smart of the spear that let out the blood of his Son; we are wounded with him, and cannot but cry out and confess our sin, though our sore is healed.

Lastly, because not to confess our sins, is to hide them. "He that hides his sin shall not prosper, but he that confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy," Prov. xxviii. 13. Hiding of sin is here set in opposition to a confession of it. "I have hid my sin, as Adam." Sin is covered, saith Mr. Caryl, when it is not confessed.

U S E.

1. O learn from hence to confess your sins, (1.). This was ever the practice of God's people, and is the character of true believers. (2.) It is a sign you are pardoned, if God's grace, and love works your hearts into due and thorough confession of sin unto him.

2. Let such, who instead of confessing their sins, hide them, fear their state is not good.

3. Ever join faith touching forgiveness with your confession of sin unto God, or in vain is your confession, believe they are all pardoned.

4. Take heed you do not ascribe your pardon to your confessions or humiliation, as that which doth procure it; no, but only to the blood of Jesus Christ. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission."

Many, I fear, by their confessions and humiliation for sin, hope to obtain acceptance with God, and pardon of sin; but this is their great ignorance, for we are only accepted in the beloved. Our acceptance with God, justification, and pardon of sin, is only in Jesus Christ, it is by his obedience and by his blood; our confession of sin cannot procure it, no nor our leaving of sin, though this we must do; and all such who see God is pacified towards them, and hath accepted them in his Son, and pardoned all their sins, they will both confess, leave, and loathe all manner of sin and wickedness, as it is an effect of the Spirit and special grace of God received.

But the father said to his servants, "bring forth the best robe, and put it upon him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet," ver. 22.

The father said not to him (as many earthly fathers would) son, have you not been a vile wretch, having wasted all I gave unto you upon harlots, and now art come home naked, or in a few filthy rags on your back, and no shoes to your feet; and being almost starved with hunger, are you returned? be gone out of my doors; will I, think you, receive such a vile person as you have been? no, not a word of any of this, he upbraids him not with his former evil and lewd course of life. God, my brethren, is not like earthly fathers; no, no, his love and compassion is infinite to returning sinners. "But the father said to his servants," &c.

What is expressed here as done for him, was done for him before, when the Father "met him and kissed him." He was then clothed and adorned. This is done as soon as ever we have union with Christ, and do believe in him; but all things cannot be expressed at once.

1. Our Lord Jesus would have us know the nature of the love of his Father, as well as his own great acts of rich bounty and mercy to believing sinners.

2. Also that we may know what a rich robe every believing sinner is clothed with, and when also it is put upon the soul. Here is (1.) mention made of a robe. (2.) The nature of this robe, *i. e.*, it is the best robe. "And a ring on his finger," and it is a rich one beside, a ring of great value, with this motto on it, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." (3.) "And shoes on his feet." That he may walk on thorns and sharp stones, and his feet not be hurt or wounded. "The best robe." He must have change of raiment, more robes than one (as the Lord said unto those that stood by Joshua) "Take away his filthy garments from him, and I will clothe him with change of raiment," Zech. iii. 3, 4.

But pray observe the order, the best robe must first be put upon him.

Quest. But who is the author of these favours, and wonderful kindnesses?

Answ. Why, it is the Father, "the Father said."

Quest. But why is it not expressed, but God said?

Answ. Because God in Christ is a reconciled God, nay, a Father to all that believe.

The "best robe" is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Though other robes are glorious, yet this far excels them all. I shall hereafter prove this is the best robe, and that it is first put upon the sinner; first, in order of nature, though not in order of time; for all that are justified, are also sanctified.

"Unto his servants." Expositors differ about who these servants are. Some think the holy angels are here meant, but others think the ministers of the Gospel are only here intended. I humbly conceive,

1. That the ministers of the Gospel may be meant by these servants, they are required ministerially, to bring forth the best robe, or offer the righteousness of Christ unto convinced sinners, and this first of all, there being no previous qualifications required of them in order to fit or prepare them to put it on.

The best robe is Christ's righteousness.

Who the servants are, that are called to bring forth the fatted calf.

2. But the chief servant is our Lord Jesus Christ, he (as Mediator) is called God's servant; and it is he who puts the best robe on the soul by his Spirit; the Father prepared this robe, the Son wrought it, and he by the Spirit puts it upon every returning sinner. True, it is ready for every one of God's elect, *i. e.*, Christ hath it for them; yet is it not actually put upon any until by the Spirit they obtain a vital union with the Lord Jesus; for before effectual calling the elect are naked, as all others are.

So much at this time.

SERMON XIX.

But the father said unto his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put it upon him.—Luke xv. 22.

WE have an account of that kind welcome the father gave to his prodigal son, upon his returning home: the son is humbled to the dust; his rebellion, and that lewd course of life he had lived, now is grievous to him, and he cried out, "Father, I have sinned," &c.

"But the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe," &c. The father's actions towards the son show he was reconciled to him: and he acts after such a manner towards convinced and believing sinners, that they may perceive all their sins and transgressions are forgiven,

"Bring forth the best robe." There are several sorts of robes or garments.

Several sorts of garment. 1. A natural garment; Job calls his skin a garment, because as our clothes cover the body, so doth our skin cover the flesh; while his boils and blotches corrupt, his skin became like a rotten garment; and when he was healed, skin became like a changed garment, he seemed to be new clothed; he had before Satan smote him with sores and boils, a whole garment, but saith, "By the force of my disease is my garment changed," Job. xxx. 18. It became like an old filthy garment! and afterwards it became like a new and fresh garment.

2. A civil garment; that is, the garments with which our bodies are clothed.

3. A metaphorical or spiritual garment, which is twofold. There are two sorts of spiritual garments.

(1.) The garment or robe of justification.

(2.) The garment of sanctification, or the robe of our inherent holiness. The apostle alludes to this garment when he says, "having the garment spotted with the flesh, Jude. xxiii.

I told you, by the best robe is meant the righteousness of Christ, which is put upon, or imputed to them that believe in Jesus to their justification before God; that it is compared to a robe is evident; "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," Isa. lxi. 10. "Friend, how comest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment," Matt. xxii. 12.

Two things I shall do here.

First, Show you why the righteousness of Christ is compared to a garment.

Secondly, Show you why it is called the best robe, or prove it is the best robe.

Why righteousness is compared to a garment. 1. Garments, are provided to cover our nakedness that our shame may not appear, so the righteousness of Jesus Christ God hath provided to cover our spiritual nakedness, or to hide and cover all our original, and actual filthiness, shame, and deformity; no sooner had man sinned, but he saw that he was naked.

The Prodigal before he returned home to his father was naked, or clothed, but with filthy rags; before the elect are united to Christ or obtain a vital union, they are naked, i. e., they have not the righteousness of Christ put upon them, or imputed to them, i. e., they are not actually justified, but are in a state of condemnation, and the wrath of God abideth on them, John iii. 18. 36.

2. A garment is of great use to the body, it preserves it from many dangers which such that are naked are exposed unto, every thorn otherwise would scratch us, and every blow wound us, and every cold blast pinch us, and the hot beams of the sun scorch us, even so the righteousness of Christ descends and preserves our soul from every thorn of the flesh, and temptation of Satan; also every cursed sin and evil thought (was it not for this robe) would wound us to death, and the law lay us dead before God, and the devil by his fiery darts lay us a bleeding. Moreover, those cold blasts of winter, I mean sharp trials and afflictions, would chill our souls, and cool our zeal. Moreover, and the burning beams of God's wrath would scorch and consume our souls.

3. A garment renders the person that hath it on to be very comely, who before appeared filthy and loathsome; put a beggar into the king's robe, and he will appear as if he was the king himself; so the righteousness of Christ put upon a poor sinner, (that was before clothed with rags, and filthy to behold,) appears lovely, and very glorious to look upon. "And thou wert comely, through my comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord," Ezek. xvi. 14.

4. Some garments discover a man of what rank and quality he is: as a knight of the noble order of the garter is known by his robe: so the robe of Christ's righteousness dis-

covers the saints to be noble persons, *i. e.*, Kings' children, or such who are of the heavenly family, and born of God, or born from above. The high-priest under the law was known by his garment; the ephod was made of fine linen, and set with many precious stones which the high-priest did wear. So the breastplate of judgment was very rich, the ephod was most curiously wrought with bells and pomegranates at the skirts of it. Now the high-priest's garment was a figure of that robe which all the holy priesthood of Christ have on them, *viz.*, the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

5. He that hath a rich robe offered him (who is clothed with rags,) must put off, or be stripped of his filthy garments, to put on that rich and noble robe. So must a sinner be stripped of all his own righteousness, which is as filthy rags.

Secondly, I shall show and prove, that the robe of Christ's righteousness is the best robe.

See the parable of the marriage-supper.

Matt. xxii. 12.

1. Comparatively, in respect had to all others.

2. Positively, best in respect of itself, or upon the account of its own great worth.

3. In respect of the esteem of God the Father, he accounts it the best robe.

4. Believers also account it the best robe.

First, It is the best robe in comparison or respect had to that righteousness that the first Adam was clothed with in his innocency, though some think (through ignorance) that it is called the best robe upon the account of its antiquity, *i. e.*, it being the same that Adam was clothed with. But alas! Adam before his fall was not clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness; no, it was only his own created righteousness.

Why Christ's righteousness is called the best robe.

Quest. But perhaps you will say, How far doth this exceed the righteousness of the first Adam?

Answ. I answer, so far as Jesus Christ excels in worth and dignity the earthly Adam, or as far as God excels the creature. Christ is God as well as man, therefore his righteousness is not the righteousness of a mere creature, as Adam's was; though Adam was a perfect man, yet Christ is perfect God and man.

2. The righteousness of Christ is more excellent than any the high-priest did wear, and that as far as the substance excels the shadow, or the antitype the type. You will say the man far excels his shadow. Sirs, those garments were but a shadow of this.

3. The righteousness of Christ excels in worth and excellency the righteousness of the holy angels,

(1.) The righteousness of the holy angels is but a created righteousness, and appertains to the first creation; and so of the same nature with the righteousness of Adam in innocency. But this is a righteousness wrought out by the Son of God, and appertains to the second creation.

Christ's righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the holy angels.

(2.) The righteousness of the holy angels can justify none but themselves, their perfect obedience can merit no righteousness for others; not for us, nor for the fallen angels, because they owe all they are and can do unto God their Creator.

(3.) They are but finite creatures, therefore no obedience of theirs can satisfy infinite justice.

4. It is the best robe in respect of the garment of our inherent sanctification.

(1.) Because our sanctification is not perfect in this life, it is not without spot; where is the saint that in this respect is without sin? There was never any man inherently perfect, or without any stain of iniquity, but the first Adam only, and the Man Christ Jesus. Solomon saith, "That there is not a just man on the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not," Eccl. vii. 20. Paul no doubt was as holy a man as any of the godly, yet he cries out, "When he would do good, sin was present with him," Rom. vii. 18: and the apostle John saith, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," 1 John i. 8.

Christ's righteousness the best robe in respect of our inherent sanctification.

(2.) Because our own inherent holiness or sanctification cannot justify our persons in the sight of God, nor screen our souls from the scorching flames of God's vindictive wrath and justice.

(1.) The law of God will soon find a flaw, and many spots in this garment.

(2.) Satan can pick holes in it also; therefore we must also say with David, notwithstanding all our own righteousness, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight no man living shall be justified," Psal. cxliii. 2. "If thou shouldst mark iniquity, who can stand?" Psal. cxxx. 3. Paul tells us, "He knew nothing by himself, yet he was not thereby justified," 1 Cor. iv. 4. No, all our works and inherent righteousness

are excluded in our justification before God; God imputeth to those that he justifieth, righteousness without works: "It is the righteousness of one," Rom. iv. 6, and it is a righteousness like a garment put upon us, not wrought in us. "It is unto all," offered to all, and put "upon all them that believe," Rom. iii. 22.

Secondly, It is the best robe, not only comparatively, but also positively,

The righteousness of Christ is the righteousness of God.

In respect of its own most excellent nature and quality.

1. In respect of Christ, whose righteousness it is. It is often called the righteousness of God, not the essential righteousness of God, but the righteousness of him who is truly God, perfect God and man in one Person. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested," Rom. iii. 21, 22. "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith," Rom. x. 3. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness," &c. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. Some say it is only called the righteousness of God, because he accepteth it; that is, he accepteth of our faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, instead of perfect obedience to the law, through Christ's merits. Christ, they say, hath merited this grace, that our inherent righteousness and good works should justify our persons before God. But this is not gospel, but a piece of new popery we say; and therefore it is called the righteousness of God.

Why Christ's righteousness is called the righteousness of God.

(1.) Because it is a righteousness wrought out by him who is perfect God in our nature, and not that Christ only merited it for us, and so his death only is the meritorious cause of our justification: but Christ's righteousness, *i. e.*, his active and passive obedience, is, we affirm, the matter of justification, or the material cause; and as it is imputed to us, also the formal cause thereof

Christ's righteousness is called the material cause of our justification.

(2.) It is called the righteousness of God, in opposition, and in contradiction to the righteousness of mere creatures.

(3.) Because God only found it out in his infinite wisdom, and because also it tends so much to his glory, and likewise because it is his own free gift, and by himself put upon us, or imputed to us.

2. It is the best robe because of the largeness, the length and breadth of it; it is wide enough to cover the whole soul, render the whole soul comely and amiable in the sight of God; it covers all our nakedness, all our sins, deformities, and infirmities whatsoever: it is commonly called the long white robe, it reaches from the head down to the feet, every way complete and perfect before God. And hence it is said, "Ye are complete in him, who is the head of principalities and powers," Col. ii. 10.

3. Such is the excellency of it, that it is a righteousness exactly suiting with and answering the pure nature of God. (1.) The justice of God cannot find one flaw in it. (2.) The truth of God cannot find the least exception against it, in respect of the threats of God against Adam for his disobedience. (3.) The holiness of God beholdeth not the least stain, spot of sin, or blemish in it. Moreover, it exactly answereth that righteousness which the law of God requireth of us to our justification before God, *i. e.*, a sinless righteousness; and therefore it is the best robe.

4. It is the best robe in respect of its duration or stability thereof. Adam's righteousness in innocency was perfect, but not stable nor lasting, but it was mutable, and liable to be lost and rent from him. And O how soon did sin and the devil rob him, and all his posterity in him, of it! What though a man hath a very rich robe put upon him, if he be not certain of keeping it one day, that cannot render him for ever happy. Man, poor man, fell among thieves, and they stripped him of his raiment, as well as left him half dead. "Man in honour abode not one night: but the righteousness of Christ is a durable, a certain, and an everlasting righteousness. It was prophesied that the "Messiah should finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation, and bring in an everlasting righteousness," Dan. ix. 24. A righteousness which cannot be lost; no thieves, no sin, world, flesh, nor devils, can rob a believer of this robe. "Thy righteousness (saith the Psalmist) is an everlasting righteousness," Psal. cix. 142 "My righteousness shall be for ever," Isa. li. 8. He that is once justified, is for ever justified; whom he "justified, them he also glorified," Rom. viii. 30. "There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. Our righteousness and justification is as certain as our salvation, which is, like the covenant, "ordered in all things, and sure," 1 Sam. xxiii. 5.

5. It is a righteousness which hath merited glorious grace, glorious gifts, and glorious privileges, yea, a glorious crown and kingdom. Our justification is not only merited by Christ's death, and suffering, but also by his personal obedience: his doing and suffering, (I newly told you) is the material cause of our justification. But besides what Christ is to

us in justification, he by his perfect obedience, or by what he did and suffered, hath merited all good things for us, yea, wonderful blessings and privileges. The paying the debts of one among men, run out of all, doth not merit the favour and kindness of his creditor. But Jesus Christ by his perfect obedience hath not only paid our debts, and acquitted, and discharged us from wrath and condemnation, but hath brought us thereby into a near relation unto God. Those that are justified are adopted, *i. e.*, made sons and daughters of the most high God; they are the favourites of heaven, and heirs of glory; they are all the King's children, and are accepted, and are most amiable and lovely in God's sight. Sir, no thing, no righteousness can commend us to God, but this only.

Christ not only paid all our debts, but hath merited wonderful privileges for us also.

6. It is the best robe, because it is our only title to heaven, and that which frees and delivereth us from the pangs of hell. We have nothing but Christ's righteousness to plead at God's bar, why we should be saved, and not be cast into hell. Dare any men on a death-bed plead their own righteousness, or their obedience and good works? Certainly if they should, their state would be deplorable; it is the righteousness, the death, and merits of Christ that give believers ease, comfort, and hope at the hour of death, and will give boldness in the day of judgment.

Christ's righteousness is our title to heaven.

7. It is the best robe, because it is that alone which gives a poor sinner, nay, a believer, so much ease and relief at all times, when he is accused and oppressed, either from without, or by enemies within. (1.) When sin presseth sore upon his conscience. Or (2.) when the law lets fly its bitter arrows and curses. (3.) Or when Satan sends forth his fiery darts, and accuses for this and that sin. Or (4.) when death looks grim upon the soul; the righteousness of Christ is, I say, our only plea against them all, and yields a believer sweet help and succour. Jesus Christ made an end of sin, as to its guilt and condemning power, and hath satisfied both law and justice, and vanquished the devil, and taken away the sting of death; so that justice is on our side, and pleads for us, as well as mercy, and death hereby is become a blessing, and no part of the curse to such who have this robe upon them.

Christ's righteousness put on the soul, gives the sinner ease and much comfort.

8. It is the best robe, the best righteousness, because it hath brought the highest and greatest glory unto God, as well as the highest and chiefest good unto man. (1.) It hath in God's contrivance of it exalted and magnified infinite wisdom; and in Christ's working of it out all other of the divine perfections are magnified also; and all the attributes of God meet together in sweet harmony; and also Satan is utterly defeated, his works destroyed, and his kingdom overthrown thereby.

Christ's obedience brought great honour to God.

9. It is the wedding-garment, and therefore the best robe. The wedding-garment of a high-born princess, is always the best and most glorious, being bespangled with jewels, pearls, and precious stones. "Though the king's daughter is all glorious within; yet her clothing is wrought gold. Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of ophir," Psal. xiv. 13.

Glorious within, I conceive, refers to her divine inherent graces and sanctification, and her clothing to the righteousness of Christ, which is elsewhere compared to the sun; "The woman was clothed with the sun," Rev. xii. 1, 2. What created glory is brighter or more glorious than the sun?

10. And lastly it is the best robe, because of the extent of it; it doth not only clothe every believer, but the whole universal church; also rendering the spouse of Christ, or his whole mystical body, amiable, and without spot in the sight of God. It makes them all shine alike in equal glory and beauty before him.

Christ's righteousness clothes not only every particular saint, but also the whole church of God.

Thirdly, it is the best robe in the esteem of God the Father. (1.) He calls it the best robe. (2.) It is that righteousness which hath satisfied divine justice, and reconciled God to us. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake," &c. Isa. xlii. 21. "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 17. In whom, that is, with all that are in him, or have his righteousness put upon them. The righteousness of Christ, and sacrifice of Christ, is of a sweet "smelling savour unto God the Father," Eph. v. 2.

2. Christ by his righteousness, is mighty to save. "I that speak in righteousness," *i. e.*, in a righteous, spotless nature; I that speak in the righteousness of God, in a righteousness answering the rectitude of God's holy nature, and holy law; and hence mighty to save. The Father hereby is rendered strong, and the Son rendered strong, and the Holy Ghost is hereby also rendered strong, the Holy Trinity is hereby become strong to save.

Fourthly, it is the best robe in the esteem of all the saints and people of God.

1. It is of this righteousness they make mention only. "I will make men-

The saints esteem it the best robe.

tion of thy righteousness, even of thine only," Psal. lxxi. 16. Mine (as if he should say) is not worth mentioning. (1.) It is on thine I rely, trust in, and depend upon; it is thy righteousness that relieves, strengthens, and comforts me at all times. (2.) Believers also only glory in this righteousness. "Surely in the Lord shall one say, have I righteousness," &c. In thee shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," Isa. xlv. 24, 25. (3.) Moreover, the saints count all their own inherent righteousness but as dung, in comparison of this robe of righteousness. "All our righteousness is as filthy rags," &c. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9. What is more contemptible than filthy rags, or than dung, or dogs'-meat (as the word will bear) he compares such to dogs that feed upon their own works of righteousness as that which justifies them before God; through the saints' inherent righteousness (as considered in itself) is amiable, yet it having many spots and blemishes in it, it is in comparison to the righteousness of Christ of no worth.

APPLICATION.

1. I infer from hence, how blind the greatest part of the people of this nation are. O how few speak of this righteousness! how is the church of England apostatized (or many of them) from their ancient doctrine! their people are unacquainted with this righteousness, because their teachers generally are ignorant of it, and little study it, or bring forth this righteousness, that the people might have it put upon them, and be clothed therewith.

2. I infer, that it is the duty of all Christ's servants to bring forth this righteousness to convinced and returning sinners. "And the Father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe."

3. This may also tend severely to reprove all such who slight this robe of righteousness, counting it as a mere fiction, or airy notion. Yet when some of this sort have been laid on a death-bed, they, with the papists, are forced then to fly thither for refuge.

See the simile of putting a piece of new cloth to an old garment.

4. Moreover, it may serve to reprove such that strive to mix their own righteousness with the righteousness of Christ, and so endeavour to put a new piece of cloth upon an old garment. And what is that but to mar or spoil the beauty and glory of the new and glorious robe, and make the old garment worse, the rent worse?

5. By way of exhortation. Let me persuade all returning sinners, convinced sinners, to endeavour to obtain union with Jesus Christ, and to believe in him.

FOR MOTIVES

(1.) Consider how gloriously you will hereby come to be clothed. "And the king will hereby also desire your beauty."

(2.) It will not be for clothing only, and for ornament, but it will be as armour of proof also, or it is armour as well as ornament. Satan can never prevail to wound to death such who have it on. It is as it were a coat of mail, put on the armour of light: Rom. xiii. 12, faith in Christ's righteousness is a shield to defend the soul.

(3.) By nature all are naked, and they so remain, till they obtain a vital union with Christ, or are transplanted out of the first Adam into Jesus Christ.

(4.) Moreover, it is a garment that will keep you warm, as well as preserve you from harm; such shall find spiritual life and heat also in them, in the cold and sharpest seasons of trials and afflictions.

Lastly, For comfort and consolation. Believers, know that you are the most happy people in the world, how low or despised soever you seem to be in the eyes of an ungodly world. Lazarus was more gloriously clothed than the rich man that was clad in purple; do not look as man looks, i. e., on what the body hath on, but see how your soul is clothed.

But to proceed.

"The father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe." From hence note, that God the Father is the author of this robe of righteousness.

"All things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. v. 18. (1.) The Father found the way and means by which we come to have this robe. (2.) It is the gift of God; "the gift of righteousness," Rom. v. 17. (3.) It is by God the Father that we are in Christ: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus," 1 Cor. i. 30.

Our union with Christ is of God the Father. (1.) The Father imputeth the righteousness of his Son to all that believe, and by that way puts it upon them; the gospel reveals it, and Ministers offer it, and show the necessity and excellency of it. But know ye that no man hath it on without the Holy Spirit's application. Faith is no more than an instrument, i. e., a hand by which the Spirit doth apply it.

SERMON XX.

And put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, &c.—Luke xv. 22.

WE see here what favour the compassionate father showed his returning prodigal, and how welcome he was unto him.

(1.) He calls for the best robe to clothe him. (2.) "A ring to adorn him, and shoes to accommodate his necessity," that he might the better walk in the ways of godliness. (3.) The fatted calf to feed and feast him.

From whence I might by way note,

"That whatsoever God sees a returning sinner needs, whether it be for honour, dignity, or to answer his necessities, he will bestow it upon him; "he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will be withhold from such who walk uprightly." Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

The son sought but for room in his Father's family (though it was to be as a servant) when he first came to himself, but the Father gives him the dignity of a son, and the best in all his house.

"And put a ring on his hand."

This is the second favour conferred on this prodigal son. I find the use of a ring in those eastern countries, was significant of several things.

The use of a ring put on the hand among the Jews.

1. To seal decrees; the decree was written and sealed with the king's ring.

2. It was used as a badge of honour; none in ancient times in those countries but noble persons, were allowed to wear a ring. And Pharaoh took his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand. Joseph was preferred as the most honourable person in all the land, even next to the king himself, and as a token of this the king put his own ring on his hand. So in the gospel times such that were honourable persons wore rings, as is noted by the apostle James, "If there come into your assemblies a man with a gold ring, you say to him, sit thou in a good place," James ii. 2. 3.

"A ring was worn for ornament, such that were persons of quality, commonly only were decked with bracelets and rings on their hands," Ezek. xvi. 11.

4. A ring, as some hint, was worn as a token of freedom among the Romans; none were allowed to wear a ring, who were either bond-men or strangers, but such only that were free-born, or purchased their liberty; and this might perhaps also be a custom among the Egyptians; for Joseph was a prisoner when Pharaoh sent for him, and Pharaoh putting his ring on his hand might not only signify the honour he now conferred on him, but also given to him as a token or pledge of his liberty, or his discharge out of prison, and that he was now made a free-man of the land of Egypt.

5. A ring was anciently a signet of conjugal love, or a token of unity, yea, of nuptial union and conjunction. From hence St. Chrysostom (as a worthy author notes) saith, that the ring was put upon the prodigal as an emblem of his soul's espousals with Christ.

Now, my brethren, if we consider what is meant by this ring, it may very well be significant of all these things in a spiritual sense; for no doubt it refers to the glorious and excellent ornament of grace, particularly to the grace of faith, which is often in the scripture compared to gold. Whosoever hath the robe of Christ's righteousness put upon him, is also enriched and beautified with the ornament of precious faith, and all other habitual graces whatsoever. God speaks of a glorious robe which he had put upon his people, whom he found in their blood and pollution, cast out like a wretched new-born infant: "I spread my skirt over thee; I clothed thee also with brodered work," &c., Ezek. xvi. 8, 10. and then he saith, "He decked them with ornaments, and put bracelets on their hands," ver. 11. Here it is called a ring, because a ring might signify more than some other ornaments. He, I say, that hath the best robe to clothe him, hath this ring, i. e., precious faith wrought in him, to adorn him; for he that is a justified person is a gracious person: as the "king's daughter was clothed with wrought gold," Psal. xlv. 9, 13, so she was also all glorious within; though faith is no part of our justifying righteousness, yet no man is actually justified who hath not true faith given to him. True, God justified the ungodly; so were all when God first discharged or

pronounced them just and righteous persons, without any previous works or acts of righteousness wrought in them; yet being justified, they are also sanctified, and remain no longer unbelievers or ungodly persons. Were ever any clothed with the best robe that God did not work faith in their souls, or did not put this ring on their hand? Therefore the outward ornament put on the hand of the returning sinner, signifies the inward adorning of the soul with the graces of the Spirit.

Grace is a seal of glory. 1. Take the ring here for a seal to confirm an absolute decree or purpose, which is like the law of the Medes and Persians, not to be altered. Grace is as a seal of God's eternal decree and purpose in Jesus Christ, signifying, the person who receives it is one that was ordained to eternal life, or it is a seal to him of all those blessings God decreed to give him before the world began; they that receive the Holy Spirit in the graces of it, are "sealed thereby until the day of redemption," Eph. iv. 30. "In whom ye are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, until the praise of his glory," Eph. i. 13-14. They, my brethren, who have but one drachm of grace, or the smallest measure of grace, even the weakest faith, are thereby made sure of everlasting life: for grace is the seed of glory, as glory is the harvest of grace. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," John iii. 36. So that although faith is more than an evidence of our blessed state, yet it is undoubtedly an evidence of it. "These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that you have eternal life," &c., 1 John v. 13.

Grace is a sign or signet of honour conferred on believers. 2. Or take a ring (as before mentioned) for a badge or signet of honour. — True grace is an absolute sign of the highest honour that God confers upon any person in this world, nay, and also of that eternal glory and grandeur he will bring them to in the world to come: the riches of this world, or the greatest fulness of all earthly things, together with temporal glory and grandeur, are no sign that the person that hath them is in the love and favour of God, and shall be great and glorious in the next world; for the worst and vilest of men are raised up to kingly dignity oftentimes here, even such whom God's soul abhorreth. Lazarus was a nobler and more honourable person in God's sight, than the "rich man that was clothed with purple," &c. Now what man that receives the saving-grace of the Spirit, is born of God, he is an adopted son of God, and is espoused to Jesus Christ, he is a favourite in the court of heaven, and an heir of God; nay, and by having this ring, being sealed with this ring, he comes to have the image of God imprinted on his soul; therefore is it a badge of the highest honour. It is, my brethren, a sign of a change of state; the ring showed that the prodigal, who was before in a state of wrath and death, was now brought into a justified state, or into a state of life: before he was in a state of beggary, but now brought into a state of true nobility. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," Prov. xii. 26. "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren," because he

was a gracious person. Or, Grace signifies a believer's freedom. 3. Take the ring to signify a believing sinner's freedom from slavery and bondage. Grace is a certain sign and pledge of that spiritual liberty and freedom he hath received from Jesus Christ; he that hath this ring, i.e., faith in Christ, hath on him the best robe, therefore is discharged from bondage and eternal condemnation: he that hath the Holy Spirit is made free by Christ. "If the Son therefore make you free, then are ye free indeed," John. viii. 36. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. All those that receive the graces of the Spirit, are free from sin, from the guilt, the power, and punishment thereof; they are also freed from the power of Satan, and from the condemning power of the law, and from death also as it is a curse, and from the eternal wrath of God in hell. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1.

A ring, as some note, is an emblem of eternity, it has no end; so all spiritual privileges and freedom are eternal.

Grace adorns the soul, as a ring on the hand adorns the hand. 4. Take a ring as an ornament: grace is only that which adorns the soul, or the spiritual ornament of every man and woman who receives it. "A meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price." What are outward ornaments of the body, but mere vain empty things tending to please carnal eyes? But grace makes a person lovely in the eyes of God, and Jesus Christ. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with the chain of thy neck," Cant. iv. 9. By that one eye, most understand is meant the grace of faith, often called the eye of faith, which is a self-empty-

ing and soul-loathing, and self-abasing grace, that which wholly leads out the soul to Jesus Christ, to love him, to exalt him, and to cleave unto him. Our Lord conquers the eye of his spouse to the eye of a dove, whose eye is very chaste and always is fixed on its meat. So is the eye and faith of a believer at all times, and in all conditions fixed upon Jesus Christ in every state; and in all he does and suffers for him, he cries with the blessed martyr, "none but Christ, none but Christ." And from hence this eye is a lovely eye in his sight. And then the chain of her neck signifies the complication of all graces; yet faith is the uniting and principle grace of all others.

5. And lastly, take a ring as a signet of conjugal love and union, or an emblem of the soul's espousals to Jesus Christ. The grace of faith particularly is, as I said, the uniting grace, i.e., that faith that works by love. No man is married to Christ without faith, though the Holy Spirit is the chief bond of this union, and is that which works faith in the soul. A worthy author, speaking of this ring saith, "that God gives a true penitent faith, by which it is espoused to Jesus Christ; and there are (saith he) six things which conquer in marriages (as is observed by such who write of marriages) which hold good also in our spiritual marriage with Christ, and are signified by the putting on of this ring.

Grace is a sign or signet of our union with Christ.

Sedgwick on the prodigal, p. 213.

Six things concur in marriage.

1. Mutual consent. 2. Mutual contracting. 3. Mutual obligation. 4. Mutual union. 5. Mutual right and interest. 6. Mutual society and communion.

1. Mutual consent; no person is, or can be espoused and married to Christ without a hearty consent: for as the person must have a true knowledge of Christ, so he must yield to accept of him; for a marriage ought to be a voluntary transaction of both persons, Jesus Christ accepteth of the sinner, embraces the sinner, and the sinner accepteth of Christ, they give themselves to each other: as Christ first chose us, so we chose him, it is a free and ready act of the will. "They gave themselves unto the Lord," &c.

Mutual consent.

2. Mutual contracting of the soul with Christ, and contraction is done by expression of words proper to marriage, not that I will take thee, &c., but I do take thee, &c. So here, not that I purpose hereafter to accept, take, and receive Christ as the only object of my soul's affection, but I do now receive and take him; though this is not expressed with the words of the mouth, yet it is the voice and expressions of the soul: Christ in his word declares that he gives himself to the soul with all he is, and all he hath; and the soul freely and heartily takes Jesus Christ as its best and dearest beloved, contemning and forsaking all other things and objects for his sake, even whatsoever was gain or dear to him before.

Mutual contracting.

3. A mutual obligation of Christ to the soul, and of the soul to Christ. Some do call this resignation, and therefore marriage is called a knot or tye, wherein the two persons are mutually limited and bound to each other in a way of conjugal separation from all others in such a relation; and this is called a covenant. Sirs, Jesus Christ obligeth himself to be kind, loving, true, and faithful to the soul; and the soul that marries Christ doth oblige himself to be true, constant, faithful, and obedient unto him. The soul disclaims all other lovers, whether objects or things, that she for his choicest love, affections, and delight, promising to take up its whole satisfaction and complacency in Christ alone, resting upon him and nothing else for justification and eternal life: I have vowed and cannot go back, saith such a person.

Mutual obligation.

4. "Mutual conjunction;" that is, they two are now become one; before marriage they were twain, or not thus united; "They two are not flesh:" 1 Cor. vi. 16. Not only one in love and affections, for so a man and his friend, his neighbour or brother may be one; but one flesh. "So he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," ver. 17. The divine nature that is in Christ, and Spirit that is in Christ is in that person who is united to him; so that as the soul and body makes but one man, so Christ and believers make but one mystical person, or Christ mystical. What union is nearer and dearer than this? We are said, by virtue of the promises and covenant, "to partake of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4.

Mutual conjunction.

5. Mutual right and interest in each other, Christ hath by our voluntary obligation and covenant, right to us, and we have right to, and interest in him. Christ hath right as a head, to, in, and over us, to guide and counsel us; he hath the right of sovereignty over us, and our duty is to obey, and be in subjection unto him: but though the wife hath not power or authority over the husband, yet she hath the power of property in her husband. And, my brethren, hereby believers have right to, and inter-

Mutual right and interest.

est in all Christ hath, as well as interest in his person. "This is my beloved, this my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem," Cant. v. 16. They have interest in Christ's righteousness, and in his riches of grace, and his riches of glory. A believer may say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," and with the spouse, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," Cant. ii. 16. And as Christ endows us with all he hath, as he is our head and husband, so all that we are, have, or can do, Christ hath interest in; all I have (saith the soul) Lord, is thine, my heart, my love, desires, and affections; even all the powers of my soul, and all I can do, all the service I am, or shall be enabled to do for the honour, and glory, and exaltation of thy name, is thine.

6. And lastly, mutual society and communion. Marriage infers co-habitation as well as co-interest, so Christ and believers dwell together, walk together, sit down together, and sup together, and have mutual love to, and delight in one another. "I will come in unto him, and I will sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. "Enoch walked with God three hundred years," Gen. v. 23. And what a privilege and honour is this, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," 2 Cor. vi. 16. The interest of Christ is the interest of believers; the grand work and business of Christ in this world, is the grand work and business of believers, which is Christ's glory, and the good of his church and people, they have mutual promises, mutual privileges; for as God is the Father of Christ, so he is the Father of believers: as Christ is heir of all things, so they are heirs of all things, co-heirs with him. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. Is there a kingdom promised to Christ? so there is a kingdom promised to them. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. Is there a throne promised to Christ? so there is a throne promised to them. "He that overcometh shall sit down with me in my throne," Rev. iii. 21. Is there a crown promised to Christ? so there is a crown promised to them. "Henceforth there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me, and not for me only, but for all them also that love his appearance," 2 Tim. iv. 8. And as Christ and believers have communion together here, dwell together here; so they shall for evermore dwell together hereafter. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," &c., John xvii. 24. Now, I say, this ring may signify all these things, and many more.

APPLICATION.

1. O happy souls, on whose hand this ring is put, or who are thus adorned, honoured, freed, sealed, and married to the Lord Jesus Christ!

2. We infer here are most sweet and powerful motives and encouragements for poor prodigals, lost and undone sinners, to labour to return home unto God.

3. We may also infer, that God intends great good, yea most singular mercies and favours to returning sinners; he clothes them, he adorns them, he feeds them, he seals his love to them, pardon to them, peace to them, nay, he espouses and marries them to his own Son; he assures them of his protection, strength, and succour at all times, and in all states, trials, and troubles, and temptations whatsoever. Moreover, he will never leave them comfortless, nor forsake them; he justifies, he adopts, he renews and sanctifies them, he seals the truth of the promises of eternal life unto them.

4. Try yourselves by what hath been said, have you this ring on your hands, *i. e.*, the true grace of God in your hearts? are you adorned therewith?

(1.) Did you ever see the transcendent beauty and excellency in Jesus Christ? is "He the pearl of all pearls," in your eye the chiefest among ten thousand? is there no beloved like your beloved? is your judgment and understanding brought to an assent and approbation of this Christ? do you see that there is life in him, and that besides him there is no Saviour? do you see he is worthy of your acceptance; do you know that you need him, and must perish, without you get an interest in him.

(2.) Is your will inclined and brought to a ready and hearty consent to embrace him; have you by faith laid hold on him; hath the Spirit of God united your souls to him, and wrought his divine nature and image in you, is your ring no counterfeit ring; is your faith all pure gold, or like precious faith, or the faith of God's elect, what fruits doth your faith bring forth?

But to proceed,

"And shoes on his feet."

This is the fourth favour and great blessing bestowed on the returning prodigal, his lips were kissed, his back clothed, his hand adorned, and now his feet are shod. Feet are often taken for the instrument or spring of the actions and courses of men.

What is meant by shoes on his feet.

1. Therefore no doubt by feet is meant the will and affections of his soul; for like as the feet of a man carry his body this way or that way, so doth the will and affections carry the soul into obedience to Christ.

Shoes fit to travel in

2. Shoes are an ornament to the feet. "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O princes, daughters," Cant. vii. 1. The daughter of a prince hath commonly rare and costly shoes; it is an uncomely thing to see a virgin's naked feet, or homely shoes on her feet. To have rich and emulous shoes on the feet, tends to the glory of a princess, so for the feet of a Christian, i. e., his will and affections strongly inclined to that which is good, it is his beauty and glory.

Shoes an ornament to the feet.

3. Shoes signify not only a regular will and affection in a believer, but the resolution, readiness, and purpose of the will, &c., to all things that are spiritually good, and whatsoever is commanded of God. Joshua was well shod, who said, "I and my house will serve the Lord." And so was David, "I have sworn that I will keep thy righteous precept." St. Paul speaks of these shoes, "And having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," Eph. vi. 15. That is, have continually such a resolution and readiness to walk in the ways of the Lord as the gospel calls for, be prepared and resolved always to do or suffer for Jesus Christ.

Shoes denote a preparedness or resolution to walk in God's way.

4. Shoes were anciently a sign of freedom, and of a comfortable state; slaves went bare-foot, but when the prodigal comes to have shoes on his feet, it might signify that he was now a free-man, a son, and no more a slave of sin or Satan.

5. Shoes are not only an ornament to the feet and a sign of freedom, but they are also a preservative against cold, and many distempers of the body, as experience shows, so strong resolution of the will, and the raisedness and spiritualness of the affections is an excellent preservative against lukewarmness, and a cold frame of heart; if you are not shod with the preparation of the gospel, or have not ready resolution of heart to follow the Lord fully, your spirits will soon cool to heavenly things, and one distemper or another will seize upon you.

Shoes preserve the feet of the soul from wounds.

6. Shoes on his feet may denote his being fit to travel through any difficult, stony, or thorny paths, where such who are barefooted cannot, dare not venture: so the resolution of the will and spirituality of the affections, causes or helps a Christian to venture through all difficulties in God's ways. A man that wants courage, zeal, and resolution, is afraid to venture through the thorns and briars of the flesh, temptations of Satan, the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches; he is like a man who is barefooted, he sees thorns and pricking briars in his way; O, says he, I dare not venture further, I shall be wounded: but a man who has excellent shoes on his feet fears nothing, but goes forward; so he that hath a resolved will and preparedness of heart, his affections raised sublime, and heavenly, he is not daunted, nor faint-hearted, though he meets with never so many difficulties, snares, and temptations from within and from without.

He that is well shod fears neither to tread on stones or thorns.

7. Shoes (saith one) are sometimes put for a mortified disposition to the world: for as shoes keep the feet at a distance from the earth, and with them we trample, so by the gospel preparation, (i. e.) a ready purpose of the will, and spirituality of the affections, a believer tramples upon all the sinful pleasures, riches, and honours of this evil world, and as shoes strengthen the feet, so hereby the feet of the soul are strengthened. God is said "to keep the feet of his saints," 1 Sam. ii. 9. "Wilt thou not keep my feet from falling?" Psal. lvi. 13.

Sedgwick.

Doct. God gives a true believer a will to do good, and heavenly affections, by which he is strengthened graciously in his inward man, to walk in a holy course of life, and new obedience.

I. I shall show you what a course, singular life, or holy walking in new obedience is.

II. Why God doth enable them thus to walk.

III. Apply it.

I. It is a different course of life, a singular walking to all other men; the prodigal before his conversion (saith one) walked with naked feet, wildly, loosely, disgracefully, dangerously; but now he hath shoes to put on his feet, his heart is not only altered, but his life also; not only his disposition, but his condition; not only his condition, but his conversation. Believers are exhorted to "put off

Believers walk in a different course of life from others.

their former conversation," Eph. iv. 22; and as they are made free, and become the servants of "righteousness, they have their fruit unto holiness," Rom. vi. 18, 22.

A heavenly course of life. 2. They that have these shoes on their feet walk in an heavenly and spiritual course of life; others are carnally minded, but these are spiritually minded: others have their affections set on things below, but these "have their affections set on things above," Col. iii. 1, 2. Before their feet carried them perhaps to play-houses, to music-houses, and to tippling-houses; but now their feet carry them into the courts of God's house, and they delight more in praying than they did playing.

In a regular course of life. 3. It is a regular course of life. The feet (saith the same author) when shoes are on, are restrained as it were, and confined; they are kept to a size, and do not squander this way and that way: so a believer walks not loosely nor uncomely, but he takes straight steps with his feet; he walks by the rule of God's word, not as vain and carnal persons walk, nor according to the course of this world; but "his conversation is as becometh the gospel of Christ," Phil. i. 27.

In an upright course of life. 4. In an upright course of life; as the shoes keep the feet up on either side, so they are upright-hearted, they walk uprightly: the living creatures feet (spoken of by Ezekiel) were straight, Ezek. i. 7. The saints are thorough for God, the same in secret as in public: their whole course is uniform, comely, and beautiful. "How beautiful are thy feet for shoes?" Cant. vii. 1, saith Christ of his spouse: they act according to those most excellent principles, from faith and love, and according to the state, grace, and dignity attained; and to high and glorious ends, i. e., that God may be glorified: they seek not their own honour, but the honour of Jesus Christ.

An exemplary course of life. 5. Their walk and conversation is an exemplary walk; it is not only profitable to themselves, but to others also: their path and holy walk gives light and directions to such who walk in darkness. "There is good to be got by him that is made good," saith one; not by his doctrine only, but by his walk and conversation also: as their lips feed many, so do their lives also.

II. From whence is it, or why doth God put such shoes on their feet, to enable them to walk in such a gracious and religious manner?

Why believers should walk with shoes on their feet. I. God hath given them a spiritual nature, to the end they might live a spiritual life, that so the goodness of their state may be evidenced by their holy conversation, and goodness of their life.

2. Because it was the design of God in giving of his Son to die, "to redeem them from all iniquity, and make them a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14.

3. God hath given them such shoes, because of the difficulty of the way in which they are to walk: great trials, great afflictions, and strong temptations, call for great and strong resolutions, and raised and sublime affections, and holy watchfulness.

4. Because he would prevent their falling, these shoes keep their feet from sliding, and their souls from being wounded. Many who want these shoes, the briars and thorns, or cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches wound to death.

5. Because hereby God designs much glory to himself, as well as profit and comfort to their souls; his grace hereby is magnified in the excellent nature and quality thereof. What can the common principles of nature do, in comparison of the graces of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers? It is one thing to walk as men, and another thing as saints, or men born from above, born of the Spirit.

U S E.

1st. Exhortation. Get these shoes on your feet, as well as the best robe upon your backs: do not only desire to be justified and saved, but also to walk in an even, upright, and straight path, and to be inwardly sanctified.

M O T I V E S.

1. They are shoes made by a skilful and excellent workman, viz., the Holy Spirit, and they exactly fit the feet of your souls; and though they pinch the flesh, yet they are easy to the Spirit: indeed they tend to mortify the lusts of the flesh, which hinder the soul in its spiritual course.

2. They are lasting, and will not wear out; they are like the shoes of the people of Israel in the wilderness, "which waxed not old for forty years."

3. Your holy conversation will honour your profession, and raise the beauty and glory of religion. By this means, wicked men think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot. Men can better judge of our lives and conversations, than they can of our principles.

4. And otherways your nakedness in part will appear to your shame and reproach.

2dly. Information. This may inform us, why so many are so uncomely in their going or walking. Alas! they want these shoes on their feet, they want holy affections, bowed wills, and Christian resolution; they do not "with full purpose of heart, cleave unto the Lord, nor unto one another in love: "but Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat," &c. Did professors purpose not to adhere to any temptation; nor do any unpleasant action, nor neglect any known duty, nor countenance any disorderly person or practice, what comely walkers should we have in our churches.

3dly. Moreover, this may inform us what the cause is so many are hurt and wounded, and halt in the way; alas! their feet want shoes, they are not shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; and by this means they give way to a contentious and quarrelling spirit, and disturb their own peace, and peace of the church also. It is for want of these shoes of preparation, that so many neglect their communion to the grief of their pious brethren.

4thly. It may be improved to the comfort of such Christians that are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, who are ready always to every good work. Others are like men that have not their shoes on, they are not ready to comply with this Christian duty, and that Christian duty, but raise up one cavil or another against it: but you who have shoes on your feet, are always ready to every good work, nay, completely armed to oppose the enemy of your souls, and to engage in any difficulty whatsoever, and therefore you shall stand in the hour of temptation.

SERMON XXI.

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat and be merry.—Luke xv. 23.

FIRST the father called for the best robe to put upon his returned prodigal, and shoes to put on his feet; and he being well clothed and adorned, and well shod, he now calls for the best he had to feed and feast him.

The poor prodigal when he came to himself, finding he was "pinched with hunger," (being almost starved, and ready to perish) thought of the plenty that was in his father's house, "In my father's house is bread enough, and to spare." He wanted bread; if he could have nothing but bread, it would have satisfied him; he seemed to desire no more than the bread of his father's house; but now he is come home, his father calls for the best he had. "Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it." Though it was killed before, yet the Holy Ghost intimates as if it was now to be slain, and that particularly too for this one lost son.

Doct. One sinner could not be fed, unless the Lord Jesus be slain and made food for his soul.

Some (as our annotators) take the best robe to mean our inherent righteousness, but I have showed that cannot be the best robe. I should rather (saith he) choose to interpret the killing the fatted calf for the prodigal to represent the "application of the blood of Christ, which is made to every sinner that truly repenteth, and maketh application to God for mercy: and the best robe, the righteousness of Christ, which is reckoned that moment to the sinner that believeth." All indeed that speak of the fatted calf, believe it meaneth the Lord Jesus Christ, sometimes expressed by a lamb, the best of all the flock, and sometimes by a kid, as ver. 29. "And yet thou never gavest me a kid," &c. The reason why I conclude it signifies Jesus Christ, is because he only is the food of our souls, and he that feedeth not on him cannot live, but must perish: and although mention is made of the best robe before (as if he had that on before he fed upon Jesus Christ, or heard of the fatted calf) yet we must know every thing cannot be expressed together; besides, a sinner no doubt is first apprehended by Jesus Christ, before he apprehendeth him: for the Spirit (which is the bond of union, and the seed of faith) is received before the act of faith is exerted, or sensible comfort, joy, and peace, experienced by a believer; for faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and his feeding upon the fatted kid may denote his sensible enjoyment of peace and comfort in believing. The prodigal before fed (you heard) upon husks, on vanity, on the wind, i. e., upon the sinful pleasures, profits, and honours, &c. of this world: but now he is returned to his father's house, he must eat the best, eat that which is good, and his soul delight itself in fatness.

Contin of
Pool's annot.

Fat, fatted, fatness, signifies that which is the best, the most choice and most excellent of every thing; we read of the "fat of wine, the fat of oil, the fat of wheat, the fat of the land," Numb. xviii. 12. "It is said of Asher, his bread shall be fat," Gen. xlv. 18. He shall have the best bread, and abundance of it. "They shall be fed with the fatness of thy house," Gen. xlix. 20, "I will feed them in a fat pasture," Psal. xxxvi. 8, the best, the choicest. So here, the fatted calf, fatted lamb, or kid, signifies the best, or that which excels in its kind.

Bring hither; that is, set before him the best provision of my house; he shall eat the fat, that which is delicious or most dainty food; the very best which is meant by bringing hither the fatted calf. I have shall not be withheld from him; he shall eat that which is "meat indeed, and drink that which is drink indeed," John vi. 55.

You, my servants, my ministers, bring forth a slain Saviour, my fatted lamb, that is killed and roasted in the fire of my wrath, to feed hungry sinners withal; present a crucified Christ before their eyes, that they by faith may feed and feast thereon. Do not feed them with such things that cannot satisfy their precious souls; they shall not eat their own husky bread, nor the trash of their own doings, nor feed upon airy notions, nor upon corrupt and poisonous meat; but upon my fatted Lamb, or upon a crucified Christ, and on what he is made to every one that truly believeth on him.

But more comprehensively, by the fatted kid, or calf, is no doubt meant all the spiritual blessings and choicest refreshments and comforts comprehended in a sinner's receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our heavenly Father allows the best to feed and feast the returned or believing sinner; he is a great King, and therefore the best provision of his house is the very best in heaven and earth.

From hence let me note one or two doctrinal truths.

Doct. I. That a returning sinner, or a believer is not only richly clothed and richly adorned, but also richly fed, he hath the best, the most refreshing, strengthening, and comforting provision of God's house.

II. That no food, meat, nor bread will satisfy, strengthen, cheer, and comfort a poor sinner, but only feeding upon a slain Saviour.

"My flesh is meat indeed," &c., saith our blessed Saviour, no food like a crucified Jesus for poor perishing sinners. "Verily, verily, I say unto, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." Ver. 53, 54.

I. I shall show you, why God will feed believing sinners with the best of his house, or with a crucified Christ.

II. Prove that this feast, this food, contains the best of all God's house, or what he hath to give unto our souls.

III. Show why feeding upon Jesus Christ is set forth by feeding on a fatted calf, kid, or lamb.

IV. Show you who they are that feed upon the fat things, or best of God's house.

I. Why will God feed sinners with the best of his house, &c.

1. Because no other spiritual food is good for the soul. "Eat you that which is good." Implying that nothing that sinners can meet with short of Christ, or besides Jesus Christ, is good.

(1.) Sinful pleasures, riches, honours, self-righteousness, or moral righteousness, are not proper food for lost sinners. What are these things? they are compared to husks or grains, which the swine of this world feed upon; they are swine's meat, they only feed the sensual part of man, and cannot feed his precious and immortal soul.

(2.) Or what are the traditions and commandments of men, but corrupt food, of which we are bid not to "touch, taste, nor handle?" Col. ii. 21, 22.

(3.) Or what is false doctrine, errors, and heresies, but poisonous food? it will poison, and utterly destroy the souls of such that feed thereon.

2. Because all other food is forbidden, it is prohibited, or forbidden meat (as the fruit of the tree of knowledge was to our first parents), upon pain of eternal death, sinners are forbid to feed upon any food, save upon Christ alone, or upon the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, on his obedience, on his righteousness, on his death and merits. If any preach justification and eternal life by any other way, or bring in any other gospel, "Let them be accursed," Gal. i. 9, and let all that receive any other

Christ was prepared for gospel, or feed on any other food, dread the same penalty and eternal danger.

3. Because this food, viz., a crucified or slain Saviour, was provided for

returning sinners, or believing sinners, as an act of infinite wisdom, love, and goodness, to feed upon from eternity. "Him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23. Hence, also it is said, "He was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. xiii. 8. O the riches of God's preventing grace! how early did he provide for poor sinners! the plaister was prepared before we were wounded, and the price of redemption before we were brought into slavery, and bread before we were hungry, and a fountain to wash in before we were defiled.

4. Because the Son of God, the Lamb of God, was roasted with the fire, broken and made fit meat, on purpose to feed believing sinners. God was at no small cost in providing of this banquet for his guests. Should any of you lay out thousands to provide a feast for your friends, surely you would have them eat and feed thereon; you would say, bring hither the fatted calf, and the wine which I have mingled. God hath furnished his table. "Wisdom (that is, the wisdom of God) hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, she hath furnished her table, and she hath sent forth her maidens," viz., (Prov. ix. 2.) the ministers of the gospel, to make all this known to sinners, and to show how willing God is they should eat thereof.

5. Because believers are the sons and daughters of God, they are the King's children, and shall he deny them to eat of the best in all his house! What father would refuse to let his dear children have the best he hath, especially when he had on purpose provided it for them? It is, my brethren, the children's meat, it was not provided for dogs. "Shall I take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs?" Matt. xv. 26.

Again, our Lord saith, "Give not that which is holy to dogs," Matt. vii. 6. But he that believeth in Christ is a child, and no dog. The prodigal was a son before by creation, but now he is a son of God by adoption; nay, he is begotten and born of God, and so a son by regeneration; and therefore the Father feeds him with the best of his house.

6. Because they are invited to this feast, and are bid to eat; many others were invited, but they desired to be excused; but the prodigal came, the poor, the halt, and blind came; and what saith Christ to them? "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved," Cant. v. 1. Also it is no more than what God hath promised to such he brings into his house. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fat things of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures," Psal. xxxvi. 8. And again, he saith, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," Isa. lv. 2. Shall God provide thus for believing sinners, and bid them eat; and also knowing what need they have of this food, is it any marvel he saith, "Bring hither the fatted calf? This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23, i. e., this is his command, that we feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. "Eat his flesh, and drink his blood." Fly to him for righteousness, rest upon him at all times for justification, sanctification, for strength, help, support, succour, comfort, and consolation, and for whatsoever we need as long as we are in this world.

7. God will have believing sinners feed on Jesus Christ, or on the best of his house, for his promise sake; who hath said, "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them," &c. Psal. lxxxiv. 11. "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing," Psal. xxxiv. 10. "He will give meat to them that fear him, he is ever mindful of his covenant," Psal. ci. 5. When a sinner returns to God, he shall have all things whatsoever that are good.

Object. But perhaps some poor child of God may object, and say I want many good things.

Answ. 1. You may call such things good things, which God knows are not good for you; he must be judge, who only knows what is best for us.

2. You may call such things, good things, which though good in themselves, yet are but husks, or dross in comparison of those things that God bestoweth upon you.

3. The poorest saint on earth hath the very best of heaven for his precious soul, the best clothing, the best ornaments, and the best food. He dwells in the best house or habitation; "For he dwells in God. Thou, Lord, hast been our dwelling-place in all generation," Psal. xc. 1. He hath the best friends, the best company, the best riches, the best honour; he is a child of God, and an heir of glory, he hath the best pleasures, the best peace, and the best privileges, and shall have the best

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end ; he has the best retinue or guard to attend him, and wait on him, and to minister to him, viz., the holy angels of God ; and the best promises. " Godliness hath the promise of the life that is now, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8.

4. Moreover, whatsoever a believer hath of the things of this world, he hath them without a curse ; those things that the wicked have, they have with a curse ; and not only so, but believers have every thing sanctified to them, and in love ; nay, more, they have also God with them, Christ with them. Alas ! what are all the things of this world, and no God, no Christ, no pardon, no peace ? " There is no peace, to the wicked, saith my God," Isa. xlviii. 22. " A little that a righteous man hath is better than the revenues of many wicked," Psal. xxxvii. 16.

5. What though you have some bitter things, bitter to the body, yet God sees they are best for the soul ; it is hard to persuade a carnal man that Lazarus had better things than Dives.

6. Besides, all afflictions, trials, sorrows, or bitter things that a child of God meets with, are mixed with sweet ; also their sorrows will be but short, and shall be turned into joy. Nay, " Their afflictions which are but for a moment, work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

7. If we had perhaps what some others have, it would surfeit us, nay, poison and undo our souls. Men may eat to excess ; drink to excess ; but those things which believers feed upon and enjoy, they cannot have to excess, they are things that neither cloy nor surfeit the soul. If we had no winter, worms and weeds would spoil the wheat, and destroy our gardens. So had we no sharp trials, no afflictions, no wintery weather, our corruptions, or the love of this world, might destroy and ruin our souls.

8. Would you be like the swine of this world, rather feed on their husks and trash, than on the choice food of your Father's house ? What are all earthly riches, honours, and sensual pleasures, to the riches of grace and glory ?

APPLICATION.

1. This may tend to reprove such ministers who do not as God commands, viz., " bring forth the fatted calf," or the precious Lamb of God for sinners to feed upon ; or that do not preach Christ as the sum and substance of all their ministry. " We preach Christ crucified," 1 Cor. i. 23.—Philip went down to the city of Samaria, " and preached Christ to them," Acts viii. 5 ; and St. Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached, though some " preached him out of strife and contention," Phil. i. 15. The great subject all the holy apostles preached, was Jesus Christ, or a crucified Saviour.

2. By this you may know who are true ministers, from such who are corrupt, or counterfeit, or false teachers.

(1.) Some instead of bringing Jesus Christ or preaching Christ, bring forth the traditions of men, the commandments of men, or the doctrines of men, as the Scribes and Pharisees did.

(2.) Some bring forth the doctrine of merits, that sinners may eat their own bread, as the Papists. And how many called Protestants, that are counted great preachers, who seldom ever preach Jesus Christ ? How many sermons may you hear, and not a word hardy of Christ in them ? I think that word of the prophet, concerning seven women taking hold of one man, may refer to many people in these days : what did they say, why, " we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel, only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach," Isa. iv. 1. Many now-a-days are for feeding on their own works, or on their own bread, or to be justified or clothed with their own righteousness or acts of morality, according to the light of their own natural conscience, yet would be called by Christ's name, i. e., be called Christians, to take away their reproach, it being counted a disgraceful thing, or a reproach to be called heathens or infidels, though they are but little better, having no true faith in Christ, nor likeness to him.

(3.) Some bring forth men's own inherent righteousness, their faith and sincere obedience, as that which must feed and justify them before God.

(4.) Moreover, others bring forth the doctrine of the old heathen, and preach Aristotle, Seneca, and Plato, &c., and feed the people with bread that satisfies not.

And some bring forth other poisonous food, of errors and damnable heresies, instead of bringing forth a crucified Christ.

3. By this ministers may learn what doctrine to preach ; for as Christ must be received for justification, and the best robe put on, so they must bring forth Jesus Christ still : a crucified Saviour must continually be fed upon, as long as we live, i. e., we must fetch all our hope, strength, and comfort from him always, to the end of our lives.

4. Trial. Sinners, are you come to yourselves? also know that you will not think of returning home to God, until a famine arise in your souls, and you see you have nothing but husks to eat.

(1.) Do you hunger after Christ, long after Christ? do you see that you must perish without Jesus Christ? the prodigal said, I perish with hunger. This caused him to resolve to go home.

How to know
we are come
to Christ or
not.

(2.) What is it which you feed upon? Is it upon Christ, or something else? Something of your own? Or do you only feed your carnal and sensual part, and not consider of your soul's wants.

(3.) Did you ever, "labour for the meat which perishes not?" John vi. 27. They that hunger and see that they are ready to perish, will strive, labour, and do their utmost to obtain bread: the proverb is, that hunger breaks stone walls. What will not men do before they will die with hunger.

(4.) Do you know the way in which you may meet with that meat which endures to everlasting life: and also who it is that must give it to you, if you seek it. "For him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 27. He that believeth on him shall have this meat; believing and eating is all one thing.

You see what provision the blessed God had made for returning sinners, and what entertainment you shall meet with. Methinks there can be hardly any poor sinner here, but should, in the strength of God, resolve to return to him, in and by Jesus Christ; what, are the sweet embraces of a gracious God not worth regard? He falls upon the neck of returning prodigals, and kisseth such. Also are not the best robe, the ring for the hand, and shoes for the feet, and the fatted calf worth seeking?

But now one word to you that are believers.

1. O labour to admire the rich bounty of your Father: what hath he done to feed, refresh, and comfort our souls; what, hath he not withheld his own Son, not spared his only begotten Son, but delivered him up for us all; "how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

2. Can you live one day without feeding upon Jesus Christ; do you every day act faith on him, fetch strength and comfort from Jesus Christ; what is it which bears up, and chiefly revives your spirits, and cheers your hearts; is it the fulness of corn and wine, or the enjoyments of earthly things? or is it not rather the light of God's countenance, his love and favour in Jesus Christ, whose loving-kindness is better than life.

3. Is Christ sweet to you, precious to you? he is so to all that believe. "To you that believe he is precious," I Pet. ii. 7. If you have tasted that the Lord is good, that the Lord is gracious. And is he not as good to you still, as ever he was? Can you say that his word is, "sweeter than honey or the honey-comb," Psal. xix. 10. And that you esteem it above your necessary food?

4. What spiritual strength do you find in your souls, against sin and temptations, by feeding upon this meat? Do you grow in strength, in zeal, in faith, and in holiness? This (as you will hear) is strengthening food: the more we eat and feed thereon, the greater strength we shall find in the ways of God, and sin will be weakened and mortified in you, if you live upon Jesus Christ; besides, you will arrive every day to more and greater satisfaction: yea, you shall, "be abundantly satisfied with the fat things of God's house," Psal. iii. 8.

5. Can you feed upon spiritual food heartily? have you a good appetite? Many persons eat not, because they hunger not. "The full soul loathes the honey-comb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet," Prov. ii. 7. If it do but feed and nourish, or tend to satisfy its hunger. Some are fed with the rod, and find more nourishment by that than others find in the word.

SERMON XXII.

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.—Luke xv. 23.

Doctr. A believing sinner is not only richly clothed, and richly adorned, but also richly fed: he hath the best of God's house to feed, refresh, strengthen, and comfort his soul.

1st. I have showed you why God will feed believing sinners with the best of his house or with a crucified Christ.

2ndly. I shall now proceed to prove, that this meat, this feast, is the best of all God's house. Fat, fatted, or fat things, we have showed, denote the best of every thing. "Bring hither the fatted calf," i. e., the best I have in my house, that which is meat indeed, &c. And that this spiritual banquet contains the best of God's house, will appear if we consider the cause, spring, or fountain from whence all here cometh, or flows to us, or what they are the choice effects of.

Spiritual
food the best
of all God's
house.

Christ not
the cause but
the effects of
the Father's
love.

The soul of
man a choice
thing.

1. The Lamb of God (signified by the fattening in my text) and all these dainties with him are the best.

1. Because the efficient cause, spring, and fountain from whence they come, is God's eternal, infinite, and incomprehensible love and divine goodness. Jesus Christ, my brethren, is not the cause of God's love, but the effects and fruits of his love: though all other spiritual blessings were purchased for us by the Lord Christ, yet he did not purchase the love of God to us, no, God loved his elect from everlasting, and as the effects and fruits thereof, he sent his own Son to die for us. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c., John iii. 16. Divine love in God is an eternal property of his holy nature: God is love. Again, saith the same apostle, "In this was manifested the love of God to us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him," 1 John iv. 9. Through him, or by means of his death, and by feeding upon him. O from what a choice spring or fountain did this divine feast flow? the cause is great, noble, and amazing, and so is the fruit and effects thereof also; nay, and what we eat of here, was not the product or fruit only of eternal love, mercy, and goodness, but the effects of infinite wisdom also.

2. It is the very best of God's house, if we consider the subject fed here-with, viz., the precious and immortal soul of man, so excellent in its nature is the soul, that nothing but God can satisfy it (God only is the Father of our spirits), Heb. xii. 9, who in a peculiar sense is the cause of its original: and pray view it in its noble faculties, and admirable powers; it is the glory of man, and the envy of devils: it is capable to bear the image of God, and divine union and communion with him; it can contemplate the divine perfections of the majesty of him that formed it, and find out the Creator by the creature; it is in its motions as swift as thought, and capable to receive the Holy Spirit, and to be filled with the fulness of God. How are its rich rooms hang'd and adorned with rich and costly jewels? "Like as the carved works of the temple, overlaid with pure gold." The price paid to redeem it shows its great worth, dignity, and inestimable value.

This is the subject that is fed at this banquet, yea, and not only fed, but feasted. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness."

3. It is the best of all our Father's house, if we consider the matter of which this feast doth consist. Is not Jesus Christ the best of heaven and earth? Why it is he that we are called to feed upon, the choice and precious Lamb of God: "he that was with God from all eternity, and was God," John i. 1, 2: yea, co-equal, and co-essential with the Father. My brethren, I may say, and not offend, that God could not give us that which is better, he hath nothing to give that excels that which we are here called to feed upon: for when God gives us Christ, he gives us himself; we feed upon God, enjoy God. "O taste and see that the Lord is good," Psal. xxxiv. 8. Is there any thing greater and better than God himself? he cannot give that which is more, or which excels himself. "I will be your God." God is not our God until we are in Jesus Christ, living in him, and feeding upon him.

4. That it is the best of our Father's house, appears if we consider the nature of the food we are here to feed upon.

(1.) It is incorruptible food. As we are "born again of incorruptible seed;" so our souls are fed with incorruptible food, meat that perishes not. How soon will the best of earthly provision, or choice food corrupt? it will soon breed worms and stink; but this corrupteth not, but endureth for ever; and this is one argument our Saviour useth to exhort us from labouring for earthly food; "Labour not for the meat that perishes, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," &c., John vi. 27. It is well worth our observing, that nothing we have, either to eat, or put on, but perishes in using; but the food of our souls is abiding. "The word of God abideth for ever; and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," 1 Pet. i. 25, Heb. xiii. 8.

It is precious
meat.

(2.) "It is a precious food, costly food, yea, food of infinite worth and

value." It is worth more than ten thousand worlds, though called a fatted calf, a lamb, or kid. Christ may be called a fatted calf, because he is slighted and contemned by carnal men; but commonly he is set forth by a lamb, as a "Lamb without spot or blemish," 1 Pet. i. 19. "And the Lamb of God," John i. 29. How precious is Christ to God the Father, and to the holy angels, and to all true believers? The spouse says, "He is the chiefest among ten thousands," Cant. v. 10; yet his precious body was broken, and his precious blood was shed that we might live, and be fed therewith to eternal life. That which redeemed, and that which feedeth our precious souls, must needs be a precious thing, and of infinite worth; but Christ both redeemed and feedeth our souls, &c.

(3.) It is, as I have often told you, soul-satisfying food. "Wherefore do you labour for that which satisfieth not?" Isa. lv. 1, 2. Riches satisfy not; pleasures of the world satisfy not; and though earthly food may satisfy the body for a short time, yet we quickly hunger again; but so shall not that soul that eats of this meat. "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," John vi. 35: that is, he shall never want anything that is truly good; he shall abide always satisfied, having an interest in me: or shall never be perplexed with soul-wants and necessity.

5. It is the bread of life, therefore the best of God's house. He that feeds on this meat shall live for ever, and not die. O what food is this? Could some people but meet with bread that would preserve them from death, how would they rejoice? But who (that is wise) would live here always? Is not the life of the soul better than the life of the body? And is it not better to live in heaven than on earth, and to be delivered from the second death than the first? Natural death to a believer, is but a passage into life. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever," John vi. 51. "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and never die," Ver. 50.

6. It is the best food, yea, the best of God's house, because of the choice varieties that are contained herein.

(1.) Redemption. Is not this rare food for the soul to feed upon; what is more sweet, more delicious? What! redeemed from the curse of the law, and out of the hands of offended justice? What! redeemed from sin, from the guilt, the power, and punishment, and pollution thereof? What! redeemed from slavery, from the bondage of Satan, the captivity and dominion of Satan, who had us once in his chains? and what! redeemed from death, and the power of the grave? "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. xv. 6. O what a redemption is this, and how good to feed upon!

(2.) Is not reconciliation sweet food to feed upon? What! reconciled to God? Is God become our Friend and our Father? Is he fully pacified towards us, and engaged in a covenant of peace to be our God, and for us, and against all our enemies, and to be our God for ever? What can be more strengthening, or more consoling than this?

(3.) Is not a vital union with Jesus Christ a choice thing? He that feeds on this food, is made one with the Father and the Son. "I in them, and thou in me, and they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me," John xvii. 23. Perfect in one; that is, in one body, whereof Christ is the same Spirit that is in the Head, is in every member, and in his whole mystical body. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit," 1 Cor. vi. 17.

(4.) Is not justification a choice thing, to be acquitted and discharged from sin and wrath, and pronounced righteous and without sin and spot, by imputation of Christ's righteousness, and to have a right and sure title to eternal ever freed from condemnation? O how good is this food? Rom. viii. 1.

(5.) Is not pardon of sin precious food? to have all sins, past, present, and to come (as to vindictive wrath) pardoned for ever. "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

(6.) Is not peace with God, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, most delicious food? for how excellent must that be, "which passeth all understanding?" Phil. iv. 6.

So doth the peace of God.

(7.) Is not adoption sweet meat to feed upon? "Because ye are sons, God hath sent

It is soul-satisfying.

See the parable of the marriage supper.

Redemption belongs to the gospel-banquet.

Reconciliation is part of this feast.

on our side, refreshing,

Union with Christ choice meat.

Head: the mystical body.

Justification tasteth sweet.

life, and for

Pardon of sin is a precious thing.

The peace of God good beyond expression.

forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 6. The people of the Jews were an adopted people. Israel was called God's son, "To them belonged the adoption," Rom. ix. 4. And from God's promise, the blessings of the spiritual adoption were first given to them; but we that were not sons, but strangers and foreigners, feed on the food of special and peculiar adoption, being "Fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," Eph. ii. 19. "Ye have not received (ye Gentiles) the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the

It is a marriage feast. Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father," Rom. viii. 15.

consolatory? What! married to Jesus Christ, and sit with Jesus Christ at his table, and eat with him, sup with him, and lie with us, at this banquet prepared to solemnize the marriage between the Lord Christ, and a poor believing sinner?

See the parable of the Marriage supper opened. (9.) Is not communion with Jesus Christ sweet food? To partake of his love, and to have him to communicate to our souls the fullest and sweetest blessings purchased for us by his blood.

We feed on communion with Christ. (10.) Is not an assurance of eternal life, sweet, fattening, strengthening, and consoling food? Why, all those things, and many more, are comprehended in our feeding on this fattening, or in feeding on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, why is feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ set forth by feeding upon fatlings, or on slain beasts?

1. Because these fatlings, or fatted beasts, whether a lamb, calf, or kid, are counted the best of all the flesh of beasts: and hence also they were offered up in sacrifice under the law; signifying to us, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the very best and choicest food of all spiritual food for our souls. Those beasts that were ordained for sacrifices were to be clean beasts, and the best of every sort: if a lamb, it was to be the best, a lamb without

Christ the best sacrifice. spot or blemish, no unclean beasts were allowed of: so Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, was the best of all the flock above and below, a Lamb without spot or blemish, without sin, or the least stain of pollution, either original or actual; for otherwise he could not have satisfied for our sins, nor have fed and feasted our souls, as we by faith do feed upon him.

Christ was slain in our stead. 2. Those beasts under the law that were to be offered up for sacrifices, were to be slain for the sins of the people, and in their stead: so Jesus Christ was slain, and offered up a sacrifice unto God for us, (and in our stead) to atone for our sins, "Even the just for the unjust," 1 Pet. iii. 18.

3. The flesh of the paschal lamb was to be eaten by all the people of Israel, being first roasted with fire; every family were to have a lamb, not one quarter, or piece only, but a whole lamb: so Jesus Christ bore the fiery wrath of God for us, and we must feed upon him, and receive a whole Christ; every sinner must receive a whole Christ into a whole heart; Christ must not be divided, nor the heart of a sinner be divided; we must not take Christ to be our Priest only, but our Prince and Sovereign also, not only to appease God's wrath, and to satisfy his justice for us, but as a Prince to rule and reign in and over us: and every faculty of our souls must be wrought upon, and be renewed, the understanding enlightened, will bowed to the will of God, and to obedience to Christ, and our affections changed, and our whole souls united to him, guided and governed by him.

Beasts under the law were not only ordained or appointed for sacrifices, but also for food; the whole priesthood (as one observes) were to feed thereon; but no stranger in Lev. xxii. 12, the priest's family was allowed to eat thereof. So Jesus Christ was not only

13. 14. appointed to be a sacrifice for our sins, but to be food also for our souls. "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," John vi. 55. All the saints of God are the antitypical priesthood, 1 Pet. ii. 5. But no stranger, no unbeliever ought, nor indeed can he eat of this spiritual food; nor ought such to be admitted to the Lord's supper (a figure of this feast).

Christ precious to such who feed on him. 4. The flesh of these beasts is very delicious, fattening, sweet, and exceeding good, so is Jesus Christ to them that feed spiritually on him; and if you never tasted him so to be, you are not true believers. "To you that believe he is precious," 1 Pet. ii. 7. "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" Psal. xxxiv.

8. How precious is Christ when a sinner can say, this Christ is my Christ? "My beloved is mine and I am his," or with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." How good is his love, his promises, his word, and his ordinances unto such persons that believe in him!

Spiritual food strong. 5. The flesh of such beasts is not only sweet and pleasant to the taste, but

is also strengthening food, causing growth in those that feed thereon, until they are strong. we come to perfect manhood, so believers, by feeding on Jesus Christ, receive soul-strength, and spiritually grow thereby; yea, all thrive and grow in grace, every member of the "mystical body, the whole body having nourishment, increaseth with the increase of God," &c., Col. ii. 19. "Desiring the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," Act. ii. 2.

My brethren, as the branch lives, grows, and bears fruit, by drawing sap from the root; so believers grow by feeding by faith on Jesus Christ.

6. Meat, as it strengthens, comforts, and nourishes the body, so it preserves life. Hence bread (which comprehends all good things) is called "the stay or staff of life," Isa. iii. 1. So Jesus Christ is the stay and staff, or preserver of the life of our souls, he is called our life, because he purchased it, and his Spirit in us preserves that life which is in our souls; we are preserved also in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

7. The flesh of beasts, bread, nor any other food, profits any, nourishes, feeds, strengthens, or comforts any man or woman, but such only that eat thereof, it is not enough they see it on the table prepared for them, or take of it into their hands; no, but if they would be nourished by it, they must eat it, or feed thereon: so Christ doth not profit, nourish, strengthen, or comfort any soul, but he only that feedeth on him; we must feed upon a crucified Christ. "He that eateth me, shall live by me," John vi. 57. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," ver. 53. No life, either of justification, of sanctification, nor of consolation. What a noise is there of late, of sinners being justified and united to Christ, before faith, nay without faith? Certainly, they do either not believe that which our Lord here saith, or else they understand him not. Whatsoever federal or virtual union there is between Christ and the elect before faith, we speak not of; but evident it is, no man is personally justified, *i. e.*, acquitted, and pronounced a just and righteous person, unless he obtains a vital union with Christ, and eateth his flesh, and drinketh his blood. No unbeliever is either in a state of life, or hath a principle of life in him. "He that hath the Son, hath life, but he that hath not the Son, hath not life," 1 John v. 12.

No man hath life but he that feedeth on Christ.

8. The flesh of beasts tends to satisfy human nature, allay extreme hunger, and also restores lost strength, and lost beauty. The poor prodigal was near starved before he returned home, and no doubt his strength and beauty was gone. But now his craving soul was satisfied, and he was eased of those dolorous and gnawing pains, which before he felt when he came to himself. Believers by feeding on Christ are fully satisfied (as you heard) and their strength is restored, and now they are lively, and of an amiable countenance. The souls of sinners are like Pharaoh's "lean kine, ill-favoured." How wofully doth a man look that is almost starved to death? He is under great and dolorous pains and weakness; but believers are fat and flourishing, comely, and beautiful in God's sight, and eased of those gripes of conscience, which they felt when the Spirit first brought them under strong convictions.

Feeding on Christ is satisfying, and restores lost beauty.

Fourthly, Who are they that eat the best, the fattest, and strongest meat of God's house?

1. Such as feed upon Jesus Christ to the full satisfaction of their souls, "They shall be abundantly satisfied." Some eat, but yet seem to want that inward peace and satisfaction, which strong Christians have arrived to. Many believers, though their souls are fed and sustained, yet they are not feasted; they eat, but are not filled, as others are.

Who they are that feed on the fat things of God's house.

2. Such may be said "to feed on the fat things of God's house," as have the sensible enjoyment of Christ's love, and live day by day in the light of God's countenance, being possessed with, or enjoying strong consolation. There is the life of justification and sanctification, and these all God's children partake of; but the life of comfort and consolation many of them do not enjoy, but walk much in darkness, and under doubts and fears, from the weakness of their faith, or the want of more clear light in the nature of true grace, and of the covenant, of the love of God, and of the suretyship of Jesus Christ, &c.

Strong Christians have sensible enjoyments of Christ's love.

3. Therefore such as have much clear light and knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel, and a strong faith, feed on the fat things of the house of God; for according to the manifestations of the glorious gospel, and the measure of faith; so is our feeding upon Jesus Christ. No man will, nor can eat abundantly, or feed upon strong meat, but such who have a strong faith. Of Canaan had a great faith, and she eat the very best of this gospel feast.

They have much light in Gospel mysteries.

The woman
"O woman,
2 E

great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt," Matt. xv. 28. The best I have is for thee. So also had the woman who had the issue of blood. "If I can but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole," Mark v. 25, 28. Some cannot believe, though they have many promises made unto them; no, they with Thomas must see and feel, or else they cannot, will not believe; but this woman had no immediate promise made her by Christ, but she no doubt, exercised faith in some general promises, and saw what Christ had done for others who had faith in him: by which means she believed with the greatest degree of faith. "Who toucheth me? (saith our Saviour) somebody hath touched me, for I perceive virtue is gone out of me," Luke viii. 46. A strong faith fetcheth mighty virtue from Jesus Christ, and such are fed with the best food. Babes cannot eat strong meat, or but little of it, they must be fed with milk. But strong men can eat and digest strong meat: so strong Christians feed upon the strongest, the fattest, and best food of God's house; they discern more clearly the mysteries of Christ, and of the gospel; whereas weak Christians must live upon slenderer diet, or on such doctrine that is more plain and easy to be understood. "Every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of age, those, who by reason of use have their senses exercised, to discern both good and evil," Heb. v. 13, 14.

4. Such who always feed upon Jesus Christ alone, or who eat nothing of their own, being carried wholly out of themselves to feed upon Jesus Christ living by faith only. "Now the just shall live by faith," Heb. x. 38. But many weak believers rather live by sense than by faith. If sin be weakened in them, and they feel a greater conformity in their souls to God, and are in a lively frame, then they can live and have some hope and inward comfort; but this is rather to live by sense, than to live by faith in Jesus Christ. It is not (saith a strong believer) because grace lives in me; but because Christ lives (who is my life) that I shall live. "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19.

5. They eat the fat, &c., that live by faith upon that fulness which is in Christ.

(1.) Upon that fulness of wisdom that is in Christ; Jesus Christ, saith that soul, knows what is best for me: though what I meet with is hard to the flesh, yet he is wise; I need these sharp stripes, these sore trials and afflictions; I am put into Christ's hand to dispose of me as he sees good, and here I rest "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold," Job xxiii. 10. It is not because God is angry with me, or hateth me, but because he loves me, he doth afflict me. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," Rev. iii. 19.

(2.) They that live upon the fulness of that righteousness and strength which is in Christ; though I am weak, yet Christ is strong, and his strength is mine, it is engaged for me. "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," Psal. lxxiii. 26. I have the sense of much sin and filth in me, but Christ hath a fulness of righteousness in him to justify me, and a fulness of power to strengthen me; and not only to pardon my sins, but to subdue and mortify them also. "In the Lord shall one say, I have righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 24. I have many spots and blemishes, but I am in him without spot or blemish in the sight of God. "Ye are complete in him, who is the head of principalities and powers," Col. ii. 10.

(3.) They that live upon that fulness of grace which is in Christ. O, saith a strong Christian, my vessel is almost empty, but the fountain is full; "with thee is the fountain of life." And from that fountain I shall be replenished and supplied continually. "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," 2 Tim. ii. 1. Do not rely upon that grace that is in thee, for that may be weak and decay; but fetch all thy support, strength, and comfort from that grace that is in Jesus Christ. "When I am weak, then I am strong." When weakest in myself, I am strongest in Christ. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in thy weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 9. Christ is full of grace, who is the head of influence to his whole mystical body. "And of his fulness all we receive, and grace for grace," John i. 14, 16. It was this which caused St. Paul to glory. What though a child hath but little bread, a little meat, or but a little money? he matters not. O, saith he, my father has enough, he is a rich man, a noble man, he hath abundance of all riches, and of all good things, and I shall not want, because he is my father. Sirs, should a multitude of thieves and murderers break into a house, the little children might be afraid, because they are not able to withstand them; but if they knew their Father could destroy

ten thousand of them with a blast of his mouth, they would not be at all terrified. Why some of God's children are certain of this, they know God can in a moment destroy all their enemies, though their inherent grace and strength is nothing. But now to exercise faith in that strength and grace which is in Christ, is to be strong in the Lord. "Therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," 2 Cor. xii. 9.

(4.) They that live upon the fulness of that love that is in Christ: as he is full of grace, so his love is infinite, unchangeable, and everlasting, nay, it "passeth all understanding;" they know nothing can separate them from the love of Christ," Rom. viii. 35. And thus they that live by faith feed upon the fulness of Christ, and thereby eat the best things, the fat things of God's house.

They live upon the fulness of that love that is in Christ.

6. I might add, they that live upon the "faithfulness of Christ." I am tempted (saith a poor saint) to decline my profession, or to grow cool in my zeal, nay, to murmur against God, and to think that Christ loves me not; his hand is so heavy upon me, I meet with cross winds, blustering storms that bear my ship almost under water; the gates of hell seem to open themselves against my soul, and the powers of darkness are raised up to destroy me. But Christ is on my side, he is for me, and he hath promised to help me, and he also is faithful. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. He is the faithful and true Witness. "No temptation hath overtaken you but such as are common to men; and God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, and will with the temptation make way for your escape, that you may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. I will not only trust in Christ for strength and support, but will look to him, and expect it from him, because he is faithful; and he hath said, "Fear not, I am with thee, he not dismayed; I am thy God, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee, yea, I will strengthen thee," Isa. xli. 10. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. This made Jonas when he was in the whale's belly, to say, "Yet will I look agurttowards thy holy temple," Jonah ii. 4.

7. Such who see suitable promises for every condition, and can rely, and live upon Christ in the promises, let their estate be what it will. "Man lives not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," Matt. iv. 4. And though they are in darkness, yet they can "stay themselves upon their God," Isa. l. 10.

They live on the promises.

8. They eat the fat of God's house, who enjoy not only the ordinances, but God with them, and in them. Some are contented with a bare duty, and a bare ordinance, but that is but like dry bread. What is any ordinance if we meet not God with it? But if these believers meet not with God at one time, they resolve to make the more preparation to meet him at another, and ask their souls what the matter may be, why they met not with God at such or such a time; they will not neglect a duty because they met not with God as in times past; they do not find fault with the minister, nor with the ordinance, but with themselves; I was (saith such a person) in a dead and lifeless frame, the cause why I did not profit nor meet with comfort, was in myself.

They live on God in ordinances.

9. Such who are strong to bear burdens, and can bear up though trodden upon, and suffer contempt and reproach from their brethren, or from the world. These things are signs that such feed high, and are strong in the Lord; no discouragements discourage them, their love to Christ, and to his truth, and ways, is not cooled at all by any of these things; though they have not the love, the esteem, or praise of men, they care not, if they have the love and approbation of God, of which they have comfortable grounds, and see no cause to doubt of it.

10. Such who get power over their inward corruptions, and by degrees find sin weakened in them, and that sin which doth most easily beset them, loses its strength, and grace outgrows the weeds of corruption, yea, and grows the more by means of the cold blasts of temptations and afflictions; so that they are ready to suffer for Christ, having got the world under their feet, and dwell above in sweet communion with God and Jesus Christ.

They get power over their corruptions.

11. Such who always come to hear the word with a craving appetite, or have a good stomach, these eat the fat of this gospel-feast. Such who are sickly or distempered persons cannot eat strong meat, nor hardly anything will go down with them; so such who have soul-diseases, or are spiritually distempered, can find no appetite to receive the word, it is not sweet to them: and hence this sort are found oftentimes to quarrel with sound doctrine, and dislike and grow sick of their minister, and are better pleased with kick-shaws, I mean with airy and empty

Some saints have always a good appetite to spiritual food.

notions. Alas, many in these days are certainly surfeited with that great plenty God hath graciously afforded us, and account the heavenly manna but light bread; and so their full stomachs loathe the honey-comb.

APPLICATION.

1. From hence we may infer, that God is not like unto sorry man, he performeth to poor sinners all that he hath promised to them. Men promise, but are often slow in performing, or not so large as in their promises, but thus God doth not. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and unto our God, and he will abundantly pardon." &c., Isa. lv. 7. God doth not only pardon the sinner, but exceeds in his mercy and goodness all those thoughts the sinner could have. What could he do more in a way of mercy and love than is here expressed by the Father to the returning prodigal?

2. By this example of the Holy God, parents should learn to pass by great sins in their rebellious children, when they return to them, and humble themselves, and not to be of an irreconcilable spirit towards a prodigal child, who hath spent all on harlots, and by a wicked course of life; nay, and not forgive him only, but be kind and wonderfully bountiful to him, so as to overcome him with their love and goodness.

3. This may inform us, that the pardoning grace of God, and his rich mercy and bounty to returning sinners is wonderful, he forgives and upbraideth not.

4. This may serve to encourage sinners to return to God, though they have been never so vile and abominably wicked. See, you sinners, what entertainment you shall have, and how nobly you shall be treated, and be received, if you come unto God by Jesus Christ; what can you desire more? What, shall you have the very best that God hath? Will he deny you no good thing? Certainly some of you that hear me this day will resolve to return to this gracious God. Can you forbear one moment? O let nothing hinder you; let not Satan persuade you, God will not forgive your sins; see how he pardoned and received this great sinner.

5. This may also put us all upon the work of self-examination. Have we tasted how good God is; have we ever been thus fed and feasted with the best of our Father's house; if not, we may conclude that our faith is weak, or that we are but babes in Christ, or do not live by faith, but rather by sense. Observe those ten particulars I have laid down, and try yourselves by them.

6. Let none henceforth harp on hard thoughts of God, as if he gives grudgingly or sparingly unto us, because he gives us no more of the riches of this world. What, would you have the husks, which is the swine's food? God gives us the children's bread, that which is far better than what the wicked of the world have; and are we not contented? Is not God better than the creature? Doth he give us himself, and are we not satisfied?

SERMON XXIII.

And let us eat and be merry.—Luke xv. 23.

"LET us eat and be merry." This certainly denotes that sweet fellowship and communion every believer hath with God, when he closeth with him in Jesus Christ, or that sweet joy and comfort when he first comes home, or is converted; he then receives most choice and sensible communion with God and Jesus Christ. The Father's love is manifested to him, and the love of the Son is manifested to him; for then he feeds plentifully upon all the blessings of a crucified Saviour.

My brethren, there are three degrees or gradual steps of the happiness of believers.

1. Union with God and Jesus Christ. The prodigal was now brought into a state of union with the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit: here our happiness begins, this is the first step or spring of it.

2. Communion. This is the next, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3.

3. Full and perfect fruition of God for ever: this completes our eternal happiness.

The two first we partake of here, while we are in this world: the last we shall receive

in the world to come. Union is the spring or way of our happiness. Communion is a sensible taste thereof; and fruition is the fullness and perfection of it.

“Let us eat and be merry.” By eating, communion is often set forth in God’s word. “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me,” Rev. iii. 20. We will eat together, rejoice, and be merry, *i. e.*, he shall have sweet communion with me, and I with him. The word communion is by some rendered fellowship, by others converse, They are convertible terms, or words of the same import.

Doct. Returning sinners, or true believers, have communion with the Father and the Son. Let us eat and rejoice together; that is, the sinner with the Father and the Son, and the Father and the Son with him; they have mutual communion one with another.

I. I shall show you what is necessary, as previous to this communion.

II. Prove that there is such communion, and also show wherein it doth consist.

III. Show you the nature of it.

IV. Also show you what the effects thereof are upon the believers heart and life.

V. Apply it.

I. As to what is necessary, as previous to this eating, or gracious communion.

1. No wicked man can have communion with God and Jesus Christ. No wicked man can have fellowship with God.
 “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?” Psal. xciv. 20. That is, such that delight in sin and wickedness, no, this cannot be. “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? Or what concord hath Christ with Belial?” 2 Cor. vi. 15, 16.

(1.) Can there be communion and sweet fellowship, where there is enmity one against the other?

(2.) Can that person have communion with God, that hath not the nature of God, or a likeness of God in him? no, human creatures may as soon have fellowship with filthy brutes, or with swine, as unholy sinners can have communion with God.

2. No person can have communion with God, until he hath union with him. “Can two walk together, except they are agreed?” Amos iii. 3. Utter enemies to each other, can have no fellowship together. “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” Rom. viii. 7. And God is an enemy to all the workers of iniquity; his face is set against them, and his wrath is kindled and ready to seize them. Therefore there must be a mutual or reciprocal reconciliation to one another. First, God in Christ is reconciled to his elect, the atonement is made; and also he is actually reconciled to the person of this or that man or woman that believeth in Jesus Christ. Whilst the prodigal abode in his swinish nature, he was not actually reconciled to his Father; but now they are united in heart, in love and affections, and so can eat together, or have fellowship one with another.

3. None, it appears from hence, can have fellowship with God that are not renewed or born again, or regenerated. The prodigal’s heart is now changed, he hath got a new nature, and can now taste and relish spiritual things; sin now is become bitter to him, yea, loathsome and abominable, and God is become the object of his love and delight; he can tell you now that God is good, that root of bitterness, that averseness that was in him unto God and spiritual things, is gone and now he loves as God loves, and hates as God hates; before he was alienated from the life of God, and also favoured the things of the flesh.

4. None can have communion with God, or with Jesus Christ, until they have espoused him, or are married to him. Marriage is antecedent to conjugal fellowship and communion.

5. Saving knowledge of God in Christ is necessary to this fellowship. The choicest fellowship flows from intimate knowledge and acquaintance persons have of one another; there may be a remote knowledge where there is no communion; but to the nearest and choicest communion there is a real and choice acquaintance. “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee,” Job. xxii. 21, that is, all true good, that which is the sweetest, even communion with God and his Son Jesus Christ. My brethren, the image of God doth in part consist in knowledge. “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him,” Col. iii. 10.

6. A man must actually be brought into the bonds of the covenant, before he can have communion with God.

Can a sinner eat and be merry, or have fellowship with God, whilst he remains under the covenant of works, or under the law, or the curse of the law?

Regeneration necessary to communion with God.

Marriage with Christ necessary to communion with God.

Knowledge of God necessary to this fellowship.

A man must be in the covenant before he hath com-

munion with
God.

no, evangelical communion is not bottomed upon the legal covenant; all unbelievers are in the first Adam: "And as many as are of the law, are under the curse," Gal. iii. 10. Therefore no unbeliever can eat with God and Jesus Christ, or be merry with them. Can a condemned malefactor be merry? or will the king admit him to eat at his table? Sirs, a man must have faith, he must believe and see his pardon, or have ground to believe he is freed from the sentence of condemnation, before he can rejoice and have fellowship with God. No man is actually in the covenant of grace that believes not, nay, he that believes not in Christ, "The wrath of God abides upon him," John. iii. 36.

There must
be sincere
love to God
in him that
has com-
munion with
God.

7. No man can have communion with God, without sincere love to God. Communion flows from that dear love and affection one person hath to another; and as love increaseth, fellowship increaseth; and as love decays, communion or fellowship decays or grows cold, also, or it is not so sweet and desirable. O how was the heart, the love, and affections of the Father drawn out towards his Son, and the heart, love, and affections of the Son set upon his dear Father? "The Father fell upon his neck and kissed him," and put the best robe upon him, and richly adorned him, and now he eats, drinks, and is merry with him; now they are united in love, and so have communion together.

8. It is necessary also that a believer knows the nature of that union from whence this communion flows; there is, as I once told you, a six-fold union.

A six-fold
union.

(1.) There is a natural union, that is, between the tree and the branches from whence the tree communicates its sap to the branches; also between the head and the body, and the members thereof, as likewise between the soul and body, and the food we eat.

(2.) There is a moral union, which is between one man and another; they cleave together in cordial love and affections, as Jonathan, who loved David as his own soul.

(3.) There is a conjugal union, this is that union that is between a man and his wife.

(4.) There is a political union, which is between a king and his subjects.

(5.) There is an hypostatical union, which is between the divine person of the Son of God and his human nature.

(6.) There is a mystical and spiritual union, and this is that union which is between Christ and his church, and every believer; and it is from hence our spiritual communion flows, though it is set forth by a natural and moral union, yet it is nearer and more intimate, as I shall show you by and by.

11. I proceed to prove, there is such a fellowship or communion betwixt God and a believing sinner, and shall show wherein it doth consist.

There is a
mystical
union be-
twixt Christ
and believ-
ers.

Charnock.

John xvii. 21.

The nature
of com-
munion be-
tween them.

1. They are not only united in love and affections, and in conjugal bonds, but are made one spirit with Christ. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," 1 Cor. vi. 17. Not made one spirit essentially, but mystically; it is as if there was but one soul in two bodies; the same spirit that is in the head without measure, is in every member in some measure. "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us," John xvii. 21.

Now where there is such a near union, there must needs be a most sweet communion. My brethren, true fellowship consisteth in community or communion. Now there is a fourfold community between Christ and believers.

1. Of enjoyment of each other. 2. A community of affections. 3. Of interest. 4. Of privileges.

1. They enjoy each other. Christ is theirs, and they are his. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "My beloved is mine, and I am his." God gives himself and all he hath to believers, and they give themselves to him; also Christ gives himself and all he hath to us, and we give ourselves to him.

(1.) Christ gives his person to espouse us, and so raises our glory. (2.) His treasure and fulness to enrich us. (3.) His righteousness to clothe us. (4.) His power to uphold and defend us. (5.) His wisdom to direct us. (6.) His Spirit to quicken, to renew, to enlighten, and to lead us. (8.) His love to delight and console us, and his glory to crown us. (9.) His angels to minister to us.

And we give Christ our hearts. "My Son, give me thy heart," Prov. xxiii. 26. We give him ourselves, and all we are. "They gave themselves unto the Lord." We give our whole souls, strength, affections, even all our faculties and powers, and members of our bodies, our judgments to judge and choose him, our understandings to know him, our wills to close with and obey him, our affections to desire, love, and cleave to him, our thoughts

to contemplate on him, our consciences to be kept awake, and stir us up to serve and live to him, our tongues to speak for him, pray to him, and to praise him, our eyes to look up to him, and to be employed for him, our hands to minister to him in his ministers and poor saints, our feet to travel to his sanctuary, and visit his poor members, &c. Sirs, Christ took our nature on him, "And so he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," Eph. v. 30. And he gives us his Spirit, his likeness, "And so we partake of the divine nature," &c. 2 Pet. i. 4. Christ's riches is ours, and our poverty was his. "He became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. Christ's righteousness is ours and our sin was his. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. His blessedness is ours, and our curse fell upon him, "He was made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ," Gal. iii. 13. He became a servant, that we might become sons; he bore our cross, that we might wear his crown; he took our shame, that we might have his glory. "The glory thou gave me I have given them," John xvii. 22. He was abused, that we might be exalted; he was crowned with thorns, that we might be crowned with eternal life. Thus there is a community of persons, and of what each other have.

2. There is a community of love and affections. Though this was signified before, yet let me speak to it more particularly because communion consisteth in this.

(1.) God and Christ love believers, and they love God and Christ; they have a mutual love to each other, signified by their eating or supping together. "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me. I will love him, and the Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 23. "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest I love thee," John xxi. 17.

(2.) Their love runs all in one channel, and it is fixed upon the same objects: what God loves, Christ loves, that believers love also: and what God hates, Christ hates, that believers hate also.

(3.) The nature or quality of their love is the same: Christ loves believers with a strong, a great, a sincere, a constant, a single, or simple love, with a sympathizing love, with a love of complacency, with an unchangeable, and an everlasting love. So the love of every believer to God and Christ is great: it is a superlative love, a sincere, a single, a simple, a constant, a cordial love, and full of delight, and abiding: such as is the cause, such is the effect. "We love him, because he first loved us;" our love is but the fruit and reflection of his love on our souls.

(4.) Christ loves a believer in every state, when poor as well as when rich, in dishonour as well as in honour, on a dunghill as well as on a throne: when old, as well as young, in a prison, as well as in a palace: so believers love Christ in all states and changes he passed through, when in the manger, when tempted, when betrayed, when spit upon, when scourged, and when hanged on the cross, as well as now he is glorified at the Father's right-hand in heaven.

(5.) Christ loves not the souls of believers only, but their bodies also: yea, and he loves their graces, and all the holy and spiritual duties and services they perform to his glory: so believers love the person of Christ, the offices of Christ, the word of Christ; they love him as he is a Priest, as he is a King, as he is a Prophet, and whatsoever he is in himself, hath done, is doing, or is made to them; they love his image, his people, his church, his ministers, his poor, his ordinances, his worship, his promises, his interest, and his name, and his kingdom, and long for it.

(1.) He calls them his friends. "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends: for the servant knows not what his master doeth; but all things I have heard of my Father, I have made known them to you," John xv. 15. And they call him their friend. "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem," Cant. i. 16.

(2.) They walk together: "Luoch walked with God three hundred years," &c. "I will walk in them," &c.

(3.) They sit together in heavenly places.

(4.) They eat together, as in my text; they sup together, Rev. iii. 20, "I will [come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." They feed on his merits, and he feeds upon their duties, and on their graces. "I have eaten my honey with my honey-comb, I have drunk my wine with my milk," Cant. vi. 1. Their graces refresh and delight his soul. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with the chain of thy neck," Cant. iv. 9.

(5.) They visit each other; Christ visits them in ways of mercy, and they visit him in way of duty.

(6.) Christ loves to hear their voice. "O my Dove, that are in the clefts of the rock let me hear thy voice, let me see thy face; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely," Cant. ii. 14. And they love to hear his voice. "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh." "My sheep know my voice, and they follow me," &c., John x. 27, that is, they love, approve, and delight to hear my voice.

(7.) Also precious love-tokens pass mutually to each other; he kisses them "with the kisses of his mouth," Cant. i. 1, which is a token of his love and affection; and they kiss the Son as a token of their love and subjection. "The Father fell upon his neck, and kissed him."

(8.) They have mutual desires after each other. "So shall the king desire thy beauty," Psal. xlv. 11. And what saith a believer? "with my soul have I desired thee in the night," Isaiah xxvi. 9.

3. There is a community of interest between Christ and believers.

(1.) They have one and the same design to manage and carry on in the world; and what is that, but the glory of God, and the good of his church, and of the souls of men?

(1.) Christ's grand design is to glorify his Father, and to greaten his own name; and this is the main design and endeavour of believers, i. e., to exalt Jesus Christ. "Christ (saith holy Paul) shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death," Phil. i. 20.

(2.) Christ's design is to enlarge his own kingdom in the world, or the increase of his church; and this is the design and end of believers; they pray for his kingdom: "Thy kingdom come."—"Do good in thy good pleasure to Sion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem," Psal. li. 18. Nay, the good of the church they prefer above all things on earth. If, like to David, "I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right-hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not

Jerusalem above my chief joy," Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6. Do some professors do this? no certainly. Why it is the property and duty of all believers thus to do; but do they do this, that hardly ever think of Sion? do they do this, that by their pride and covetous practises expose her to reproach? Do they do this, who suffer her to languish and decay, rather than they will spare their strength or treasure to support her? what hinders the increase of the church or spreading of the gospel? Is it not self-interest? Some will lay up hundreds, nay thousands for themselves and children, who grudge a few shillings to uphold the walls of Jerusalem, or to encourage poor ministers at home, or to send them abroad. Some so little regard the interest of Christ, his church and ministry, that were it not for a few faithful persons, his whole interest might fall to the ground for all them. Sad times! They drive a trade for themselves, and regard not Christ nor his church; they cannot say with David, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," Psal. exix. 139. Though he spoke it in the person of Christ, yet it was true no doubt in himself.

(3.) Christ's design is the good, the comfort and edification of his people, that they may abound in grace and holiness, and in all the fruits of the Spirit: and this is the design of all sincere believers, and thus their interest is one and the same, both strive to pull down Satan's kingdom, and to destroy sin and all sinful practices, with heresies and errors, traditions of men, superstition idolatry, popery, &c. Christ's work is to establish truth, and cause that to flourish: the interest of the husband is the interest of the wife; that which is the father's true interest should be the child's labour to promote.

2ndly. They also seek and choose the same means, in order to the carrying this interest on; that way Christ makes use of to promote his own glory, and his churches good, they approve of, and consent to.

(1.) If it be by weak means, they will support and continue it as much as they can, and not say. Christ is able to preserve his own truth, and good of his church, by his own hand another way.

(2.) If it be by persecution, they consent; if by the rod, they approve of it; if by liberty, peace, and prosperity, they submit, and are pleased; or if by ways that may seem hazardous as to their outward state, they complain not, nor go out of God's way; they are not like Jeroboam, rather than to hazard the loss of his kingdom, set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel.

3rdly. As they mutually agree in the means, so also in the instruments that Christ chooses to promote and carry his interest on, if noble and learned ones, every true Christian is pleased; but if God lays aside such, chooses few of that sort, but rather the unlearn-

ed, or base and contemptible persons to preach his gospel and manage his cause, they are as well satisfied, and will not expose them to the scorn of the world, because they are not endowed with the knowledge of the tongues, or human literature.

4thly. They have also the same friends and the same enemies; he is no friend to Christ, that is an enemy to his people; nor is he a believer's friend that is Christ's enemy. Those that hate thee, and rise up against thee, I hate, saith David. My brethren, why do some men hate his present majesty, our gracious king? is it not because he is a friend to and a favourer of God's people, and why do the godly love him; but because God hath raised him up to favour his righteous cause, and to be a scourge to his enemies?

Christ and believers have the same friends and the same enemies.

Their interest and end, means and persons (as one observes) are so one and the same, that what is done, said to be done to one, is done to the other. They that despise you, saith our Lord, despise me; and they that receive you, receive me. And they also that persecute the saints, persecute Christ: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Acts viii. 4. And hence the sufferings of the saints are said to be the sufferings of Christ. "They that touch you, touch the apple of mine eye," Zech. ii. 8. Moreover, they that feed, clothe, and visit the poor saints, feed, clothe, and visit Jesus Christ, Matt. xxv. 35. This their interest is one.

4. There is between them communion of privileges also, as is noted by divers worthy men. Christ is called God's child, he is called the holy Child Jesus: so the saints are called the children of God. Christ is the Son of God, and the saints are the sons and daughters of God also: Christ is called God's servant; also the heir of all things, Heb. i. i. 2. And the saints are called the heirs of all things, Rev. ii. 17. Or joint heirs with him. Rom. viii. 17. Christ is God's eldest, and they are God's elect in him. Christ was from above, and heavenly, and the saints are said to be born from above, to be heavenly also. Christ is a King and Priest, and the saints are called Kings and Priests also, Rev. v. 10. Christ a Conqueror, so the saints are said to be conquerors. Christ is called a Pearl, and the saints are called jewels: Christ shall judge the world, and the saints shall judge the world with him; they sit with him on his throne; he hath a crown, and they shall be crowned also. Thus they have communion in like privileges, but Jesus Christ hath infinitely the pre-eminence above them.

A communion of privileges between Christ and believers. See Durham.

"And let us eat and be merry." Why may not this eating comprehend, or partly refer to the Lord's Supper, every believer that is brought into God's house hath communion with him in that holy ordinance; and of all ordinances they have the sweetest fellowship with God and Christ in this: prayer is an act of homage, praise an act of gratitude; but this is the love-feast, or the chief consolatory dainties of our Father's house. O of what a Lamb do we feed on at this table?

But so much as to the second thing.

III. I shall open the nature of this fellowship and communion between God and Christ, and a believing sinner at this merry and joyful meeting.

It is a most honourable communion.

1. It is a most honourable and sublime fellowship. What! sit with the Father at his table, the glorious King of heaven and earth, eat, drink, and rejoice with him. What honour like this! what, eat with the King and with the King's Son! and be embraced in their arms, and have the kisses of their lips! What, walk with the King, converse with the King, behold the King in his galleries, may, be espoused by him, and be led into his chambers, "and into his banqueting-house, and have his left hand under our head and his right hand to embrace us!" Cant. i. 4, 5. ii. 6. Stand and admire!

2. It is a God-glorifying communion. For, my brethren, he manifesteth his glory to us hereby, in his glorious attributes. (1.) His wisdom in finding out the way to raise us to this high fellowship and amazing grandeur. (2.) His power in removing all those impediments that were in the way of it. (3.) His infinite love and goodness. (4.) His justice, in that we are not raised to this happiness, without full satisfaction made to the justice and law of God. (5.) Also, how is mercy, and rich bounty, and free-grace, magnified in admitting of a poor returning prodigal, to such a God-glorifying banquet! and then believers glorify God by letting him have their hearts, their whole souls, and their superlative love and affections.

It is a God-glorifying communion

We by letting out our chiefest affections to God, glorify his beauty, amiableness, and divine goodness.

By a reverential fear of God, we glorify his justice.

By faith and a holy dependence upon him, we glorify his power, all-sufficiency, and faithfulness.

By our humility we glorify him in his majesty and greatness.

By our patience we glorify his wisdom and sovereignty; and now in the exercise of all these graces of the Spirit, we have communion with the Father and the Son.

It is the highest communion. 3. It is the highest fellowship we are capable of, while we are in this world; we can have communion with no persons of a higher rank, dignity, or quality.

What is it to have fellowship with an earthly king, to eat with him? &c. To this eating also the greatest love that ever was known was the spring and cause of it, the greatest price also was paid to procure it. Moreover, it is a resemblance of heaven, and prepares us for the fruition of God.

It is soul-profitable. 4. It is a soul-profitable and pleasurable communion. It doth not only tend to the glory of God, but also unto our good; such that sit under Christ's shadow, find sweet delight; every step of this fellowship is a paradise. O how sweet are those lips that drop sweet-smelling myrrh! What a fragrant scent doth he diffuse into our souls whilst he lies in our bosom all night! they that taste and eat with Christ, or have communion with the Father and the Son, will soon find the sweetest of earthly enjoyments bitter and burdensome; and be sure those that value not, prize not this fellowship, never tasted how good God is; the consolations of God are small with them, because they know not what they are, and because earthly comforts are overvalued by them. Until sin be bitter, and earthly enjoyments distasteful, Christ will never be sweet and precious to you; all is theirs who have Christ. O then let us eat and be merry! Man's chiefest happiness is in his enjoyment, and feeding on the chiefest good. "Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than when corn and wine increased," Psal. iv. 7.

It is a free communion. 5. It is a free communion, all is the effects of free grace, sovereign grace. "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" It cannot be purchased; it is granted to whom the Father pleaseth, and the Son pleaseth; God gives himself, and Christ gives himself to us freely. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them," Hos. xiv. 4. Freely without any desert, and without bounds or measure. God loves us because he will love us, and he vouchsafes us communion with himself, because he will do it; it is to magnify his love, and the riches of his free and undeserved grace, according to his own eternal pleasure and purpose in Christ Jesus.

It is an increasing communion. 6. It is an increasing and growing communion. "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shines more and more to a perfect day," Prov. iv. 18. And we grow in faith and love, our communion is more and more; the more light and knowledge of God and Jesus Christ we have, the more sweet fellowship, joy, and comfort our souls do possess; the more we grow in likeness to Christ, the more communion we have with him. "They shall go from strength to strength in Zion," Psal. lxxxiv. 7. And from faith to faith, nay, from glory to glory, from a lesser to a greater degree of glory. Grace shall prevail, increase, and be victorious, and therefore this fellowship and communion shall increase and be more sweet every day to such that walk close with God, and daily visit him, and wait upon him in his holy ordinances. If we follow on to know the Lord, we shall know him, *i. e.*, know how good he is, and enjoy his love and favour.

7. It is a soul-strengthening, and a soul-confirming communion, it is feeding upon the fat things of God's house, food that hath strong nourishment in it. It is a vain thing for sinners to question the truth and reality of these things, and to persuade a child of God he is mistaken; no, no, saith he, I have experienced, and found what I say. I know what I speak, I have tasted how good God is, and the love of God and Christ is. You may as soon persuade me when I have newly drunk a draught of excellent wine, that it was water and not wine, as you can make me think I am mistaken in what I have seen, felt, and tasted, or my soul hath enjoyed of God. O how am I strengthened and confirmed hereby in the belief of this glorious Deity, and in the belief of the blessed Jesus, and in the belief of our true Christianity! "The joy of the Lord is my strength." The divine presence, his love and favour establisheth my soul in his ways and ordinances, which some contemn and despise. "What we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life," 1 John i. 1. "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it," ver. 2. As Christ was manifested in the flesh, so he is manifested to the souls of his people. "And 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," ver. 3. Sirs, if you do arrive to this communion, you will say, O it is sweet, it is satisfying, it is strengthening, and of a soul-confirming nature. But more of this under the next head.

IV. Let us consider the effects of this communion on the soul.

1. This communion you hear is of a soul-strengthening nature; and so it follows from thence, it revives and quickens the soul. "I will be a dew unto Israel:" and what then? "He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his root as Lebanon; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree," &c., Hos. xiv. 5. This communion is like a dew on tender herbs, it refreshes, quickens, and revives our souls. "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine," ver. 7. The approaches of Christ to us are like the approaches of the sun in the spring on the earth, herbs, and

It is a soul-satisfying communion.

flowers.
2. It is a soul-satisfying communion: to eat with God, and sup with him, gives full content and satisfaction to the soul; the soul delighteth itself in fatness.

"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fat things of thy house," Psal. xxxvi. 8. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple," Psal. lxxv. 4. The prodigal eat before, but he was not satisfied, but now he had what his soul desired.

It causeth the soul to content the world.

3. It hath such effects on the soul, that it causes it to slight and contemn this world in all its glory, riches and pleasures. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? neither is there any on earth I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxviii. 25.

Paul esteemed all things as dung in comparison of the knowledge of Christ, and of communion with him; this made the spouse also to say, "Her beloved was the chiefest among ten thousand."

It is a precious cordial,

4. It is like a strong cordial to a drooping spirit, that bears it up; the reason may be, because it is the soul's first welcome to Christ, and to his Father's house: first love is commonly the sweetest, a believer meets with such a cordial at its first closing with Christ, which he cannot forget as long as he liveth. True, they do not feast on these dainties every day; and should they, perhaps, they would not prize them so much, Paul speaks of what he met with fourteen years ago, 2 Cor. xii. 1, 2, 3; he was not often feasted in that manner.

It causeth the soul to remember God.

5. It makes the love of the Father, and of the Son, and Holy Spirit, to be remembered. "The king hath brought me into his chambers," Cant. i. 4. Well, what then? "We will remember thy love more than wine." Get but a real taste of God's love, of Christ's love, and you will never forget it as long as you live in this world. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul to thee," i. e., Psal. xlv. 4; when I remember what communion I had once with thee. "When I went to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise."

Communion has soul-abasing effects attending it.

6. It hath soul-abasing effects attending of it; that is, it humbles the soul.

Who am I (said Elizabeth) "that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?" Luke i. 43, much more may the soul say, who am I, and from whence is it that my Lord himself should come unto me! O how low did Job lie at the foot of God when he had clear sights of him! "Now I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job. xlii. 5. And thus it was with the prophet Isaiah also, he cries out, "I am undone," Isa. vi. 5. The more we see and enjoy of God, the more low we lie at his feet, and are abased before him.

It is a soul-transforming communion.

7. Such are the effects of this communion, that it is of a soul-transforming nature; it leaves a divine impression of God's image, of grace and holiness upon us. "We beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Compare this with Cant. v. 5, "I rose up to open to my beloved, my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock." When Moses came down from the mount from conversing with God, his face shone so exceeding bright, that the children of Israel could not behold it.

Communion with Christ makes his ordinances prized.

8. It causes our souls to prize those ordinances in which we meet with this communion; nothing raises the worth of ordinances like this: O, saith the soul, I prize the word of God, and the ministry thereof; I prize prayer, I prize the Holy Supper of the Lord, for I have met with God and with Christ in these ordinances, I have had sweet fellowship with him in them, and what is the cause others do not value them, but set light by them? Alas, they had only the shell, they never tasted God, met with God in them.

It makes us long to be in heaven.

9. It makes the soul to long for heaven. "When shall I come and appear before thee?" if one drop of wine be so sweet, so reviving, so strengthening,

so consoling, and so ravishing, saith the soul, what will full draughts of it be, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right-hand are pleasures for evermore," Psal.

It makes a dwelling in God's house prized. xvi. 11.

10. It causes the souls of believers to prize a dwelling in the house of God. "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O Lord! therefore do the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings, they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fat things of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures," Psal. xxxvi. 7. Also it maketh believers to desire further communion; such certainly are utterly strangers to fellowship with God, that do not pant and breathe after it, and also after greater degrees of. "O when wilt thou come unto me?" Psal. xlii. 1. How did David long, thirst, and pant for the living God? so the prophet Isaiah speaks, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, and with my spirit will I seek thee early," Isa. xxvi. 9.

APPLICATION.

1st. Trial. Examine yourselves, have you found fellowship with God? hath your eating with your heavenly Father, and your supping with Christ had such effects upon your souls, if not enquire, what the cause of it may be.

Why some find no more consolation in Christ.

1. Is not the world got to much into your hearts: are not earthly consolations over-prized by you?

2. May be you have been too much contented with ordinances, without the God of ordinances; what is a bare ordinance without God and Christ in it?

3. May be your faith is weak; weak believers have but small comfort, are seldom filled with joy, or partake of strong consolation; if you see not Christ is your's, or you have real union with him, your communion cannot be great?

4. Therefore (as one observes) there is a vast difference betwixt a reflexive or sensible certainty, and a real certainty; a strong faith hath the advantage and the pre-eminency here: yet you may have a real certainty, for that doth not depend upon the strength of faith, or strength of grace, but upon the truth of it. My condition may be good, and God may be my God, and yet I may not fully know it, or be persuaded of it. Pardon belongs to all believers: all have their sins forgiven, and all are justified, are renewed, all are adopted, all are sanctified; and all have an equal right to glory; but all do not partake of equal joy and communion with God here in this world.

5. May be thou hast fallen into some sin, or temptation, and hast given way to Satan, or dost not live by faith, live on Christ, on what he hath done, but on what is done and wrought in thee, fetching thy comfort from thy inherent holiness or sanctification. Or,

6. May be Christ hath withdrawn himself from thee for a time; he will return, and therefore be not cast down nor be discouraged. Or

2dly. Sinners, may not this make you willing to return home, as this prodigal did? is not the entertainment you shall have very inviting to you? believe there is that to be found in God and in Christ which you never yet met with. Moreover, do not blame believers that they so willingly have denied themselves to follow Christ.

3dly. This commends true religion, faith, and holiness to a blind world; let all take heed they speak not evil of those things they know not, and understand not.

4thly. Learn to know from hence, that the way to true happiness is to obtain union with Christ, and so opens the door to him; this lets the soul into this sweet and blessed communion, as you have heard.

5thly. What a fearful state are they in that fight or mock at this fellowship, and esteem communion with the works of darkness, and with the workers of iniquity better than this fellowship! alas, their hearts are carnal, and until they are changed they cannot relish these things. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them."

6thly. Happy, thrice happy, eternally happy are you that can say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Lastly. O what a difference is there between believers and such who are in their sins! Moreover, let such who do believe and sup with Christ, nor forget to live to him, to his praise and glory, whilst they live upon the earth.

SERMON XXIV.

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.—Luke xv. 24.

THESE words (as one observes) seem to be an abridgement of the whole parable.

1st. We have his former state expressed under a twofold allusion. (1.) "He was dead." (2.) "He was lost."

2. A twofold account of his present state. (1.) "He is alive again." (2.) "And is found."

3. The consequences or the effects of it upon the hearts both of father and son, and the rest of the family. "And they began to be merry."

True joy flows from grace, or is the fruit of the Spirit, and of divine union and regeneration; and it doth not only cause joy in the soul of a believer, but God the Father, and those that dwell with him in his house are pleased and delighted therewith; also all rejoice together.

"For this my son," &c. (1.) We may observe from hence, that God takes notice of every particular sinner that believes or returns unto him. (2.) Note also, that God sometimes converts great sinners. (1.) "This my son," even he that led such a wicked course of life; great afflictions, straits, and powerful convictions are blessed, sometimes to the conversion of notorious sinners. "This my son was dead and is alive again," (3.) Observe, that grace makes a mighty change upon a sinner; what can be a greater alteration of the creature, than for one that was dead to be made alive? the Spirit puts life into a dead sinner. (4.) That the Lord is not ashamed to be called the God and Father of such that return to him, who have lived very wicked lives before; when he is renewed, the Father calls him his son, owns him to be his child; he is not only (with Zaccheus) a son of Abraham, but by grace and adoption a Son of God.

God takes special notice of every sinner that returns to him.

"Was dead," &c.

Doct. An unconverted person is a dead person; or sinners by nature are dead, spiritually dead.

There is a twofold death, viz., a natural death, and spiritual death; the prodigal was spiritually dead. Sometimes the taste of sinners before renewed, called, or regenerated, is set out, (1.) As being fallen. (2.) By one sick. (3.) By one wounded, (4.) By a captive. (5.) By being blind. (6.) By a leper. (7.) By a wretched infant cast out into the open field in its blood. (8.) By one naked. (9.) By one condemned to die, and often by one dead. A man may be considered in a threefold state. (1.) What he was by creation, as considered in the state of innocency, so he was alive. (2.) What his state is by sin or degeneration, and so considered he is dead; this presupposeth he was once alive. (3.) What his state is by regeneration, and so considered he is alive again. "He was dead and is alive again."

A threefold state of men in this world.

I. I shall show in what respect a sinner may be said to be dead, and why said to be dead.

There is a twofold spiritual death.

(1.) In respect of state; as we say a condemned man is a dead man, he is dead in law; thus all unbelieving sinners are dead; the holy law of God lays all under the sentence of death and condemnation; this death passed upon all men in the first Adam.

(2.) Dead, as to a principle of true spiritual life, even truly and really dead in a spiritual sense; as a man naturally is dead when his life or breath is taken away, or his soul departed.

1. This death consisteth in that privation in all the faculties of the soul; they are under a total privation of the life of God, or of original righteousness; the same faculties remain, but the rectitude is gone. Original sin is the extinguishing of the light that was in the soul; like a candle that is put out, the candle remains, but the light is blown out; or like a tree that is dead, the body and arms remain, but the life is gone, its leaves are fallen off, its branches withered, and dead. Even thus it is with all men naturally, they are dead, or without a principle of divine life in their souls; and hence all their works, deeds, and duties of worship which they pretended to perform to God, are called dead works: repentance is called "repentance from dead works," Heb. vi. 1, 2.

Wherein spiritual death doth consist.

Sinners
beauty is
gone, as is
the beauty
of a dead
man.

Sinners are
cold to
spiritual
things, as a
dead man is
cold as
stone.

God, the preciousness of Christ, the sweetness of this world, promises and ordinances: alas! it is all nothing to them, they are cold to such things; though it is true, some of them may act from false principles, with some kind of moral heat, and seeming zeal, but *Isa. i. 31.* it is all from sparks of their own kindling, and not from the spirit of life received from God, and so all they do, or speak, or act, in religious matters, is vain, they being dead to God, but full of life to the things of this world. Talk to them about earthly things, O how warm and lively are they! then they are in their proper and natural element; but they are like fish taken out of the sea, if you speak of heavenly things to them.

Men dead in
sin breathe
not, pray not.

4. Dead men breathe not, there is no breath in them; so unregenerate persons pray not; prayer is the breath or spiritual breathings of the new creature: an unregenerate sinner may pray (the Pharisees prayed twice a day) but not from a principle of life, it was not by the Spirit of God: the Spirit of God is a Spirit of supplication, it causes a believer, as soon as ever it is poured forth on him, to cry *Abba, Father, Father.* It is one thing to say or read a few prayers, or to have the gift of prayer, and another thing to have the grace and spirit of prayer. Paul before his conversion (no doubt) prayed, but God took no notice of those prayers; but no sooner did Christ touch his heart, but he poured out his soul, behold (saith the Lord,) to Ananias, he prays, now he breathes forth his desires unto God.

Sinners dead
in sin cannot
act nor move
spiritually.

5. A dead man is without motion, he stirs not, moves not, acts not, all vital motion ceases; so a man dead in sin can no more move, act, or do anything in a true spiritual manner from a divine vital principle, than a dead man can act or move naturally, and therefore cannot prepare himself in any remote sense, or in any degree in order to obtain the life of grace: nay, it is worse yet with dead sinners, a dead man cannot resist or oppose the almighty Agent that hath power to quicken him; Lazarus could not resist that power in any respect that raised him from the dead; but dead sinners (being alive in their bodies, and the spirit of Satan being also strong in them at first) resist and oppose the motions of the Spirit, their carnal minds being filled full of enmity against God, and against the word and workings and influences of the Spirit, they for a time may make resistance. "Ye will always resist the Holy Ghost," saith Stephen, *Acts vii. 51.* Therefore know, it is one thing for men to act by natural or moral principles, and another thing to act from a vital principle. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life," *John v. 40.* This shows the averseness or rebellion that is in the will, and not the power of it in moving the soul to come to Christ. From hence it appears, that greater power is required to be exerted to raise a dead sinner, or to quicken one dead in sin, than in raising one that is naturally dead, or that which God puts forth in creating the world; for there was no devil then to oppose him, nor in his creating man, there was no rebellious will to resist him; but there is, when he begins to create us again in Jesus Christ, the heart of the sinner opposes, the will opposes, and the devil oppose, and makes oppositions against the Spirit and operations of God: though in the day of his power the will is made willing. "If God will work, who shall let?" "The wind bloweth where it listeth," *John iii. 8.*

Greater
power re-
quired to
quicken and
raise a dead
sinner, than
one that is
naturally
dead.

6. A dead man cannot speak, he cannot praise and magnify God. "The dead cannot celebrate thee. The living shall praise thee," &c., *Isa. xxxvii. 18, 19.* So unrenewed sinners, dead sinners, cannot perform any acceptable service to God, though God requires duties of them, and they owe him honour, worship, and praise, must hear and pray, &c., yet they bring no glory to God; all people are to pray, praise, nay, sing the praises of God, yet none but the living, i. e., the saints of God pray and sing his praises acceptably, to his glory; for how can he sing with grace that has no grace in his heart?

7. Such that are dead cannot feel, see, hear, taste, nor smell; so all the spiritual senses

of the soul are gone: though guilt, like a mountain, lies upon him, he feels it not; though sin, like a sword, pierces his soul, he cries not out, nor feels any pain. Also he is so blind that he sees no beauty in Christ, nor good in divine things; and so deaf that he cannot hear the voice of the Lord Jesus in the word; they are like the deaf adder; neither can they taste any sweetness in the word, that is as honey and the honey-comb; and their smelling also is quite gone, they smell not the savour of Christ's sweet ointments, nor of his garments which are as myrrh and cassia, they savour only the things of the flesh, and taste the sweet or worldly gain, honour, and pleasure.

8. A dead man soon stinks and is loathsome: so it is with dead sinners, they stink in the nostrils of God, and all gracious persons; and all their brave ornaments and odours are but the perfuming of a dead corpse. "Their throats are as an open sepulchre." Their breath is loathsome, or their prayers abomination to the Lord. Moreover, a dead man is not fit to remain above ground, but to be buried; so wicked men are good for nothing but to be cast into hell.

U S E .

O mourn over the dead, over your dead sons, dead daughters, dead husbands, and dead wives, and dead neighbours.

2. See what sin hath done; O what evil is in it? it hath slain the soul, nay, the whole world, &c. What fools are sinners who love their sins, that have murdered their souls, and exposed them to eternal wrath.

3. I infer, that we live among the dead, converse with the dead; and yet how few mourn over them: in some families many lie dead, and hardly any that there is not one or more dead. O lament! people converse with the dead, and yet are not afraid; the pestilence that fills houses with the dead is dreaded, but this plague, i. e., sin that slays millions, and lays all men dead and full of the tokens, yet very few either fear it, or strive to escape from it: when there was but one dead in a house in the land of Egypt, what sorrow or lamentation was there? But for these that are spiritually dead, few are concerned.

4. This may reprove such that say, mankind by nature are not dead, but only maimed or wounded, and so need not to have a vital principle infused to quicken them: these men assert that the will is not so dead to spiritual things, but that only moral suasions may incline it so powerfully to that which is spiritually good, as to turn and convert the sinner; which error I have in other parables detected. See the lost sheep.

5. Yet here is comfort for the dead; Christ, that quickening Spirit is come to make the dead to live, he can raise the dead. "You hath he quickened, that were dead in sins and trespasses. Even when we were dead in sin, he hath quickened us together with Christ." Eph. ii. 1, 4. Such that are dead may in a moment be raised to life. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live," John 5, 25.

"This my Son was dead, and is alive again."

Doct. He only lives in a true spiritual sense, that hath received a principle of divine life from Christ. Saints are made spiritually alive.

A believing and a true penitent person is a living person: saints are alive, though sinners are dead.

I. Let me open the nature a little of this divine life, and prove that believers are alive

1. Before he was dead, but now life is infused into his soul: Can a dead man live until his soul returns again into him? My brethren, what the soul is to the body, that is the Holy Spirit to the soul; I mean it is the vital principle, or that which makes him a living man. Adam was no living person till his soul was created and breathed into him. Therefore as the body without the soul is dead, so is the soul without the Spirit of Christ. Some may ask, can these dead bones, dead sinners live? yea if Christ please, "for the Son quickens whom he will."

2. Life infused, is stirring, it is not without motion; so where there is true spiritual life, that soul will be moving Godward and Christward; they are full of spiritual activity. Sirs, according to the nature of that life possessed, such is the nature of the motion and actings of the creature; for all creatures act according to that principle by which they live.

3. Such that live in a spiritual sense, they are sensible, they see, they hear, they feel, they taste, they hear and know the voice of Christ, the call of Christ, they hear the joyful sound, or the soul-ravishing melody in Christ's banqueting-house. "There was music upon the returning of the prodigal to his father's house," Eph. i. 18. In God's house is mirth or spiritual melody; and what is that but singing "Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs?" It is a pity any of the family should not like it: they do not only hear,

but also see "their understanding is enlightened; they see what sin is to loathe it, what the world is so as to die to it; what Christ is, so as to cry out, he is "the chiefest among ten thousand," and that he is "altogether lovely," Cant. v. 10. 16. They also feel, the least sin makes them cry out, the very thoughts and words are a burden to them; I mean words that drop unadvisedly, or too hastily from their lips. Moreover, they taste and know the Lord is gracious, "that the Lord is good," Psal. xxxiv. 8; and daily feed upon the feast of fat things which others relish not, nor can taste any sweetness in; and they also smell the sweet odour of Christ's myrrh, cassia, and frankincense; all the graces of the Spirit are as sweet spices or perfumes to them.

4. Spiritual life influences the whole man; the whole man is quickened thereby, wherever it is, even all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body are governed by this life; their tongue speaks for God, prays to God, and praises God, &c.

5. They relish spiritual things, and are spiritually minded; also they "live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit," Rom. viii. 11, Gal v. 25, Rom. viii. 14. They live in Christ, they live with Christ, and they live to Christ; for the grand work and design of the Spirit, is to glorify Jesus Christ, and this is the great tendency of this life: such strive to magnify Christ, and exalt him above all in heaven or earth. Moreover, there is heat and warmth in their souls; "Did not our heart burn within us?" Luke xxiv. 32.

6. Lost beauty, even the image of God, is restored to them, they partake of the divine nature; the new creature is a glorious creature, it being "created after the image of him that created it," 2 Pet. i. 4. This life makes them lively and holy, and causeth them to delight in God, and to walk with God, and to live on high, *i. e.*, in communion and fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John i. 2, 3.

7. Such who partake of this life breathe freely, unless they are distempered, fallen sick, or are under temptations: I mean, unless they are fallen into sin, or are disordered in their spirits: they pray always, and go to God as to their Father, and cry Abba, Father; they love God as a Father, and love the habitation and provision of his house. And thus it was now with this poor prodigal, and therefore the father said, "This my son was dead, and is alive, was lost, and is found." What it is to be lost and to be found, I have opened in the parable of the lost sheep, and shall add no more to it here.

APPLICATION.

1. O what a change doth grace make! and O what power is that which God puts forth when a sinner repenteth? It is God that raiseth the dead.

2. Bless God for Christ, and magnify Jesus Christ, "who came that we might have life," and have it more abundantly. Sirs, we come to have this life by Christ's death; it is a life purchased for us, as well as a life infused in us.

3. Trial. Try yourselves.

(1.) What spiritual life, warmth, heat, and zeal do you find in your hearts? is God, Jesus Christ, and religion, preferred above all things by you? Are religious duties your delight? Do you make religion your main business? then certainly you are spiritually alive.

(2.) Do you remember the time when you were dead and cold to spiritual things, seeing no worth and value in them; and can you remember how, and by what means, and near the time when this mighty change was wrought in you?

(3.) Is sin, every sin dead in you, as to its ruling power? and is the least sin like a thorn in the flesh to your souls, or as a heavy burden? if so, no doubt but there is life in your souls. Are you dead to this world, and to all the sinful profits, honours, and pleasures thereof? and are you also dead to your own righteousness, dead to the law, and that dead to you, by your espousing of Jesus Christ?

(4.) Do you breathe freely and continually, that is not only a sign of life, but also of health; not that you are only in a good state, but in a lively fraue. Some persons, though alive yet breathe with difficulty, they meet with obstructions; and others fetch their breath short, being weak and faint, and have lost their appetite: so some cannot pray freely, and others make very short prayers (though long prayers always may not be expedient, nor the best) but when a child of God finds it difficult to pray, it is a sign he is sick or distempered in his soul.

(5.) What faith have you? Faith is the life of the soul. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," Gal. ii. 20. None have Christ but such that believe truly in him. "He that believes hath the Son," John iii. 36. "And he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life," 1 John v. 12.

(7.) Is the Spirit of Christ in you? the Spirit of Christ is the life of faith, that which gives life and vigour to faith; the Spirit is the vital principle in the soul.

(8.) Are you spiritual, holy, and heavenly minded? "They that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 5.

Exhort. O prize this life! what is natural life to true spiritual life? yet how is natural life valued? What will not a man give for his life? O then esteem this life!

1. It is a dear bought life; it cost Christ the price of his most precious blood.

2. It is the life of the soul; and O how precious is the soul, the subject of this life! and what a fearful death was it under before!

3. It is secure, it is a life a believer cannot lose; men nor devils cannot take away this life. "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. Men may as soon deprive Christ of life, as any one that is in him, of this spiritual life.

4. It is the seed, and the assurance of eternal life. Believers, by having this life, have eternal life in them; eternal life in the seed, in the principle, in the earnest, in the promise, and in their head.

5. It tends therefore to peace, to comfort, and joy, through the Holy Ghost; O what consolation is here to believers!

6. It is a growing and an increasing life; such grow in faith, love, humility, &c., and in saving knowledge; here is cause of mirth, "And they began to be merry."

"Now the elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing."

This elder son, I told you, was the Jews and Pharisees, they were in the field of this world, working for life, doing to be justified. But when they came near the gospel-church, in the ministration and dispensation thereof; they heard that the Gentiles and great sinners were returned to God, and that he pardoned them, and made them sing for joy of heart, and rejoice in the abundance of gospel blessings. At this the elder brother, the Jews and Pharisees were offended, and seem to be angry, that great sinners, and vile Gentiles, should be esteemed above them, or fed and feasted with gospel dainties. But see how sweetly the Father reproves him, answers all he had to say in a precious mild way, "Son thou art ever with me, and all I have is thine." These expressions, I suppose, make some think by the elder son, the holy angels are meant; but that cannot be, because they are not of the same kind or species with sinners: nor are they angry when a sinner repents, but contrariwise, as I have showed, do rejoice to see it. Nor can the older brother signify godly men: for they never are offended, nor angry when sinners repent and come to God, but also do rejoice.

By being ever with God must refer, I humbly conceive, to whatever God speaks of under the law, of the Jews, and of Jewish ordinances, rites, and privileges; which ever only referred to the end of that dispensation, or until the gospel-church took date. And plain it is, some of his words show him to be a Pharisee.

"These many years do I serve thee." He is called a son, but had a servile spirit.

"Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." Thus the Jews and Pharisees gloried. "All these things have I done from my youth up," said the young man.

"And all I have is thine." All must be taken here with restriction (as in many other places of scripture) *i. e.*, all I have thought good to give to you my people of the fleshly seed of Abraham, or stock of Israel, legal rites, blessings, and privileges. "To whom pertaineth the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises," Rom. ix. 4. Nay, Christ also was sent to them, offered to them, and he was theirs, as concerning the flesh. Now what had God more (if I may so speak) to give under that dispensation to this elder brother? "What could be done more for my vineyard, than I have done?" or be given more to them: but for their sins in rejecting of Christ, they lost all, and were cast off, and the younger brother, *i. e.*, the poor Gentiles, were received and grafted into Christ, even all that believed, or received the Lord Jesus, though never so great sinners; and therefore the Father saith, it was meet that we should make merry and be glad: "For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and he was lost, and is found."

And thus I shall close with this parable.

THE
P A R A B L E
OF THE
I M P O R T U N A T E W I D O W .

S E R M O N X X V .

And he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint ;

Saying, there was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man ;

And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, avenge me of mine adversary.

And he would not for a while, but afterwards he said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man ;

Yet because this woman troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

And the Lord said, hear what the unjust judge saith.

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them ?

I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?—Luke xviii. 1—8.

Year of
Christ 33

Of his ministry 4.

The time
when
preached.
Feb. 2. 1701.

In what parables the main scope only should be observed.

My brethren, I enter upon this parable at a season when the subject may appear to all very seasonable, what is at this time more necessary than extraordinary prayer, or crying unto God ? We seem to be in an evil and amazing hour, what God is about to do with England, with other nations, and with his own people, we know not, we are in a cloud ; things look black abroad, and bad at home.

But to proceed.

My brethren, there is in this parable little more than the main scope and drift of it to be opened, it so much (with some other parables) differs from the generality of the parables our Lord spake. Indeed, such parables that are taken from the actions of wicked men, as that of the unjust steward, and this, &c., it is only the main scope that should be chiefly minded.

Now the main drift and design of our blessed Saviour in speaking this parable, is in the general expressed in the first verse, " He spake a parable to this end, that men should always pray," &c :

1. Therefore one grand design of it is, to provoke the people to prayer, viz. ;

The scope. (1.) To be fervent in prayer ; this is signified by crying, " Who cry day and night to him."

(2.) To be constant in prayer, " Men ought always to pray."

(3.) Not to be weary, or give over praying, " And not to faint."

(4.) To patience in waiting for the answer of prayer, " Though he tarry long," &c.

2. Our Lord's design herein is to show his saints, that all those wrongs and injuries they sustain in this world, from the hands of wicked men, shall be avenged, and that in the mean time their afflictions and persecutions should stir them up to fervent prayer.

3. And to assure us also, that though God doth seem to delay, to avenge his own elect for a time, or to answer their prayers ; yet he will assuredly at last appear for their help, and against their enemies, though they think it is long before he doeth it.

4. That if God's people do cry unto him day and night, and not faint, he will avenge them speedily ; he never tarried long, when a mighty spirit of prayer was poured forth upon them.

5. To show nevertheless, that when Christ comes to avenge his elect upon their enemies, in the last days, but very few will believe it will then be done.

“Shall the Son of man when he comes find faith on the earth?” That is, faith as to his coming to execute judgments on his church’s enemies; he refers to this, not to the grace of faith. These five things, I conclude, take in the cum of his whole design, in speaking this parable.

As to what is contained in the several parts of this parable, and now to be improved, I shall in the next place speak briefly to that.

The parts of
the parable
opened.

1. We have an account of a judge, and of his character, viz., an unjust judge, one “that feared not, neither regarded man;” a worse judge cannot be.

2. An account of a widow, poor widows commonly go to the walls, and are unjustly dealt with, and abused with their poor fatherless children.

(1.) A relation of her condition (which is implied) she was wronged by her enemy. Widows (like poor afflicted Sion) have adversaries, or meet with enemies, and are ill-treated, as I hinted.

(2.) An account of her actions, or what she did. (1.) She came to this unjust judge, to be avenged of her adversary. (2.) Her importunity, she would not let him rest; she it seems follows him, and cries to him again and again, saying, “Avenge me of my adversary.”

(3.) An account of her success at last; though he would not at first, yet at last he did it.

(4.) The reason why he resolved in himself to do it, or grant her request, i. e., lest by her continual coming she weary him.

3. We have the improvement our blessed Saviour maketh of this action of the unjust judge, viz., “And shall not God avenge his own elect?” that is, shall not God much more do it?

1. Because the judge was a person that feared not God, nor regarded to do that which was just to men; he was an unjust judge, but God is a righteous judge.

2. He did it for a woman that perhaps was a stranger to him, or one that was no ways related to him; whereas the saints are God’s own elect, such that he hath redeemed; his children are such that he loves dearly.

3. Also very likely the unjust judge was under no promise nor engagement to this widow; but God hath laid himself under many gracious promises to his people, to appear for their help, and to save them when they cry to him.

4. The unjust judge regarded not his honour, name, nor credit; for he regarded not man, valued not what men spoke of him: but God’s name and honour is dear to him. “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” With him the fatherless find mercy; and he is the revenger of the widow’s cause; “For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and terrible God, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward; he doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow,” &c. Deut. x. 17, 18. Poor Sion who sits as a desolate widow, he judgeth. “A Father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation,” Psal. lxxviii. 5.

5. The unjust judge had no bowels to pity, nor sympathize in his heart with the widow; but God is full of pity and bowels. “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,” Psal. ciii. 13.

And therefore (as if our Saviour should say) you may be sure from hence, God will avenge his own elect. Shall a wicked graceless man, by reason of earnest importunity, appear to help a poor widow? What greater reason have you to believe that God will avenge his own elect, that cry day and night to him, and who have none else to help and relieve them? and though (for reasons known to himself) he may seem to tarry long, yet if they cry to him, and cease not, he will at last avenge them with fury, and that speedily, though but few on earth will believe that he will do it then, or at that very time when he will come, and appear clothed with vengeance against his enemies to do it.

Now from the words thus opened, several propositions, or points of doctrine may be noted.

Doct. I. That prayer is a great duty, and ought continually to be performed.

The doc-
trines raised.

Doct. II. That the people of God, like a poor widow, are greatly wronged and abused by an ungodly world, or by wicked men.

Doct. III. That God will hear the cry of his people, or his elect ones, and at last execute vengeance on their enemies, though he seems to delay.

Doct. IV. That at that very time when Christ comes to execute judgment on his peoples’ enemies, but very few, or none of them, will believe it.

My chief design is to speak to the first of these propositions, as taking in the main scope and design of this parable; and I shall show.

I. That prayer is a great duty, and ought continually to be performed.

II. Show what is meant by praying always.

III. Prove that prayer is an indispensable duty.

IV. Show that prayer tends much to the glory of God, and to the profit of his own people, and others also.

V. Show what prayer tends to the honour of God, and is profitable to us, and others:

What prayer is. I. Show you what prayer is, or what it is to pray.

1. Prayer is the pouring forth of the soul to almighty God, by the help, assistance, and the influence of the Holy Spirit. Hence the Spirit of God is called the spirit of supplication. "I will pour upon the house of Jacob, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication," &c. Zech. xii. 10. Hannah prayed to the Lord, and what did she say? "I have poured out my soul before the Lord," 1 Sam. i. 15.

My brethren, I understand not that reading out of a book, is any more praying, than the reading a sermon out of a book is preaching. When I pray, I will pray with the Spirit: that is, my spirit shall pray by the aid and assistance of the Spirit of God. And hence Paul saith, "We know not what to pray for, but as the Spirit helps our infirmities," &c. Rom. viii. 26. It is called a wrestling and striving with God. "Jacob wrestled with the Lord, he wept and made supplication," &c.

2. There are several sorts of prayer, but all from the same Spirit.

Several sorts of prayer. Ejectory prayer. 1. There is ejaculatory prayer, which is nothing else than the lifting up of the soul to God upon a sudden emergent occasion, or at any time, which some sorts, but lively expressions of our desires to him; it may be vocal, or only by some secret sighs, desires, groans, and workings of the heart to God, and those darts often reach heaven as well as the loud cries and voices which a thousand people hear. When Hannah prayed, though her lips moved, yet her voice was not heard. This sort of prayer is to be valued, (1.) Because we may be beset by some sudden temptation of Satan, and then may send up to God our prayers and sighs, when we have no place to retire unto to put up vocal prayer. (2.) Because we may pray thus when we walk the street, or in our work, or among evil company, even at all times. (3.) And this is the way to keep our hearts with God continually, and a sovereign means to get our affections off of the world, and delivered from snares, and also to keep up our communion and converse with him always.

Vocal prayer. 2. There is vocal prayer; that is, to pray with our heart and voices; but if we are alone, it is best our words be not loud, lest it proceed from hypocrisy; that God that knows our sighs and groans can hear us, though our voice be not heard.

Social prayer. 3. There is social prayer; that is when many join together with one heart in those prayers that are put up by one mouth: for it is confusion for many to speak in prayer together; though we read in social singing all joined together, not only in heart, but in their voices also, which tends to make the melody the more sweet: but we read of no such sort of praying.

Family prayer a great duty. 4. There is family prayer, which ought to be daily performed, if possible, twice or thrice a day. We read that "David prayed three times a day." The same also did Daniel, Dan. vi. 10. Such therefore who pray not so much as once a day, are either under great temptations, or in a dying state, or else are no true Christians. The prophet invokes God to pour forth his wrath upon the families that call not upon his name, Jer. x. 25.

It appears that Cornelius prayed in his house or family always; it was, no doubt, his constant practice, Acts x. 2, 3.

Secret prayer. 5. There is secret prayer, or closet prayer, when a man gets by himself alone in secret, and pours forth his heart to God; and this sort of prayer our Saviour exhorts us to: nor can a true believer live without it, though being found in this we ought not to neglect family duty any day: one duty should not displace another. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father," &c.

Extraordinary prayer, when to be found in it. 6. There is also extraordinary prayer; and the special times for extraordinary prayer, are these following.

1st. When we are afflicted. "Is any afflicted? let him pray," James v.

13. What, only then? No, no, not only when afflictions are upon us, but at such a time more than ordinarily, to be much more in prayer, or pray mightily to God.

2ndly. When we are tempted or buffeted by Satan. Thus Paul in an extraordinary manner prayed, when he had that "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. For this I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me," 2 Cor. xii. 8; that is, many times; how often that thrice might be, we know not; he means he cried often and earnestly to God.

When we are tempted, we must be much in prayer.

3rdly. When we look for, and suddenly expect to be called to great sufferings. Our blessed Saviour just before he suffered, was all night in prayer, and in prayer he prayed, that is, in an extraordinary manner. When we look for suffering, or are in trouble, or under persecution, we should cry mightily to God. "Call upon me in the day of trouble," &c., Psal. l. 15., that is, more than at other times.

So when great sufferings are expected.

4thly. When the enemies threaten us, and seek to invade us, or come in like a flood upon us, then we would in an extraordinary manner pray and cry to God. Thus did Jacob, when he heard his brother Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred armed men, to cut off the mother with the child; he was all night wrestling with God in prayer, and prevailed, Gen. xxxii. 24, 26. Thus also did Jehoshaphat and all Israel; and the like did Hezekiah, when Sennacherib invaded Judah. Also Esther and Mordecai, when all the Jews were in danger to be cut off in one day, 2 Kings xviii. 10, 15.

When we are threatened, we should pray much to God.

5thly. When heavy judgments are upon us, or upon the land. "If I shut heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send the pestilence among my people," 2 Chron. vii. 13. O that is a time to pray more than ordinary. "If my people humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their evil way; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and heal the land."

6thly. In times when great and wonderful things are expected, or strange revolutions for the church's deliverance may be near, then mighty prayers should be made. Thus did Daniel, when he understood by books, that the seventy years captivity was near expired, he then set himself to seek the Lord by prayer and fasting, Dan. ix. 3, 4.

When great things are expected we should pray mightily.

7thly. When we are going about some great work for God, or desire that he would put forth his miraculous working power, as in healing the sick, or casting out unclean spirits; then we must fast and pray, or be more than ordinary in prayer. "This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting," Matt. xvii. 21.

When we are going to do some great thing or to ask some great things of God.

3. I shall show you of what parts prayer consisteth. Prayer, my brethren, consisteth of three parts.

Prayer consisteth of three parts.

Confession.

Supplication or intercession. Thanksgiving.

(1.) When we pray, we should confess our sins, and the sins of God's people, even all the manifold evils of our lives, and our unprofitableness unto God: thus we find all the Lord's people ever did, and thus our Lord teacheth us to do.

(2.) We must humbly entreat God, or supplicate him graciously to give or vouchsafe to us whatsoever it is we need, or his people need: even lay all our wants, and the wants of our families, and of the church of God, and of the land in which we live, before him; and intercede for help, and all supplies from him.

(3.) Also give God thanks, and bless his holy name for all those good things we daily receive from his merciful and bountiful hands.

My brethren, as we must pray to God for what we have not, so we must praise him for what we have.

So much as to the first thing, viz., what it is to pray.

II. I shall show you what is meant by praying always.

1. Negatively; not that we should do nothing else but pray, for that would take us off from many other indispensable duties, both civil, moral, and religious.

2. Affirmatively. 1. Our Lord means, no doubt, that there is no time or season when we can have an opportunity, but we ought to pray; we must neglect no proper praying time. He is said to dine, or eat bread with us continually, that feeds with us at our table every day, and at every meal. And from hence it is said, David told Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, that he should "eat at his table continually," 2 Sam. 9. 7. He did not mean, he should do nothing but eat.

To pray every day, is to pray always.

2. To pray always, is to pray every day. Hence our Lord saith, God's elect cry to him day and night: which may refer, as some think, to morning and evening, without neglecting of it once, if in health, or able.

To pray in all things we enter upon.

3. In everything, according to that of St. Paul, "In everything by prayer and supplication, and giving of thanks, let your request be made known," &c. Phil. iv. 6. We should set about nothing, enter upon no enterprise, but we should seek to God for wisdom, directions, and a blessing upon. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Whether it be in temporal or spiritual matters, and then thou mayest be said to pray always.

To pray
always, is to
pray in every
condition.

4. To pray always, is to pray in every condition, age, or state we are in, when child, a young man, or apprentice, or a journeyman, a single man, or a married man; if rich or poor, if in health, or sick; if in prosperity or in adversity, we must pray.

To pray
always, is to
have a heart
always to
pray.

5. To pray always, is to have a heart to pray, or to be in a praying frame of heart, nay, and not to neglect it, though not in so good a frame at one time as at another; we must not do as some children, who having mispent the day in play, steal to bed for fear of being chid or whipped. If a workman's tools be blunt, he must see to set a new edge on them. If new sins are committed, we must apply Christ's blood by fresh acts of faith, and being joined by prayers and tears, sue out for a sense of pardon.

To pray
always,
is to pray as
long as we
live.

6. To pray always, is never to cease or give over praying; we must not cease praying until we cease living; neither should our constant performance degenerate into lifeless formality. "I will call upon thee as long as I live."

III. I shall prove that prayer is an indispensable duty.

Prayer a
moral duty.

1. Prayer is a moral duty, or a branch of natural religion. Mankind are taught and moved by the light of nature to pray, and to sing the praises of God. When the mariners were in that storm with Jonas, though heathens, "they cried to their gods." It is a proverb, "If a man cannot pray, send him to sea." But, I fear, there is at sea more cursing and swearing than praying now-a-days.

Prayer
brought un-
der divine
institution.

2. But prayer is not only a moral duty, but is an ordinance instituted and appointed of God. Mind my text, "Men ought always to pray." Not only the saints, but also all men; but more especially our Lord put his disciples upon prayer, "Ask, and ye shall receive."—Again, he saith, "Watch and pray, that ye fall not into temptation." Matt. xxvi. 41. "Watch and pray always, that ye may escape all those things that shall come to pass," Luke xxi. 36.

3. That in the doing of which, God hath made gracious promises unto his people, is a great duty, but O what a multitude of precious promises hath the Lord made to the prayers of his people! Therefore prayer is a great duty.

4. That which God hath owned, and wonderfully confirmed and crowned with his miraculous appearances, is a great duty; but God hath wonderfully owned, confirmed, and crowned the prayers of his people with his miraculous appearances, therefore prayer is a great and indispensable duty.

5. If God will be sought to by us, that he would do whatsoever he hath promised to us, then prayer is a great duty; but this he hath positively said he will be.

6. If the prayers of God's people be his delight, and also a great duty, it is a great sin to restrain prayer from God; and prayer is a great and indispensable duty; but this is so.

IV. I shall show you, that prayer tends greatly to the honour of God, and to the profit of our own souls, &c.

Prayer is a
God-honour-
ing duty.

Prayer ought
to be joined
with all
duties.

1. Prayer is a God-honouring duty, because it is part of his holy worship; and not only so, but it ought to be mixed with all other ordinances, all duties of sacred worship ought to be mixed with prayer: nay, we should not enter upon any civil or earthly business, without seeking first to God by prayer, but much more careful we should be to begin every part of God's worship with it.

Before we preach we ought to pray, prayer ought to be joined with preaching, baptism ought to be administered with prayer: first we should look up to God. Laying on of hands must be with prayer. The Lord's supper must be with prayer. "Every thing is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer." Hearing, reading of God's word, meditation, and watching must be with prayer. And as prayer should be used in every ordinance, so also in all trials, temptations, afflictions and troubles whatever; nay, in eating and drinking, or what ever we do else, we should pray, and so we may expect a blessing from God, and all ordinances, mercies, and afflictions to be sanctified to us, and not otherways; therefore prayer must needs tend to the honour of God, and our good.

By prayer
we own and
acknowledge
the sacred
Duty.

2. By prayer we acknowledge the holy and most sacred Deity, or divine being, and majesty of heaven, and that he is God only, and none else, and thereby we glorify him also in every one of his blessed attributes.

(1.) By prayer we own and acknowledge God's omniscency, (i. e.,) that he sees and knows our hearts, thoughts, desires, and all our wants and necessities whatsoever they be, and declare hereby, that we doubt not of the glorious perfection of the divine majesty.

By prayer we acknowledge God's omniscency.

(2.) Prayer tends also to glorify God in his infinite power, omnipotency, and all-sufficiency: we declare hereby, and doubt not, but as he sees and knows all our hearts and wants, so also that he is able to supply them, and do all things for us,—“and nothing is to hard for thee,” Jer. xxxii. 17. We hereby declare, that there is nothing too hard for God to do and work in us, and for us: and though men and devils, and the powers of hell and darkness combine against us, faith and prayer magnifies the God of power, and raiseth the glory of omnipotency.

(3.) Prayer tends to magnify God's infinite wisdom, hereby we acknowledge, that as God is able to help us, to strengthen us, to pardon us, to save us in or out of trouble; so he also knows how to do it, and also at the best and most seasonable time; that he is wiser than man, though never so crafty, and can turn their wisdom into foolishness, and counterwork Satan in all his devices, and defeat all the policy of hell, and all powers of darkness.

Prayer magnifies God's infinite wisdom.

(4.) Prayer tends to glorify God's mercy, love, and infinite goodness to us; for he knows how to blast all hellish politicians in those designs of theirs, carried on with the deepest subtilties for many ages, and can bring all to nought in one moment: so his love, mercy, and pity to his people is such (which we plead with him in prayer, he being our Father) that hereby we declare that sense and apprehension we have of his goodness, that we cannot doubt of succour and pity from him. And indeed this our blessed Lord himself clearly informs us of in this parable: for if an unjust judge will avenge a poor widow that cries unto him, how much more will God (as if our Saviour should say) avenge his own elect, who is so full of bowels, love, and compassion to his children, or to them which fear him? God is good and gracious, as well as just and righteous, and he also is our Father and dearest Friend; and, as so considered, we direct our prayers to him, and this also by the rule he hath given us, “Our Father which art in heaven,” &c. Who can make supplication (with strong confidence) to one that he believes is void of bowels, love, and pity? True, the widow is said so to do, as was heard, but not to the honour of the judge, in respect of his pity to the woman, but because he would not be troubled with her.

Prayer magnifies God's love and mercy to his people.

(5.) Prayer tends to magnify and raise to honour God's faithfulness in performing of his own gracious promises, and in making good his holy covenant. “I know the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor,” Psal. cxl. 12. This we plead, and this we are obliged stedfastly to believe. “He is faithful that hath promised, and he will do it,” 1 Cor. i. 9.

Prayer magnifies God's faithfulness.

(6.) By prayer we glorify God, in respect of his sovereignty over us; we hereby show, that all our hope and help is in God; and also that all creatures and things are at his disposal: “For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.” Amen. Thou mayest do what thou wilt (even according to the good pleasure of thine own will) with us, and with all the nations of the earth. “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hands or say, what doest thou,” Dan. iv. 35. And this he will make all haughty tyrants of the earth to know in due time, as well as he caused Nebuchadnezzar to know it, before he had done with him. I might also add the like in respect of the other attributes of God, but shall close at this time.

SERMON XXVI.

He spake a parable, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint &c.—LUKE xv. 1—8.

Doct. That prayer is a great duty, and ought continually to be performed.

I am upon the fourth head proposed, viz. That prayer tends to the honour of God, and to the great profit and advantage of our own souls.

This I am upon, and have showed how it tends to glorify God in all his blessed attributes. To proceed,

(7.) By prayer we confess we are poor depending creatures, and cannot help ourselves, save ourselves, nor direct our paths, nor deliver ourselves from dangers feared, and that all our wisdom, strength, and succour, is from God, and hereby we give glory to God. "Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are up unto thee," 2 Chron. xx. 12. While we acknowledge our own weakness and inability to do any thing as of ourselves, and also can, and do rely believingly upon the great God in every state and condition, we advance the name and glory of God. And thus by prayer we magnify God, or the glorious Deity, as essentially considered; so hereby also in the second place we glorify God, as he is, personally considered. (1.) We by prayer glorify God the Father in all his perfection.

Prayer tends to glorify God the Father. (1.) In prayer we acknowledge that relation he stands in to us through Christ, viz., as our gracious Father; not only a great, a wise, a holy, a just, a merciful, and a faithful God, but a tender Father also; and that as he is so considered, he is the first and efficient cause, fountain, and spring of all that good we want, and do receive from the glorious Deity.

(2.) That he is in heaven, i. e., that he is exalted above angels, men, or devils, and that his kingdom ruleth over all, and as far above all as the heavens are above the earth: what need the children of such a Father fear?

(3.) That he is a living Father, and the Father of mercy, and of all strength, comfort, and consolation, knowing the wants of all his children, caring for them, feeding, clothing, correcting, teaching, and succouring them all, and that continually in all fatherly bowels, wisdom, and compassion knowing all our necessities, and hearing all our cries and prayers we put up to him.

(3.) By our holy and reverential approaches to him by faith, filial fear, and child-like affections; and thus, (and in many other respects,) we glorify God the Father in prayer.

Prayer tends to glorify God the Son. 2. Hereby we glorify also God the Son, or lift up and advance his honour. (1.) In that we call upon his name, as he is Mediator, and so own that the Son is the same God, or one in essence with the Father, and that he is the immediate object of all divine worship. We by him come to God, believe in God, and worship God, and give the same honour to the Son, that we give to God the Father.

(2.) In that we always come unto God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our only Mediator and "Advocate with the Father," 1 John ii. 1, 2, 1 Tim. ii. 5; i. e., that it is for his sake, and through his merits alone, that the Father hears and answers all our prayers, and supplies all our wants.

(3.) We glorify Jesus Christ, in that we confess we come to God for nothing but for what Christ hath purchased for us by his blood, and is laid up for us in him, as the fountain of life, that is, with the Father. "With thee is the fountain of life," &c., Psal. xxxvi. 6. "It pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. And thus we, as God hath exalted him as Mediator, do lift up his glory, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3.

(4.) In that we hereby also acknowledge, that we receive all things we need, by virtue of his intercession.

(5.) Also in that we in prayer confess and declare the great love, power, care, and faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ; believing that he both knows our wants, and is ready and able to help and save us to the uttermost, and all that come to God by him, and so acknowledge that all the divine perfections and attributes of the Deity, are equally in the Son as in the Father; he being the same one and "ever blessed God over all," Rom. ix. 5. Amen.

3. Prayer tends also to glorify the Spirit, or God the Holy Ghost.

Prayer tends to magnify the Holy Ghost. (1.) In that we confess we cannot pray acceptably, without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, nor know we what to pray for. "No man can call Jesus Christ, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. xii. 3. That is, no man can call on Jesus Christ aright, (viz., truly own and acknowledge him, believe in him, cry to him, or so call on his name as to advance his glory) who is not renewed, influenced, and assisted by the Holy Spirit. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but as the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26.

(2.) In that all fervour, life, heat, and spiritual warmth in prayer, is from and by the Holy Spirit. How cold and flat are those prayers which are not put up to God by the influence of the blessed Spirit? This we find and do acknowledge, and so magnify the Holy Ghost in prayer.

(3.) It is by the Spirit that our faith in prayer is strengthened, and we attain to a lively

hope, and are also helped to wait patiently upon God, until we receive those things we ask of God.

(4.) The Holy Spirit is magnified, in that it is by him we call God Father: he is the Spirit of adoption, and so helps us to cry Abba, Father. My brethren, we pray to the Father in the name of the Son, and by the Holy Spirit; and thus glorify all the three persons of the Trinity in this great and holy duty of prayer.

Secondly, as prayer tends thus to the glory of God, so likewise it is profitable to our own souls, to others, and to the whole church of God.

Prayer tends to our own profit.

1. God hath appointed prayer as the way or means, in and by which he will supply all our wants. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you," John. xv. 7. That is, whatsoever may be for the glory of God, and our own good. "Every one that asketh receiveth," &c., "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," John. xvi. 24. O what a blessed ordinance is this, by which God gives every thing we stand in need of to us! "And whatsoever ye ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son," John. xiv. 13; i. e., Whatsoever is according to the will of God, I will do it, signifying his oneness in essence with the Father. Compare this with I John. v. 11.

2. It is by prayer, our faith (and all the graces of the Spirit) is increased and strengthened: "Lord, increase our faith." This was the prayer of all the disciples, they prayed to the Lord Jesus, so did the woman of Canaan, "Lord, help." And the poor man, "I believe, Lord, help mine unbelief," or, help me against my unbelief; for that he meant. He that would obtain a stronger faith, must pray to the Lord Jesus, or to the Father in his name.

Prayer is the way to have our faith increased.

3. By prayer or crying to God, we come to have an evidence of pardon. Thus David, "I acknowledge my sin to thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin, Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time that thou mayest be found," &c. Psal. xxxii. 5, 6.

Prayer is the way to have an evidence of pardon.

Confession, you heard, is one branch or part of prayer. For this (that is, for pardon of sin, or for this reason, this motive) I prayed to the Lord, and he pardoned me." And let every one that is godly, that hath sinned, do the same, and they shall receive the same blessing also, "forgive us our trespasses;" &c., apply the blood of thy Son to our souls, and give us the sense and sight of pardon, let us know that our sins are forgiven. My brethren, prayer is the way to obtain this great gospel-blessing, and therefore most profitable to us.

4. God hath made many gracious promises to his people, but the way to have those promises made good to us, is by our praying and crying to him.

"I will nevertheless be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," &c. God will bring us upon our knees, before he will give us the mercy or good things which he hath promised. And this our Lord signifies in this parable. Before his own elect are delivered from their enemies, they must cry mightily to him, and faint not. Show me that saint or godly man, who did not this way receive the good things promised from the hands of God. God promised Abraham a son, but he entreated God for that son: God promised Jacob that he would surely be with him, and bless him; but he wrestled with God, prayed and cried to him to be blessed. Thus David received the promise: and Daniel also, though God promised to return the captivity of his people, yet how did he cry to God that he would do it, even just when the time was come! Dan. ix. 2, 3, 4.

Prayer is the way to have the good things God hath promised.

5. Prayer is the way to escape Satan's temptations, or to be delivered from his assaults, or strengthened when assaulted. Paul prayed thrice, when he had the messenger of Satan to buffet him, and the enemy prevailed not; he failed not of help and succour. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 9. Our Lord directeth us to pray, "lead us not into temptation," not into a way of temptation, nor suffer us to fall in a temptation.

Prayer is the way to be succoured in a time of temptation.

6. Prayer is the way to prevail with God to divert judgments, or to escape the wrath and rage of our enemies. Thus God delivered Jacob from the wrath of his brother Esau: he cried unto God, and prevailed: and, as the answer of prayer, God defeated the wicked design of bloody Haman against the Jews: and thus was the counsel of Ahithophel overthrown. David prayed, Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness; and the Lord heard him. How were the Philistines

Prayer is the way to have the wrath of man defeated.

overthrown by the prayers of Samuel and all Israel: also the mighty hosts that came against Jehoshaphat. 1 Sam. vii. 7—10.

7. Prayer, importunity in prayer, is the way to get the loaves, and to have God to avenge us of our adversary.

Praying souls shall be hid in the day of God's wrath. 8. Prayer is the way to be hid in the day of God's wrath, nay, and to have a mark set upon us, that the destroying angel may spare us. "Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are committed in the land," Ezek ix. 5. God gave commission to the angels to slay utterly old and young, even all besides those on whom the mark was, and to begin at his sanctuary. All must fall or be cut off, besides those crying and praying persons, in the day of some of God's sore judgments. "Seek the Lord, all the meek of the earth," &c., "may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger," Zeph. ii. 3. Moreover our Lord directeth us to "watch and pray always, that we may escape all those things that shall come to pass, and stand before the Son of Man."

Prayer is the way to have fullness of joy. 9. Prayer is the way to have or obtain fullness of joy. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," John xvi. 24. This is the way to meet with God, and to enjoy the light of his countenance, and to have all our doubts, darkness, and sorrow removed. We must do as David did, even cry, "Lift up the light of thy countenance on us," Psal. iv. 6. And again, "restore to me the joy of thy salvation," Psal. li. 12. We have no more peace, no more light, no more strength, no more joy, because we pray no more. Our clouds would soon be dispelled, our fears vanquished, our doubts resolved, and our souls comforted, did we pray more than we do.

10. Prayer is profitable to us, because this is the way to be prepared to meet with God in his ordinances. My brethren, we are to approach near to God at his table this evening. Have you prayed? Have you endeavoured to prepare yourselves? This of prayer is one of the principal ways to do it. We read, many in Ephraim and Manasseh had not prepared themselves; but "Hezekiah prayed for them, the good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God," 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19.

Prayer is the way to have every thing sanctified. 11. Prayer is the way to have every thing sanctified unto us. "Every thing is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer," 1 Tim. iv. 5. You cannot expect that any thing should be blessed to you without prayer. You should pray that your trading, your buying, your selling, your health, your relations, your meats, your drink, your clothes, your liberties, and lives, as well as all spiritual good things, should be blessed and sanctified to you. This is the way to have everything do us good. "In every thing by prayer, &c., let your request be made known to the Lord."

Also it is the way to know such truths we are ignorant of. 12. Prayer is the way to have God make known those truths to us, that we may yet be ignorant of: "What I know not teach thou me." God led his people of old by prayer and supplication; and this is the way he leads them still.

To succeed well in all things. Lastly, this of prayer is the way to be directed by the Lord, and to succeed well in all our undertakings. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," Prov. iii. 6.

Thus I have showed you how profitable prayer is unto us ever, to our bodies and souls, and to the whole church of God. But to proceed.

Fifthly, I shall show you what prayer it is that tends so much to the glory of God, and to our own good and advantage.

They are the prayers of a godly man that glorify God. 1. In respect of the persons praying, you must know it must be a gracious or godly person: "God heareth not sinners." The prayers of unconverted men tend not to the honour of God, their prayers do not glorify God: the man whose prayers are accepted, must be renewed or regenerated, or one that is in Jesus Christ. "The prayers of a righteous man availeth much," &c.,

James v. 16. Though he be a man of infirmity (or a man as Elias was, of like passion) they are the prayers of such a person that tend to glorify God, and to his own profit. The prayers of "the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. When ye make many prayers, I will not hear you, your hands are full of blood," Isa. i. 15.

Sincere prayers glorify God. 2. They must be prayers put up to God in sincerity; the person must be one that is upright in heart. "The prayers of the upright are his delight," Prov. xv. 8. They must proceed from a pure heart, a sanctified heart, a heart sprinkled with the blood of Christ; and also put up to God in godly sincerity; not hypocritical prayers, of one whose heart and tongue agrees not. "My prayer also is pure," Job. xvi.

17. Prayers are then pure, when the heart is clean, and sanctified by the Spirit.

When prayers may be said to be pure.

3. When we ask according to the will of God. "This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything that is according to his will, he heareth us," 1 John v. 14. (1.) Either those things God hath commanded us to pray for. Or (2.) Whatsoever things are prophesied of, or foretold, God will do for us, or for his people: to pray for the accomplishing of such things, is according to the will of God. (3.) Or what things he hath promised to give unto us.

4. Our prayers tend to the honour of God, when our ends and aims are purely to glorify him, or to advance his name and interest in the world.

5. When our prayers are the breathings forth of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Prayers that tend to the glory of God, and which shall be heard, are such that are put up by the assistance of the Holy Ghost. "Praying always with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit," Eph. vi. 18. The Spirit helps us to imitate those prayers that we put up by God, and also stirs up, or excites our spirits, and strengthens our faith: it is the Holy Spirit that helps us to act and exercise its own graces in prayer, and also gives us boldness to cry, Abba, Father. We must not only pray for the gift of the Spirit, but also for the graces of the Spirit: when the soul melts in prayer, and the affections are raised and strengthened, and our doubts and fears are scattered, we may be said to pray in the Spirit.

What it is to pray in the Spirit.

6. It is the prayer of faith that tends to glorify God, when we act faith in the power, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, and in the promises of God. As unbelief dishonours God, so a strong faith tends to the honour of his holy name. Thus Abraham glorified God, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God," Rom. iv. 20. Nothing is too hard for prayer, when it is put up by faith in God. "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering," James i. 6. Let not a man that doubteth of the power, love, or faithfulness of God, think to receive any thing from God's hands, or of bringing any glory to him. "It is the prayer of faith that saves the sick," James v. 15.

The prayer of faith brings glory to God.

7. Prayer that tends to bring glory to God, must be fired with zeal and holy fervency. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," &c., ver. 16. Cold lukewarm prayers will never do any execution upon our enemies, neither on sin, Satan, nor the world, nor stir up the Almighty to appear for our help and succour; we must cry, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, that cry to him day and night?"

Fervent prayer glorifies God.

8. It must be argumentative prayer, or prayer that fills the mouth with arguments to plead with God. This was the prayer that always prevailed with God. "I will (saith Job) fill my mouth with arguments," Job xxiii. 4. Thus Jacob prayed also, "Thou sayest I will surely do thee good," &c., Gen. xxxii. 12. Again, he saith, "O God of my father Abraham, &c., which saith unto me, return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies, &c. See what arguments he used to prevail with God. The like did Joshua; "O what wilt thou do for thy great name?" Josh. vii. 9. What arguments did the church also make use of: "We are thy people," Isa. lxiii. 16. "Where is thy zeal, and thy strength, and the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our Father, O Lord, thou art our Redeemer, &c. We are thine, thou never bearest rule over them," ver. 19. Thus Jehoshaphat pleaded with the Lord also: "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? We have no might against this great multitude that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee," 2 Chron. xx. 12.

Argumentative prayer honours God.

9. They are prayers put up to God in the Spirit of adoption, which tend to the honour of God: we must not come to God, as unto a just, and sin-revenging God, or as unto an angry Judge, but as to our Father in Jesus Christ, or to a God in covenant with us. "Our Father which art in heaven," &c. "We have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father," Rom. viii. 15. Such prayers God is well pleased with, and they tend to his glory.

Prayer put up in the Spirit of adoption glorifies God.

10. They are prayers put up with humility, with self-loathing, and self-abbhorrence; we must lie low before the Lord. "I that am but dust and ashes," &c., saith Abraham. "I abhor myself," saith Job; Job xlii. 5: not like the prayer the proud Pharisee made, who boasted he was not like other men.

Humble prayer honours God.

Watching unto prayer, in and after prayer, tends to the honour of God.

11. They are prayers with watching: it is not enough to pray, but to watch as well as to pray. A man that was a great professor, who fell lately into a great sin, confessed he prayed, but he did not watch; such prayers God will not hear, nor will they glorify him, neither be profitable unto us. Satan will be too hard for us, if we do not watch as well as pray: he always watcheth against us, he sleeps not. Hence St. Paul exhorts the saints to watch unto prayer," Eph. vi. 18. "Watch and pray always," saith our blessed Lord. Watching may be considered as threefold.

What we must watch.

(1.) We must watch our hearts in all their inclinations; our hearts are deceitful, and should be watched continually. "Who can know his errors?"

(2.) We must watch the Lord in all his dispensations, we must observe his various providences, under which we, and his people are exercised.

(3.) We must watch Satan in all his temptations; we must watch before prayer, in prayer, and also after prayer, that we are not hindered from praying, nor obstructed in prayer, our souls being carried away with wandering thoughts; and after prayer call to mind how we prayed, and for what: that we may wait to receive it, we must pursue our prayers.

Prayer must be with thanksgiving.

12. Prayers that tend to the glory of God, and our good, must be with thanksgiving; we should never pray for what we want, but also give thanks to God for what we have received. "In nothing be careful; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God," Phil. iv. 6. Shall we be always a craving of God, and not make return of praise to him? Should you be asking this and that favour of your dear friend that has done much for you, and never acknowledge his former kindness done you? Sure that could not be the way to prevail with him; no, but he may say, I will find you first more thankful for what I have already done for you.

Sixthly, I shall a little further open the matter of prayer, or show you wherein the matter of prayer does consist.

God's word shows us what we should pray for, as well as after what manner.

What we should pray for.

signifies the

What it is to seek God's honour, or his glory in Prayer.

1. More generally, the main thing that we should pray for is, that God would glorify his own holy name. "Hallowed be thy name." This is the first petition we are directed to put up unto God. Now the name of God (I.) being or essence of God. The name of the God of Jacob is all one with the God of Jacob. (2.) The name of God denotes his holy attributes, his wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, justice, love, faithfulness, &c. and we must pray that God would glorify all his perfections, and blessed attributes, for his own honour, our good, and the ruin of his enemies. (3.) By the name of God sometimes is meant his word; but by whatsoever God is called, or made known to us, that is his name; and since God is made known, or chiefly manifested to us in and by Jesus Christ, our Lord Jesus is the name of God; and hence he is also called the Word of God: and we must in prayer desire God would glorify his Son, or advance the honour, and raise the glory of Jesus Christ; for his name is upon him, and his design is to exalt, extol, and make him very high. Note,

(1.) We can add nothing to the essential glory of God: but when we pray, we desire God would declare or make known his own glory, and do whatsoever may tend thereunto.

(2.) That we may be helped to do whatsoever may tend to the glory of God, or to raise the honour of Jesus Christ.

(3.) Hereby also we are taught to lie low before the Lord, and be abased to the very dust before him.

(4.) To acknowledge all things to come from God, and also to trust in him, rely upon him, and to confess that nothing is too hard for him to do.

We must pray for God's Kingdom to come. Ps. xciv. 3.

2. The second thing that we should make the matter of our prayer is, that God's kingdom might come; hereby we acknowledge God is a great King, above all gods, a glorious, a just, a wise, and righteous King, and also that he hath a kingdom which is not yet come, or least-wise not in its full glory, as it shall come in the latter days. We pray that God would pull down, or overthrow Satan's kingdom, and that his own kingdom may shine forth more visibly in glory and splendour in this world, and also come with greater glory into our souls.

3. The next thing that should be the matter of our request, and humble petition unto God, is, "That his will may be done." (1.) That the will of God may be done by us, and others. (2.) That the will of God may be done on us, or we submit to whatsoever he is pleased to exercise us under.

God's will, my brethren, is the rule of all he doth, and he being infinitely good, can will nothing but what is just and righteous; and therefore we should pray we may be helped willingly and cheerfully to submit unto it in all things.

4. We should pray for whatsoever God engaged to our blessed Lord, in the covenant of grace or redemption, to give unto us.

5. And also for all those things that Christ hath purchased for us, and which are treasured up in him as our Head, blessed Trustee, and Mediator, and for all things that God hath promised to give us, and which also Christ Jesus intercedes for, or pleads with God as our Advocate and High-priest, to give unto us. But all things must be prayed for, as to measure, manner, and time, as God in wisdom seeth good to bestow them upon us; not what, nor in what measure, or at what time we think best, but to leave all to the divine will.

6. Chiefly we should pray for spiritual things, or for supplies for our souls; this being according to that directory prayer our Lord taught his disciples. There is but one petition respecting our outward wants, "Give us this day our daily bread." Certainly it is unlawful to pray for riches, or great abundance of outward things, seeing we are bid to pray to God, to give us day by day bread to eat. Solomon's request was well pleasing to God, who asked wisdom, not riches, honours, nor the life of his enemies. As undue endeavours after riches are sinful, so to pray for them is sinful. We read of one of the wisest of men that prayed against riches. (1.) If we pray for temporal things, with preference to spirituals, or in an equal degree.

Chiefly to pray for spiritual things.

(2.) Or if we pursue them by unjust means, or in an undue manner. (3.) Or ask them, that we may consume them upon our lusts. (4.) Or seek to obtain them to the hurt of others, or in neglect of the poor, or to the prejudice of the church or kingdom. (5.) Or to lay them up, and neither be willing to give them to such that need them, or not with a resolution to part with all, when God calls us so to do; then thus to pray for outward things, or endeavour after them, is very sinful, and it argues gross ignorance of the divine being, and of what is for our good (God being a pure spirit) we must desire nothing above a likeness to him. For, (1.) That which renders us most like to God, and tends most to our happiness here, and eternally hereafter, we should always chiefly pray for, and endeavour after. (2.) That which is contrary to the divine will, or a transgression of his holy word, is sinful, and to be abominated; but to love the world, and chiefly to desire the things thereof, is contrary to the divine will, and a transgression of the holy word; therefore it is sinful and abominable. "Love not the world," &c. Such that love the world above God, are such that hate him.

When we sin in praying or endeavouring after riches.

7. We should pray to be contented with our present state, and with such things as we have, not with what we once had, or with what others have, but with what we have now, though but food and raiment, or though we want that, because God knows what is best for us, and wisely orders all things for the good of our souls.

We must pray to be contented with our present state.

8. We should pray to be delivered from all evil, all temptations; that is, that we be not brought into the way of temptation, nor fall in the hour of temptation; and that we may be enabled here to glorify God, and made meet for glory for ever hereafter.

Seventhly, I shall lay down a few arguments or motives to stir us all up to be constant and fervent in prayer.

1. Prayer is the way of our access through Christ to the Father, hereby we daily visit the blessed God, it is by prayer we have access to him; and sure if we love God, we will visit him often.

By prayer we have access to God.

2. Prayer is (saith one) the golden key of heaven, but it will never open the door without faith. It is the tree of the promises, but the fruit will not fall unless it be shaken by the hand of faith.

3. They that restrain prayer from God, are estranged from God, and at last God will be a stranger unto them, and not know them when they cry to him in their distress.

4. May be many Christians receive no more from God, because they ask no more of God. "Ye have not, because ye ask not," James iv. 2, or because they ask amiss, or not such things that are according to the will of God.

5. Consider how much it tends (as you have heard) to the glory of God. Prayer gives that glory to God which is due to his holy name.

6. It argues such are converted souls that are praying souls, or that they have divine life in them, "Behold he prays," Acts ix. 11.

7. It is also an argument, that such are in a state of health that breathe freely, in like

manner it is an argument, that such have healthy souls (or are in a state of spiritual health) that pray freely, or breathe forth freely their desires unto God. Some cannot breathe without difficulty, or do fetch their breath secret; so some find it hard to keep up in a constant course of prayer, and others prayers are too short, though long prayers are not always most prevalent with God.

8. Prayer is that which God delights in, if it be the prayers of godly persons, and their voice is sweet also unto Jesus Christ. "O my love, &c., let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Cant. ii. 14. Will you deny God that, and Christ that, which he is so much pleased with?

9. Prayer hath done or obtained wonderful things (as you have heard) it has defeated the council of the wicked, and it also consumed the captains and their fifties, it stopped the clouds from raining for three years and a half. It opened heaven again, and it rained. O what power hath this ordinance with God, that thus shut and opened heaven! It hath made hungry lions, as harmless as lambs, nay, made them become guardians of their intended prey; it hath opened the earth, and quenched the violence of fire, the "two witnesses," Rev. xi. 6, this way smote the earth as often as they pleased. What was the fire that went out of their mouths, but the answer of their prayers? It hath stopped the sun in its race, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, and also caused the sun to go back, as well as not to move at all; and it also hath, and can, when joined with faith, remove mountains of difficulties. Prayer is like an amazing engine, or battering ram, that beats down towers and strong holds, and lays all even before it; it makes hell quake, haughty tyrants to fear, and devils to tremble. O be much in prayer! it hath put to flight the armies of the aliens, and cast out devils, and obtained great deliverances, having opened the prison, and caused gates of brass to give way, and let out the prisoner.

10. Prayer is an evidence of the truth of grace, of a changed heart. The Spirit of grace is a "Spirit of supplication," Zech. xii. 12; and also it is the way to have all grace, knowledge, and spiritual gifts to increase, and the word to run and to be glorified. By this means the word hath a door of utterance, and also a door of entrance into the sinner's heart, causing the soul to love the word, to believe and obey it, and to contemplate thereon, and esteem it above thousands of gold and silver.

USE.

Therefore see you pray always, and not faint; and let such that give over praying, be ashamed; indeed we should never cease praying until we cease living, and as a man dies, or lives not when he breathes not, so he dies in his soul that prays not.

SERMON XXVII.

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry to him day and night? &c.—Luke xviii. 7, 8.

In these words,

1. We have an account of an act done. Avenge, &c.
2. An account of a glorious agent, viz., the great God.
3. The subject for whom this act is done, viz., his elect.
4. The motive moving God to do it for them, viz., their cries, "who cry to him day and night."
5. A confirmation, it shall be done. (1.) "I tell you." Christ says it. (2.) God's will, he will do it; it is God's purpose, his decree; he will avenge his own elect.
6. The manner how, &c., speedily, suddenly, unexpectedly, as to the time when, and manner how.

Doct. 1. God's people have adversaries that wrong them, which they cannot, must not avenge themselves upon.

Doct. II. That God will at last, though he seems long first, avenge his own elect, though when he doth it, few will believe it, or then look for it.

I shall, my brethren, speak a little to both these.

I. Show how, or wherein God's people are, and have been wronged, injured, and abused.

II. Show you after what manner God will avenge them.

III. Give you a few of the reasons why God will do it.

IV. Show when he will do it.

1. Wicked men have, and do wrong the saints and people of God in their names. O what scandalous, bitter, and reproachful words have they spoken against the saints! "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me," Psal. xlii 10. "My soul is among lions, even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are as spears, and arrows, and their tongues a sharp sword," Psal. lvii. 4.

God's elect
wronged in
their good
name.

Few think how some words cut and wound the children of God, as a spear thrust into their heart: how did the prophet Jeremiah complain, as well as "David, their tongue is as an arrow shot out! it speaketh deceit; one speaketh peaceably with his mouth, but in his heart he lieth in wait," Jer. ix. 8. Some smite openly, and others secretly. "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me," xx. 7. "I have heard the defaming of many: report, say they, and we will report." And this made him say "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord," verse. 10. How do reproaches weaken the hands, and afflict the heart of a faithful servant of God! It is often from open enemies, and sometimes from false brethren, and that is worst of all. Moreover, how was our Saviour himself reproached, e. i., called a gluttonous person, a wine-bibber, and a friend of Publicans and sinners (as if he encouraged them in their ways of wickedness) because he kept company with them, or allowed them to come into his presence, that he might do their souls good, and preach faith and repentance to them, who came to seek such that were lost. Paul also, and other apostles, were sorely reproached. "If a man smite you on the face," &c., 2 Cor. xi. 20, 21. "I speak as concerning reproaches; which he compares to smiting on the face.—Also when he reckons up his afflictions, mentioneth this as one; "In reproaches, in necessities," &c., 2 Cor. xii. 10. And again he saith, reproached, but yet true. Our Lord also saith, "they shall speak all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," Matt. v. 11.

2. God's people are also wronged and injured, in respect of the holy doctrine they preach, sacred religion they profess, many censuring and condemning them, as if guilty of errors and heresy, and as factious persons. "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in Moses and the prophets," Acts xxiv. 14. Again it is said to him, we desire to hear of thee, what thinkest thou of this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." Acts xxviii. 22. It is no new thing for God's people to be called sectarians and such that love singularity; the primitive Christians were separates, *i. e.*, they separated from the Jewish worship, and from the idolatries of the Gentiles; and from hence were vilified and censured as a bad and odious sort of people.

God's people
wronged in
the doctrine
they preach,
rendered
heretics.

3. Their sincerity was also questioned, and they censured as deceivers and hypocrites. Thus was holy Job charged, and not by his enemies only, but by his friends also; our Saviour was called a deceiver; "We remember the deceiver said," &c. Matt. xxvii. 63. "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil," John viii. 48, 52. Again they said, we know that thou hast a devil. Again "thou hast a devil, and deceivest the people." Hard words! and as our Saviour was called a deceiver, so was his servant Paul, "as deceivers, yet true," &c., Cor. vi. 8. What could they say that was worse, or more hard to bear?

God's people
called hypo-
crites and
deceivers.

4. God's people were, and still are wronged, in respect of their liberties, and just rights, as men, and as Christians, as it was some years since here, and is now in France, and othes places, contrary to the laws of God, nature and nations.

Wronged in
their liberty
and just
rights.

5. They have been, and still are wronged by cruel threatenings, "Behold, Lord, their threatenings," &c. Rev. xiii. 6. How do the wicked belch out oaths, and blaspheme against all that dwell in heaven, or in the church of God!

6. Nay, how often have God's elect, and dear children, been wronged by persecution, spoiling their goods, gnashing at them with their teeth, yea, biting and tearing them to pieces, casting into loathsome prisons and dunghills, thinking no death bad enough for them! How have thousands been barbarously murdered, by hanging them, burning them alive, roasting them alive, pulling or flaying off their skins alive, boring out their eyes, drawing them to pieces with horses, and all other inhuman and cruel deaths which man devils could invent! These have been some of those sorrows, wrongs, and injuries which God's elect have met with from their enemies,

God's elect
wronged by
bloody per-
secutors.

besides, thousands have suffered in bloody massacres, thirty thousand at one time, and more than two hundred thousand at another, but about sixty years since by bloody papists, and not far from us, even in Ireland, and our own poor Prote-tant Country, both men, women, and children.

II. I shall show you how, or after what manner God will avenge his own elect, for all the wrongs they have suffered.

1. By famine, sword, and pestilence. It is true, the sin-revenging God hath this way already poured out his wrath upon his peoples' enemies, as also by sudden and fearful deaths upon many of their bloody persecutors, as approved histories show, but those fore-mentioned judgments will, in these latter days, be more dreadful than any, (except the amazing wrath and vengeance of God, that was poured out upon the Jews, to the utter desolation of the city, of Jerusalem and their temple, to avenge the wrongs done to our blessed Lord, his apostles, and dear children, for wrath came upon them to the uttermost). But this way, that is, by the sword and famine, and by the pestilence, will God destroy Babylon, and contend with all the enemies of his church and people. "Therefore her plagues shall come upon her in one day," (that is, in one year) "death, mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire; for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her."

How and after what manner God will avenge his people on their enemies.

God will take vengeance of his churches enemies, by thunder, and lightnings, and earthquakes.

2. As leading to this, God will send dreadful earthquakes, thunder, lightning, and great hail, such that never was seen or known before, which may be daily expected to come to pass, from the God of vengeance, as a just recompence upon his peoples' enemies, or to avenge his own elect, that cry unto him.

3. God will avenge them, by setting their enemies one against another; he will take peace from the earth, and fill the wicked with rage and fury; so that they shall kill one another, as they have part already done. And power was given to him that sits thereon, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. God will set ruler against ruler in Babylon. "My people, go out of the midst of her, and every man delivered his own soul from the fierce anger of the Lord; lest your hearts faint, and ye fear, for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall come in one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.—For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famine and pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places," Matt. xxiv. 7. May be this prophecy is begun; O look up! the days of vengeance draw near. "Blood ever long shall come out of the winepress, up to the horses bridles, for the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."

A mystical earthquake upon the church's enemies.

4. God will avenge his own elect upon the tenth part of the city, or mystical Babylon, by a mighty and terrible, mystical earthquake, which will make the hearts of the enemy in that street of the great city to tremble, and there shall be slain of the names of men seven thousand. "and the remnant will be affrighted, and give glory to the God of heaven," Rev. xi. 13. And so the second woe will pass away, seven is a number of perfection; it is a certain number put for an uncertain.

The ten kings shall execute Gods vengeance on Babylon.

mouth, shall The saints shall be instruments in it.

5. God will put it into the hearts of the ten kings (or some of them) to hate the whore. "and to make her desolate and naked, and they shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire," Rev. xvii. 16. They will be kings of those kingdoms that formerly gave their power to the beast, or owned the pope, and popish church; but the Lamb by his word, or sword, that goes out of his overcome them, and God's own people also shall join with them (or with some of them) and they shall be God's battle-axe, by whom he will cut down their enemies. "Come out of her my people," &c. "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double, according to her works, in the cup which she hath filled to you, fill to her double," Rev. xviii. 6. They will be some, or all of the Protestant princes, and the saints in conjunction with them, by whom God will avenge himself and his people, on his and their adversaries.

God will come forth clothed with vengeance.

6. In a word, God will also, in a way perhaps which we know not of, by his more immediate hand, break forth in dreadful wrath upon the enemies, and make an utter end of all the persecutors of his church and people; he will arise and devour them. "I have for a long time holden my peace, I have been still, and have refrained myself; now I will cry like a travailing woman, I will devour and devour at once," Isa. llii. 14. O how dreadful will that God appear,

when he comes forth clothed with wrath and vengeance! "He will put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head, and he put the garment of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak." Isa. lix. 17. What a man of war is the Lord! and how terrible will our God appear, when he comes forth in fury, thus armed! "The Lord will rise up, as in mount Perizim; he will be wroth, as in the valley of Gideon, that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act," Isa. xxviii. 21. The land shall be soaked with blood—"For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompence for the controversy of Sion," Isa. xxxiv. 7, 8. And hence it is said, "He will roar out of Sion," Joel iii. 16. Little do the tyrants of the earth know what days of vengeance upon them are near, neither how they will "come on princes as on mortar, and as he that treads the clay," &c.

III. Why will God avenge his own elect, or execute vengeance upon their enemies?

Ans. 1. Because his people's enemies are guilty of blood. Shall murderers escape the just vengeance of God? nay, they have murdered the saints, the best of men; yea, they have murdered thousands, if not millions. What murderers are they who have shed the "blood of the saints, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus!" The sentence of the moral law is, the murderer shall die. "He that sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," Gen. ix. 6. Sometimes murderers escape long, so have these, but they shall be taken at last, and with vengeance die. O it is a righteous thing with God, to avenge the wrongs of his people! "He will give them blood to drink, because they are worthy."

Why God
will avenge
his own
elect.

2. Because vengeance belongs to the Lord, it is his right to execute it. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord," Rom. xii. 19. "To me belongs vengeance," Dent. xxxii. 35. "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs, show thyself," Psal. xciv. 1. God's people are not to avenge themselves; and when he makes use of them as instruments, or as an axe in his hand, it is he that is the Agent, it is God that takes vengeance, let whosoever be the instruments.

Vengeance
belongs to
God alone.

3. God will avenge his people upon their adversaries, to make good his promises unto them, and his threatenings denounced against their enemies. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord," &c., until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me," Mich. vii. 9. "Now shall she be trodden down, as the mire in the streets," verse 10. How many times hath the Lord said, he will execute his wrath, and pour out his wrath on Sion's enemies! "Thy nakedness shall be discovered (speaking of Babylon) thy shame shall be seen, I will take vengeance, and will not meet thee as a man; no, but as a terrible God," Isa. xlvii. 3. "Be strong, fear not, behold your God will come, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you," Isa. xxxv.

God will
avenge his
elect, to
perform his
word.

4. These words refer to the time of the church's deliverance, and the setting up his kingdom. "When sorrow and sighing shall fly away," verse 10. "The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies," Nah. i. 2.

4. Because they are so near and dear to the blessed God; and besides, it is for his own holy Name-sake that they suffer, and have always been exposed to the rage of their enemies. How doth it grieve a tender father, to see his dear children torn into pieces, and burned alive before his eyes! and much more the compassionate and tender husband is afflicted, and in bitterness of soul, to see his beloved wife abused and mangled in a most barbarous and inhuman manner, whilst he looks on. And how would such a father or husband avenge the blood of such relations (were it in their power) on such murderers! Now the love and bowels of our heavenly Father far exceed the love and pity of any earthly father to his children, and so doth the love and compassion of Jesus Christ to his church, which is his spouse, and endeared wife, for whom also he poured forth his own blood. O Sirs, from hence be sure he will not spare her bloody enemies, in the day of his wrath! especially considering it was alone, for his sake, they have suffered all those lamentable sorrows and miseries.

God will
avenge his
elect, be-
cause they
are so ne-
ar and
dear to
him.

5. God will avenge his own elect, to convince the world how grievous to him it hath been, to behold all that violence and cruelty wicked men have done unto his own people, and to discover their horrid murders, and to convince them of the detestable sin of persecution, tyranny, and oppression, and likewise to clear the innocency of his people. "Behold the Lord comes to execute judgment upon all, and convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, and hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

6. God will do it, because it is the vengeance of his temple. "Her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down, for it is the vengeance of the Lord," Jer. l. 15. "De-

clare in Sion the vengeance of the Lord God, the vengeance of his temple," verse 28. Moreover, because it is the time of the Lord's vengeance, "These are the day of vengeance," Luke xxi. 22. As there are days of mercy, so the days of vengeance will come, when mercy will be turned into fury.

God will
avenge his
people be-
cause the
wicked's day
must end,
and the
saint's day
must begin.

7. Because the harvest of the wicked will be then fully ripe for cutting down, and the time when the wicked shall be utterly cut off, and rooted out of the earth; they shall have their time, the full time that is set for them; but when the last period is expired of their time, and the "set time also is come for God to favour Sion," and to give his people the kingdom, then with vengeance the other shall fall, that God may exalt the other.

Because of
the prayers
and cries of
God's elect.

Lastly, God will avenge his own elect, because they cry to him both day and night. This is one reason and argument which our Saviour gives, why God will do it, as it is expressed in this parable. Shall not the prayers of the Lord's people be answered? Will he never remember their sighs and cries? See what he himself saith, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord, I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him," Psal. xii. 5. What a multitude of prayers are there on the file in heaven, that shall all be answered in God's own time, put

up to him by his people in every age; and besides, the cry of the blood of the slain saints, nay, their souls are said to cry to God. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.—And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth!" Rev. vi. 9, 10. This is one, and not the least reason neither, why God will avenge his own elect; their prayers and cries shall be answered, though God seems to tarry long.

IV. When will God avenge his own elect on their enemies?

When God
will avenge
his people.

Ans. 1. When the beast's forty-two months are fully expired, so long God hath determined the wicked shall have; Antichrist must have his full time to reign, but when those long months are ended, and the saints' 1260 days or years of suffering, and the whole time of their distress is run out, then

the days of vengeance will begin. In a word, when the "second woe is passed away, and the seventh angel begins to sound his trumpet," then the enemy shall fall, and the "kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ," Rev. xi. 14, 15, 16. Which I, with many other servants of God, believe will suddenly be accomplished.

2. When the sins of his enemies are full. When the sins of the Amorites were full, God drove them out, and gave Israel the land of Canaan, Gen. xv. 16: so the enemies of Sion must fill up the measure of their sins, and the saints also must fill up the measure of their sufferings which are behind; and when both these are done, God will destroy the one, and deliver the other.

3. When Babylon is in great expectation of recovering her lost children, or some that fell off from her, and she begins to say, I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow, then the time comes, "How much she glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow; then her plagues shall come in one day," Rev. xviii. 7, Isa. xlvii. 8. The enemy shall seem very secure, just when her ruin comes. Thus was Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar his son, when judgments came upon them. Dan. v. 21, 22, 23.

4. A little before that very time that God riseth up to execute his judgments on his enemies, he will assemble the nations, or stir them up one against another in war, so that they shall strangely weaken one another, and waste their people and treasure. "Therefore wait upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, and that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce wrath; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy," Zeph. iii. 8. Well, and then what will follow? Mark the next words, "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." Then no more distinction of names, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, &c. No, all shall become one church; perhaps this may be effected at the ascension of the witnesses, Rev. xi. 11.

5. When the people of God, or the virgins seem to be all asleep, or secure, and yet by some sudden and amazing Providence are awakened, to put up a mighty cry to God, then will the time come; look not for it until you see a mighty spirit of prayer poured out upon the people of God, or many of them. Yet,

Lastly, By what our Saviour here saith, just when God begins to avenge his people upon their enemies, they will be very low in their faith and expectation, as to the time of their deliverance. "Shall the Son of Man when he comes, find faith on the earth?" They will not believe it will be then.

APPLICATION.

1. Let none despair of God's mercy touching his people's deliverance, it will come, the vision will speak; though it tarry, yet wait for it.

2. We infer, that God hath not forgotten his poor people; it is for wise ends he seems to delay his coming to avenge them on their enemies.

3. From the whole, let us all be put upon most fervent prayer, yea, pray and not faint; and also exercise faith in our prayers, touching the church's deliverance, and the utter ruin of her enemies.

4. By what hath been said we may also infer, that there is much reason for us to believe the days of vengeance are very near.

5. Let all that be yet in Babylon haste out speedily, and every one deliver his own soul.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

KING WHO TOOK ACCOUNT OF HIS SERVANTS.

SERMON XXVIII.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king, who would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents: But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, lord have patience with me and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him an hundred pence; and he laid his hands upon him, and took him by the throat, saying, pay me that thou owest; and his fellow-servant fell down at his feet," &c.—Matt. xviii. 23—35.

THE main scope and proposition of truth, which our Saviour designs in this parable (as our annotators do observe) is to press all men (especially his disciples) to forgive one another all wrongs and injuries done to them, upon the person offending's repentance. The scope, and acknowledgement of his faults; and this most evidently appears from the coherence, or what precedeth before, where our Lord answers a question put forth by Peter, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, till seven times?" ver. 21. "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven," or as often as he sinneth against thee, and saith, he acknowledgeth his sorrow, and unfeignedly repenteth. This, I conceive our Saviour intendeth; for by a certain and definite number, an uncertain and indefinite number is meant.

2. Our Saviour's design also hereby is to show, what a vast debt sin is, or the greatness of the evil which is in sin, and likewise the great difference or disparity there is between sin, or offences, as against God; and those offences that are committed against our fellow-creature, as so considered; for

The great difference between sins as against God,

and such that
are against
man.

the one is set out by ten thousand talents, the other by an hundred pence; the first (as our annotators say) amounts to one million eight hundred and seventy five thousand pounds, a very great sum; yet less than this may no unforgiven sinner be said to be indebted to the justice of God. O what have sinners done, and in what a poor, miserable, and wretched state are all men naturally? Owing so much, and not having one farthing to pay. What is any debt owing to us, compared to this? It is said to be a hundred pence, a very small matter.

3. It is to let us know the infinite and boundless love, grace, and mercy of God to true penitent believers, and the horrid cruelty of unmerciful men to their fellow-creatures.

4. To show that such men (let them be who they will) that will not forgive their brother all trespasses against them (upon their repentance and due acknowledgement of their faults) God will never forgive them. And if some to whom mercy and pardon in Christ is freely offered, and they seem to accept thereof, do afterwards, nevertheless, show a cruel and unmerciful heart, God will cast them into hell; and such a wicked and merciless spirit demonstrates that they never were forgiven. But as many parables run not on all-four, so neither doth this; for evident it is, that all such whom God, through the satisfaction of Christ, forgives ten thousand talents (or let their sins be more or less,) he forgives them all the debt for ever. God never revokes or makes void his free and absolute pardons, but forgives all their sins, and will remember them no more.

These things contain the main scope and design of this parable; yet it should be well observed (as one well notes) that all the actions of the king mentioned therein, do not correspond or agree with the actings of God towards sinners. But the inference our Saviour draws, ver. 35, or that improvement he makes of it, shows the chief design or purpose of it, viz., "so likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother, their trespasses."

The parts
opened. Yet I shall speak a little more distinctly to it, and endeavour (God assisting,) to open the parts thereof.

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto," &c., ver. 23.

By the kingdom of heaven here, I understand is meant the administration of the kingdom of grace, or God's merciful dispensations and dealings with the children of men, through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; particularly in respect to pardon of sin. And as this is evident from the scope hereof, so with this sense our annotators and other expositors do agree.

See Pool and
the assem-
bly's Annota.

"Likened unto a certain king, who would take account of his servants."

Biadete and
Marlorate on
Matthew, &c.

Thus far it holds parallel with the great God, who doth, and will take account of all his servants, or of all the children of men; and as the parable of the talents calls them all his servants; so doth this likewise, though some men are slothful, wicked, and unmerciful servants. God, my brethren, is Lord of and over all men; and all owe to him all they are, and are able to do, to the glory of his holy name.

God will take
an account of
all sinners.

"And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents," ver. 24.

"Brought unto him." He came not, it appears, of his own free choice, to beg or entreat his lord to forgive his vast debt, or to have a little patience towards him; but he was forced to come, or was brought unto him. If we may infer anything from hence, to our spiritual instruction, it may be this, which holds with the analogy of faith, viz., that the conscience of a sinner may be awakened, and may, as it were, force a man to come or draw near to God, and to hear the word, or to pray and confess his grievous crimes, or that vast sum he owes to the justice and holiness of God, in violating the law.

"But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all he had, and payment to be made," ver. 25.

The laws of some nations we read were such, that he that was run a vast deal into debt, and had nothing to pay; was himself, his wife, and children to be sold; nay it was a law in Israel, to sell the poor debtor. "Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" Isa. 1. 1. Hence the poor widow told the prophet Elisha, "Thy servant, my husband, is dead, and thou knowest thy servant, my husband, did fear the Lord, and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons for bondmen." 2 Kings iv. 1.

Exod. xxi. 2.
Levit. xxv.
39.

But, my brethren, in this the parable holds no parallel; for God deals not thus with any poor sinner, he neither sells any (to satisfy his law and justice) for bondmen, nor doth he exact payment or satisfaction to his justice of us, because nothing but an infinite

sum can satisfy divine justice; therefore none but Jesus Christ could do this, and by his doing and suffering is full satisfaction made, who was God as well as man. Note this, that no unjust nor cruel actions of men, mentioned in any parable, can be applied to the holy God, nor is commended by Jesus Christ. Therefore in the parable of the unjust steward, our Lord only commended his wisdom in providing for himself for the future time, but not his unjust way in doing it.

“The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all,” ver. 26.

The Lord Jesus by these words may show, that sinners, who are abominably guilty before God, when under convictions, should fall down at his feet, and entreat for pardon. But what this debtor said is not the voice of a true penitent sinner; for such beg not for time, nor entreat God to bear patiently a little longer, till he can pay him all; nor do true penitent sinners make any such promise, because they know they are not able, nor ever shall, to make satisfaction for the evil that is in the least sin, much less to pay ten thousand talents; therefore on this foot neither doth this parable run.

“And then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt,” ver. 27.

We may infer from hence, that some men who are creditors, and have a vast sum owing them, do not always exercise severe justice, but are inclined to mercy, and forgive very great debts. Moreover, this may teach all Christ's disciples to forgive their brethren, and all men their trespasses, wrongs, and injuries done unto them whatsoever, even a sum or sums of money, when their debtors are poor, and have nothing to pay, and humbly submit themselves, and entreat for mercy; and if they do not thus, they must expect no mercy from the hands of God. And also we are hereby taught to do thus, our Lord intimating, that though sin (as it is against God) is a vast and wonderful debt; yet he, when a poor sinner comes to him (in and through Christ) and pleads for mercy, God freely forgives him all, without any satisfaction made by the poor sinner; nor doth God regard any promises a sinner may make, knowing how unable he is to satisfy his justice, or answer the demands of the law.

Men ought to forgive the debtors who are poor having nothing to pay.

“And the same servant went out, and found his fellow-servant who owed him a hundred pence, and laid his hands upon him, took him by the throat, saying, pay me that thou owest,” Ver. 28.

“And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all,” Ver. 29.

“And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt,” Ver. 30.

This may denote two things.

1. That some persons to whom a man (who is their creditor) forgives a vast debt, through his compassion, will themselves show no mercy to others; though they are forgiven much, yet they will forgive nothing, no not a few pence that are owing them; by reason of which, the creditor makes void the pardon given to them.

A disparity.

2. But though it is sometimes thus among men, yet God, as I hinted, never revokes any pardon he hath given to any believer; God's free and absolute pardon is not revoked by the giver, nor forfeited by the receiver. Therefore this, some think, refers to a church pardon, I mean, when a man for some great offence is brought under a church censure, or is cast out, yet he acknowledging his sin, and manifesting repentance, the church forgives him, but soon after he falling upon his poor brother, in an unmerciful manner, the church revokes that forgiveness, and casts him out again, and he being never humbled (but showing he is a cruel and wicked man) is never received any more, but perishes eternally.

Object. “But this cannot be a church-forgiveness, because it is said, the Lord forgave him,” Ver. 27.

Ans. Such as the church forgives, God forgives. “Whomsoever ye bind on earth, are bound in heaven, and whomsoever ye loose on earth, are loosed in heaven,” Matt. xviii. 18; as a little before in the same chapter, our Saviour expressly saith. And though penitents after excommunication the Lord forgives, and the church forgives or absolves, so as to grant admission; yet all stubborn and impenitent sinners God binds the censure of the church upon, and therefore (as our annotators note) this is a terrible text to those that are justly and daily cut off from the communion of the church, for notorious and scandalous sins, and who persist in their wickedness.

But according to others, it may refer to a great sinner that concludes, or thinks that he is forgiven, yea, boasts that God hath pardoned all his abominable sins; but he showing

(soon after) a vile heart, or a cruel and merciless spirit, God convinceeth him, or declares he was never forgiven. "I forgave all that debt;" or did I not offer thee a free pardon, which thou didst seem to accept? But thou clearly showest, by thy cruel actings towards thy fellow-servant, that indeed thou wast never forgiven, but hast deceived thyself.

But I rather conclude the acting of this lord as a creditor to his servant (who was absolutely forgiven, but would not forgive his fellow-servant) cannot refer to God, but is mentioned by our Saviour to aggravate the great evil of a person that will not forgive his brother, who hath trespassed against him. Though, as all expositors agree, it may show the vastness of that debt sinners are indebted unto God.

My brethren, all persons who receive never so great favours from God, or forgiveness from his people, if they retain a wicked and an unforgiving spirit, it will move the Lord to anger, and bring eternal ruin upon their souls.

"O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, &c., shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had of thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, until he should pay all that was due," Ver. 32, 34.

He that cannot, will not forgive, shall never be forgiven. "He shall have judgment without mercy, that showeth no mercy," James ii. 18. Such shall be judged according to the rigour of the law, by pure justice, and shall have judgment without the least mixture of mercy.

"Until he shall pay the whole debt."

The papists plead for their purgatory from hence. "He must pay all, but say they neither in this life, nor in hell, therefore in purgatory." O foolish assertion, and as blind a conclusion! Why not in hell? for by temporal punishment inflicted upon a cruel and merciless person, our Lord, no doubt, intimates, that all who do not forgive their brethren or neighbours, shall be cast into hell, "Until thou have paid the uttermost farthing;" that is, they must suffer eternally.

For can a finite creature (by suffering) satisfy infinite justice? There is no purgation but by Christ's blood, nor any place of torment after death Christ's blood. but hell; therefore as one of the ancient fathers (on this place) saith, "He gave the man to the tormentors until he paid the whole debt; that is, he gave him to perpetual punishment, for he shall never come out from thence again. For thus will the holy and just God deal with all, "Who from their hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

See what proportions our late annotators have noted from hence. This excellent parable (say they) instructeth us in these truths.

continuat.
of Toob's
Annotat. 1. That as men by the law of nature, law of God, and laws of men, may be debtors to us, to our reputation, or to our estates; so are we debtors to the glory, honour, and justice of God.

2. That it is a vast debt we owe to God's honour and justice, to which no debt owing to us can bear any proportion.

3. That we have nothing to pay to God, in satisfaction for our debt.

4. That God hath a right to demand a full satisfaction for our debts.

5. That God for Christ's sake, upon our applications to him for mercy, will forgive us our debts.

6. That we are not so ready to forgive our brethren their little injuries they do us, as God is to forgive us.

7. That we ought to set before us God's compassion towards us, and free love in forgiving us, potently to move us to forgive those who have done us injuries, and to forgive them out of that consideration.

8. That we ought from our hearts to forgive men their trespasses; that is, so as not to hate them, bear any grudge or malice, or seek any private revenge upon them, nor public satisfaction beyond what they are able to give, but be ready to do them all common offices of kindness in their straits that are in our power.

9. That the not doing of this will be an evidence to our souls, that God hath not indeed forgiven us, as well as a bar against such forgiveness, or an ill omen of punishment in the line; or if not here, yet in the life to come. To this purpose our annotators speak.

I shall not, and speak briefly unto three or four propositions from hence.

Prop. I. That sin is a debt, a vast debt, or that there is much, yea, great, exceeding great evil in sin, considered as a debt.

Prop. II. That sinners are debtors, and have nothing to pay, and therefore are forgiven freely, as an act of God's mercy, all their debts without any satisfaction made by them.

Doct. III. That God doth and will call sinners who are debtors to him, to an account, be they willing or no.

Doct. IV. That a pardoned person, or one that God hath forgiven, does forgive from his heart all those that have injured him; and they that do not so are not, nor shall be ever forgiven.

I shall begin with the first of these.

I. Show why sins are called debts.

II. What a great debt sin is.

III. Apply it.

I. Sin is a debt, &c. Sins and debts, my brethren, are used promiscuously, in Luke called trespasses, in Matthew called debts, "Forgive us our debts," &c.

And the reason is, not because in sin there is an obliquity and dissonancy from the law. For this is not called a debt, but obedience to the law, or holiness that we owe to God; and for non-payment of this debt, we are grand debtors to him. In sin also is guilt, i. e., an obligation unto punishment; and this is called a debt, a full payment of which we are not able to make. But because this is opened in the exposition of another parable, I shall say no more to the first thing proposed.

See the parable of the two debtors in the supplement.

II. I shall show you that sin is a vast debt, or that there is great, exceeding great evil in sin, as it is considered a debt.

Sin is a vast debt, in respect of the quantity of it.

1st. Sin is a vast debt in respect of the quantity of it; it is ten thousand talents. Is not one million eight hundred seventy-five thousand pounds a vast debt? so much every sinner is indebted to God. Sin is compared to a debt, consisting of such a great sum; but indeed every sin a sinner is guilty of, is more than a talent; and his sins (as to their number) as "David says, are more than the hairs of our head," Psal. xl. 12.

In respect to the quality of it.

2ndly. Sin is a great debt, in respect to the quality of it. Should a man steal the kings crown, and all his jewels, and lose them, and not be able to restore them, what a guilty wretch would he be? What would be the nature, the quality, as well as the quantity of such a debt? Or what would an offender be indebted to the king? Why, sirs, every sinner hath robbed God of his glory, his crown (as I may say) and his choice jewels, nay, hath spoiled and marred his glorious image, and can never make restitution to God of what he hath stolen or robbed him of.

I. Sin is a vast debt, or an exceeding great evil in respect of God, against whom it is committed.

In reference to the object against whom it is committed.

Sin is in this respect an infinite sum, or an infinite evil. "Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquity infinite?" Job. xxii. 5.

(1.) Sin (saith Mr. Caryl) is not infinite properly, yet in a vulgar sense it may be called infinite; we call that infinite which is very great, or which exceeds all ordinary bounds, though not all bounds; for that only is properly infinite that exceeds all bounds; some sinners exceed those bounds that others are kept in.

(2.) Saith he, sin hath an infiniteness in it, in reference to the object, viz., the holy God; and so not only a great sin, but small sins, or any sin may be said to be infinite, because it is committed against an infinite God.

(3.) He shows also, sins may be said to be infinite in respect to the number of them, there is an arithmetical as well as a geometrical infiniteness in sin. Thus the septuagint render the text, "are not thine iniquities innumerable?"

(4.) He adds, iniquities may be said to be infinite, or in reference to the will or spirit of him that commits those iniquities; those sins are without bounds to which man would never set a bound, &c.

Sin infinite in respect of the will of the sinner. Burroughs.

2. I may add, sin may be said to be infinite, because of the desert of sin, it deserves infinite wrath; (1.) As one notes, the desert of sin is the loss of infinite good, even God, and all the good that is in God. (2.) Sin hath made an infinite breach between God and the sinner; it puts the sinner at an infinite distance from God, and procures infinite torment.

3. Sin may be said to be infinite, because it requires an infinite price to make an atonement; none but Christ, God-man, and so an infinite person, or the most high God, could satisfy for the wrong sin had done to the Majesty of heaven.

An infinite price must atone for sin.

4. Sin may be said to be infinite, because nothing but infinite power can overcome it; none but God the Spirit, which is God, can subdue it. The power of sin is not subdued without infinite power: it cannot be destroyed, or the evil root spoiled, unless infinite grace and infinite power be exerted.

Infinite power must subdue sin.

We cannot hate sin enough.

5. Because it requires unmeasurable hatred: if it were possible we should hate sin with an infinite hatred; we can never hate it enough.

Jer. Burrough's evil of sin, p. 353.

6. Sin may be said to be infinite, because it is the universal cause of all evil, as God appears to be an infinite good, because he is the universal cause of all good. And as all good flows from God, so all evil flows from sin: yet my author should have showed, that there is a grand disparity in re-

spect of these two causes, because the one is the effect or product of a mere degenerate creature, i. e., either the devil or sinful man, and the other of an infinite God. But put all these together, and then you will say that sin is a vast debt, or an exceeding great evil, as a debt.

3rdly. Sin is a vast debt, considering what wrong it hath done to God; it is a crossing his will, a violation of his law, a contemning of his authority, a despising of his sovereignty and dominion, a defacing his image, and a resisting his Spirit, abuse of his patience, and a slighting of all his love, mercy, and goodness.

4thly. Sin is a great debt, because all men, yea, all the saints on earth, nor angels of heaven can pay this debt, or satisfy the justice of God for one sin, the smallest sin a sinner committeth against God; no, none can do it but Jesus Christ alone.

5thly. Sin is a vast debt, because it exposeth the sinner to eternal wrath and vengeance; it provokes a holy God, and merciful God, to throw the impenitent and unbelieving sinner into hell, to endure intolerable torment, and misery for evermore. That debt, which if not paid, exposeth a man to be burned alive, to be consumed to ashes, all would say was a dreadful debt: but what is such a temporal death (though the worst that men can invent or inflict) to the second death, or to lie in the lake of fire and brimstone to all eternity?

Sinners in hell cannot satisfy God's justice, nor pay this debt.

6thly. That which can never be paid by a sinner's sufferings in hell to all eternity, is a great debt: but no sinner can pay this debt, or satisfy God's justice in lying to an endless eternity in hell-fire; therefore it is a vast and great debt the damned in hell are always paying, but can never pay; for if they could, there would be an end of their misery, and a redemption out of hell: but the "smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever."

They must lie there until the debt be paid, even the last farthing, but that can never be done by the sufferings of mere finite creatures.

U S E.

1. We infer, that Satan hath strangely deceived and beguiled poor sinners, in persuading them sin is a small thing: what do you think of such fools who make a mock of sin? that sin, and say, are we not in sport?

2. We may infer, that all unconverted or unbelieving sinners are very poor, though they are externally rich: yet if ungodly, though they are kings, they are very poor, even owe to God's justice ten thousand talents, and have not one penny to pay.

3. Moreover, I infer, what a dismal thing is it, to see men so poor and miserable already, yet run every day more and more in debt, and bring still fresh guilt upon their own precious and immortal souls.

4. Also, O what grace, what mercy, and love hath God showed to us, to find out a way, by a person rich and able, to pay all this vast debt, and who hath indeed paid it, and for ever satisfied the law and justice of God for our sins, for all the sins of his elect, or all that believe in Jesus Christ; they are for ever discharged from this vast debt, they are freed from hell and wrath, "and shall not come into condemnation." John v. 24. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1.

5. We also infer, that their state is dismal, who cannot, will not forgive others; for God will not forgive them this debt, but they must go to prison, and lie in hell for ever: and the state of all others is dreadful also, who continue in sin, and do not believe on Christ. "He that believeth not shall be damned," John iii. 36; Mark xvi. 17.

6. I infer, Jesus Christ, is wonderfully rich, who hath paid so vast a debt, seeing every sinner that is pardoned owed ten thousand talents; and O how many thousands hath he pardoned, having paid all their debts! stand and wonder!

Comfort. But O what comfort and consolation is here for believers! you are forgiven, all this debt is blotted out, you are pardoned through Jesus Christ, and for ever pardoned; therefore you may sing and triumph in God's boundless grace for ever.

But to proceed.

Doct. II. That sinners are debtors, and have nothing to pay; and therefore such that are forgiven are forgiven freely, as an act of God's grace and mercy, without any satisfaction made by them to the justice of God.

In speaking to this proposition, I shall.

I. Show how it appears that sinners are debtors, or greatly in debt.

II. Show what kind of debtors sinners are.

III. Show how they that believe, can be said to be forgiven freely in a way of grace, and yet Jesus Christ hath paid all their debts.

IV. Apply it.

I. A man may be a debtor many ways.

1. By owing of money; so sinners are debtors unto God, by owing him perfect obedience to his righteous law. This is meant by money; "without money," that is, without righteousness, Isa. lv. 1.

How it appears that sinners are debtors.

2. A man may be a debtor, as he is a trespasser, and offender, or a guilty person, and under obligation to punishment. In this sense also sinners are debtors unto God, for they are trespassers, offenders, and guilty persons, having broke God's law, the penalty of which is eternal death. He is a law debtor, a criminal, and is under an obligation to everlasting punishment: so that no traitor or flagitious person is more obnoxious to temporal death than every unconverted sinner is obnoxious to eternal wrath, and divine vengeance.

Man a debtor in a law-sense, or a criminal.

3. A man may be a debtor by robbery, by stealing a man's goods, or robbing him of his good name. Adam rendered God not to be believed through Satan's subtily; and thus sinners are become debtors also.

4. A man may be a debtor by violating a covenant, or by wasting his master's goods; sinners are debtors to God this way also, they have broke the covenant of their creation, and have wasted their Lord's goods, Gal. v. 3; Matt. xxv. 26, 27.

5. A man may be a debtor, by receiving kindnesses; he owes the debt of gratitude and thankfulness: and O what great debtors are sinners this way to God, and how few, pay the thousandth part of this debt and tribute of praise which is due to him for all his mercies and favours received?

II. But to proceed to show, what kind of debtors sinners are to God.

1 Sinners are ill debtors, they are not willing to be called to an account, nothing is worse to them than to hear the tidings, "give an account of your stewardship," &c. Hence it is said in this parable, "One was brought before his Lord, that owed him ten thousand talents." Hence the words intimate, as if he was forced or hauled before his Lord to reckon with him: why so sinners love not to think to be brought to the bar of God, they when awakened, trembled to think what large bills, and hand-writings will be brought against them, to hear of all the oaths they have sworn, and lies they have told, and how many times they have been drunk, and of the thefts and cheats they are guilty of, and the woredoms they have in secret committed, and of the wrongs by a detracting and back-biting tongue, they have done to their brother or neighbour, and of the means of grace they have slighted and neglected; yea, to answer for all the evils they are guilty of. "They shall be brought forth in the day of wrath," Job xxi. 30. They will not come willingly, but they shall be haled before the Judge of heaven and earth.

A debtor is unwilling to come to give up his accounts.

2. Ill debtors are commonly attended with shame. Ambrose speaketh of some, who for shame and distress made themselves away, fearing more *opprobrium vitæ*. than *mortis periculum*; the reproach of life, than the pain and punishment of death. So sinners made sensible, are attended, like ill debtors, with great shame; and therefore, like Adam, hide themselves, and to cover their shame sew fig-leaves together, to clothe themselves; they have many devices to cover their iniquities, which is their shame.

An ill debtor is attended with shame.

3. Some ill debtors have many shifts and delays to put off their creditors; it is a common custom among poor debtors, to contrive ways to excuse themselves: so sinners, when charged and told of their sins, have many excuses, *i. e.*, I was drawn in before I was aware. "The woman gave me, and I did eat." So say many now, it was this bad man, and that bad woman that enticed me to commit this and that sin; but all are guilty, who is without sin? I shall do better when God gives me grace, my heart is good; and thus they put off God and conscience, by trifling excuses and delays; but repent not, nor go to God, through Jesus Christ, for a new heart, and for forgiveness of their great debt.

An ill debtor has many delays and excuses

An ill debtor hates his creditor, so it is with guilty sinners.

1. Some ill debtors hate their creditors, *Leve alienum debitore facit, grave facit, grave inimicum*, saith Burgess; a little money borrowed, makes a man a debtor, but a great deal an enemy; so that the more they owe, the more they hate. Nay, Aristotle saith, "Debtors wish their creditors to have no being; wish they were dead, so that they might be freed of their debts."

My brethren, the scripture saith, that wicked men hate God, they are afraid of him, because of the vast debt they owe, who, as an offended Judge, they know will call them to his bar. Hence they, like the fool, wish there was no God.

2. A debtor doth not love to see or meet his creditor, he will avoid it, go some by-way; so sinners love not to approach near unto God, nor that God should meet them by the reproofs of his word, checks of conscience, or by the rebukes of the rod. When God comes near to them, by touching their consciences: how are they startled, as in the case of Felix, who when he found the Lord had met him by Paul's preaching, whilst he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," Acts xxiv. 25.; it is said Felix trembled. Alas, he could not bear it, and therefore cries out, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient time, I will call for thee."

As debtors so sinners are afraid of being arrested and sent to prison.

No compounding the debt sinners owe to God.

I mean, full payment, or a complete satisfaction for the wrong they have done to the holiness of God, his law and justice, by their iniquities and abominable transgressions; all must be paid, either by him or his Surety, or to prison the sinner must go.

2. A debtor among men, upon non-payment of his debts, is exposed but to external punishment, the worst of which that we read of, either in the scripture or history, was thus, viz., I have read, that Valentinian, the emperor, would have such put to death that were not able to pay their debts. Also, Mr. Burgess mentions a most severe law, made in some countries, viz., that if he that was in debt could not pay it, the creditors might come and cause him to be cut into as many pieces as they pleased: a most severe law indeed. But what was this to a sinner's being cast into hell? for all who fly not to Jesus Christ, or plead not that satisfaction or payment the Lord Christ hath made, by believing in him, shall, by the just and righteous God, "be tormented in fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb for ever and ever," Rev. xiv. 10. Or as our Saviour saith, "They shall be cast into a furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xiii. 50.

3. A debtor among men may escape, and oftentimes does, the hand of justice, by flying; but no sinner can fly from the omniscient and infinite God; there is no escaping his wrath this way. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I fly from thy presence?" Psal. cxxxix. 7.

4. A creditor, his heirs and administrators, assigns, &c., may all die, and none be left that have right to demand, or can recover the debts that a poor debtor may owe. But God liveth for ever.

5. When debtors among men lie in prison, they are pitied and get relief; but when these debtors come to hell, they will have none to pity them, nor can they get one drop of water to cool their tongues; no ease nor relief they have to eternity.

6. A debtor among men, by craft, and through abuse of the law, by corrupt lawyers, judges, or juries, may cheat their creditors, and that way get a discharge: but there are none can find any way by all the craft and subtlety of their own wicked hearts, or subtleties of devils, to escape the just and sin-revenging hand of God.

7. Other debtors are sensible of their sad state, and are greatly troubled; but many sinners who are not vicious debtors, are insensible of their state, and never are troubled, nor think of what they owe to God's justice.

U S E.

1. How may this tend to humble sinful mortals; what signifies their boasting of their riches, considering how far they are in debt?

2. It may also move God's people to pity sinners. When you see poor prisoners that lie in prison for debt, crying out of the grates, Bread, bread for the Lord's sake; how ready are you to pity them? but how few pity these debtors; yet when these cry out under despair, in dismal horror, they are pitied, yet perhaps their condition may be much better than such who are wholly insensible.

3. Let poor debtors that see and are convinced of their poverty rejoice, provided they know whither to go for relief, and get a discharge of all their debts, even be acquitted, justified, and pardoned for ever, which is by believing in Jesus Christ. "For in him all that believe are justified from all things," Acts xiii. 39.

4. And let believers praise God, and admire his love in Christ, who hath forgiven all their debts. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; and healeth all thy diseases," Psal. ciii. 1, 3.

SERMON XXIX.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him that owed him ten thousand talents, &c.—Matt. xviii. 24.

I HAVE showed you that sin is a great debt, and that sinners are debtor unto God, and also what kind of debtors, and that they are the worst debtors. I shall proceed.

Thirdly, I shall show you how they that believe in Christ may be said to be freely forgiven in a way of free-grace and mercy, and yet full satisfaction is made to the law and justice of God, by our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

That it is wholly of God's free-grace that sinners are forgiven, I have abundantly demonstrated, in opening the parable of the two debtors, to which I refer the reader. Let me premise one or two things as explanatory propositions.

See Supplement, p. 1, 2, 3, &c.

I. That among men debts are often forgiven, without satisfaction made, either by the debtor or his surety.

II. That though among men that debt which is freely forgiven, cannot be said to be paid; yet it is otherwise here in our forgiveness. Or neither of these things are so, in respect of our pardon.

I shall begin with the first, viz., That God doth not forgive us our debts as a simple act of his mercy and grace, without satisfaction to his law and justice, made by Jesus Christ.

To make this appear it will not be amiss to consider the nature of God's threatenings. I mean his legal threatenings denounced against Adam for the breach of the first covenant. Several worthy writers have well distinguished between legal and evangelical threatenings. Gospel-threatenings are only the denunciation of Fatherly chastisements, to keep us within the bounds of filial obedience, and are never brought upon us but in love, in measure, and only in case of need. "If need be, ye are in heaviness," &c., 1 Pet. i. 6. But legal threatenings denounce unmixed and unallayed wrath and the curse. Now these two vastly differ, not only in their nature, but end also.

See Vol. 2. of Metaphors, Book 4. p. 326, 327.

What legal threats are

I. As first to suppose that the gospel threatening be denounced, and yet is not executed; it clearly follows, that the obligation we lay under to them, as to such an end, is dissolved, and ceaseth, seeing what God intended to effect thereby is obtained without the rod, even by the bare threatening of it; and this without the least derogation from the truth of God, or the impeachment of his other properties, which may be suspended. But legal threatenings being of another nature, have another end, viz., the vindication of the holiness and justice of God upon prisoners or rebels, they are no ways in any wise dissolvable, but must be of necessity inflicted, that the perfections and just government of God may be vindicated, and sin be revenged; all sin being a contempt of God's authority and righteous government, casting dirt upon his glory, the punishment is a vindication of God's honour, in revenging the evil committed. Yet let this be well noted, i. e., that in case of such a proportional satisfaction

The difference between legal and evangelical threatenings.

tion (by which the honour and equity of his law is justified, his justice, holiness, and hatred of sin is demonstrated, and the end of government attained) God may relax and dispense with the threatening, as to the debtor or person offending, though not with his law, which is the case here. For by the execution of the threatening upon Jesus Christ as our Surety, and receiving full satisfaction from him, God hath given an eminent demonstration of his justice, righteousness, purity, and infinite hatred of sin, and hath fully vindicated his law from contempt, as if the offending sinners, and guilty criminals had suffered in their own persons; and hereby also is an admirable mixture of grace with justice, in our discharge.

See Dr. Owen, Mr. Charnock, Mr. Ferguson, &c.

Gen. ii. 17.
Deut. xxvii.
26.

This being promised, I shall, with our learned writers, resume the argument, viz., that the truth of God's threatenings would not allow him to pardon sin, and save the sinner, but upon a satisfaction.

I. God having denounced death, and the curse against a sinner, the veracity and purity of his nature, and faithfulness obliged him to see it inflicted. Never (saith one) any entertained a notion of God, but they included in it, he spake truth. Could ever any threatening of God awe the conscience of a sinner? should the first and great threatening he so easily made void? Also should it be granted, that notwithstanding God's solemn denunciation of wrath, in case of sin, that yet he had taken the offender into favour, and pardoned the offence without any satisfaction, as it would eclipse the glory of his truth and justice, so the creature might imagine and say, that God either intended his threatenings for mere scarecrows, or else was subject to mutability; which apprehensions being once received, what boldness would men assume to sin, believing also that the comminations of the gospel would be no more executed for a non-reception of Christ, than those of the law; nay, that there had been no need of the spilling of the blood of the Son of God? "But let God be true, and every man a liar."

2. To suppose that God hath abrogated his threatening, pardoning sin, without a satisfaction to his law and justice, tends not only, (1.) To cast contempt on his wisdom, in giving such a law, (with such a sanction) at first, which he could disannul and dispense with, and give a more mild and gentle one, but, (2.) It would at once, also overthrow the whole scripture, for that expressly tells us, "That not one jot of the law was to perish, but all must be fulfilled." Matt. v. 18; "and that every disobedience received a just recompense of reward," Heb. ii. 2; and that without shedding of blood there is no remission; and also that "God will by no means clear the guilty, and that Christ was made sin for us, and bore our sins, the just for the unjust," Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; 1 Pet. iii. 18. (3.) It would render all the sacrifices of the law to be mere significant things; why should such atonements be made by the blood of lambs, and goats? &c. (4.) Nay it would render the sacrifice of Christ, the antitype of them itself, to be useless, and that he offered no propitiatory sacrifice unto God.

3. If the threatening annexed to the law be disannulled, it is either by virtue of the law itself, or by the gospel, now it was not, could not by the law itself; for that was Gal. iii. 10 wholly inexorable, requiring perfect and constant obedience, or the execution of the unmixed and unallayed wrath; nor is it released by the gospel. This the Holy Ghost clearly informs us, "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid, yea, we establish the law," Rom. iii. 31. Think not (saith our Saviour) "that I am come to destroy the law, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle of the law shall in no wise pass away, till all be fulfilled," Matt. v. 17, 18. All the predictions of the law and prophets must be fulfilled, all the types must be fulfilled, and all the precepts of the moral law also must be perfectly kept by our Surety, and so fulfilled, and the penalty or punishment the law denounced on transgressors must be borne and suffered also by us, or one in our nature able to satisfy divine justice, and appease divine wrath, all which our Lord hath done. Nay, my brethren, the gospel is so far from making void the moral law, or repealing the penalty of it, that the very gospel itself is founded on Christ's undertaking, as our Surety, in doing what the law required, and in suffering what the law denounced; which things had not our Saviour done for us, we had never had any gospel at all. Besides, the gospel is so far from releasing or abrogating the law, as a rule of righteousness; that as the law is considered in Christ's hand, it is not only confirmed in the gospel, but in the most strict manner, it opens the evil of every lust of the heart, and it magnifies the purity and spirituality of the law. We are commanded (and it abides to be our perpetual duty) "To love the Lord with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves; yea, to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect." Though we cannot do it, nor attain to such a pure obedience in ourselves, nor any way else, but through Christ

alone, who is only the end of the law (as a covenant of works) or in respect of righteousness to all that believe in him.

4. The sum of what we say and believe about this great truth is this.

(1.) That by the sin of our first parents, all men were brought into a state of sin, apostacy, enmity, and wrath, or under condemnation, being dead in sin, and under the curse of the law; and that there is no difference as to their state by nature, between Jews and Gentiles, the elect and reprobates.

Gen. xvi. 5.
Psal. li. 9.
Rom. iii. 23,
and 8. 7.
Eph. iv. 18.
Col. ii. 13.
Eph. ii. 1, 2,
3.

(2.) That in this state all men continue before faith and union with Christ.

(3.) That the justice and holiness of God (as he is the supreme Rector, Governor, and Judge of all the world) requires that sin be punished, and the vast debt sinners owe be paid; nay, and that God hath also engaged his veracity and faithfulness in the sanction of the law, not to leave sin unpunished.

Rom. iii. 10,
11, 12.
Exod. xxxiv.
7
John xxiv.
19.
Psal. v. 4, 5,
6.
Gen. ii. 17.

“Cursed be he that continueth not in all things written in the law, to do them,” Deut. xxvii. 26. And had not infinite wisdom, being moved by sovereign love and grace, found out a way to satisfy divine justice, &c., all mankind had been lost for ever. But,

(4.) God out of his infinite and inconceivable love and grace, laid our help upon one that was mighty, namely, his own beloved Son, whom he sent to assume our nature, and to work out our redemption.

(5.) That the love of the Father, and of the Son, were alike; the Father could not be more gracious than the Son, nor the bowels of the Son exceed the Father's, being the same one God.

(6.) That the way in general, whereby the Son of God became incarnate, to save lost sinners, was by being substituted as our Surety, Sponsor, and blessed Representative, according to the decree of God, and that blessed covenant that was between the Father and the Son in eternity; that he in the room of all the elect, should answer all the demands both of the law and justice. “He made him sin for us, that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, and that way pay our debts,” 2 Cor. v. 21, Gal. iii. 17; Rom. v. 7, 8.

(7.) And that Jesus Christ in his saving us, or in the order to procure a free pardon for us, the scriptures say, (1.) That he offered himself a sacrifice unto God, to make an atonement for sin. (2.) That he redeemed us by paying a price or a ransom for our redemption, or remission of sin. (3.) That our sins were imputed to him, and that he bore them and the punishment of them, on his own body on the tree. (4.) And that our Lord hath answered the law, in respect of perfect obedience, and the penalty of it. (5.) That he died for sin, to expiate that, and in the room of the sinner. (6.) That God upon his Son's voluntary undertaking of his office, as Mediator, God laying our sins and sentence upon him, he hath made full satisfaction for whatsoever legally could be charged upon him for whom he suffered, or what was necessary to the wisdom, justice, and holiness of God; and all that believe in him are justified, pardoned, and shall through his merits and righteousness be eternally saved, the divine justice being satisfied, and the law fulfilled, by what he did and suffered. And this brings me to the next thing.

Isa. liii. 10.
Eph. v. 2.
Heb. ii. 17,
and 9. 12.
Mark x. 45.
1 Cor. vi. 19,
20.
1 Tim. ii. 6.
Isa. liii. 5.
1 Pet. iii. 18.
Rom. viii. 3.
Gal. iii. 13,
and iv. 4, 5.

II. Though among men that debt which is freely forgiven cannot be said to be paid, but our debt is paid by our Surety, as I shall show, yet we are freely pardoned.

That pardon or remission of sin is wholly through the free love and grace of God, I have elsewhere fully proved, and shall but touch upon it here. There is, my brethren, nothing more evident or clearer laid down in the word of God than this, and yet not without payment, satisfaction, or atonement.

Our debts
are freely
pardoned,
and yet
Christ made
full satisfac-
tion for them!

First, I shall show you, that our debt is every ways freely forgiven, as to us.

Secondly, Answer one or two objections.

Thirdly, apply it.

First, That sin is freely forgiven, the scripture testifies. “Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven,” Luke vii. 47. “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven,” Matt. ix. 2. “That ye may know the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins,” &c., Ver. 6. “Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquities, and passing by the transgressions of the remnant of his people,” &c., Mich. vii. 18. “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and that healeth all thy diseases?” Psal. ciii. 1, 2. I might multiply texts of scripture to the same purpose.

2. Yet that they are not forgiven without the satisfaction or atonement Christ hath made, is also evident by many scriptures. This appears by plain scripture testimony. "In whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the remission of sin, according to the riches of his grace." Compared with Rom. iii. 25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," Eph. i. 7. "As God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 32. By these, and many like scriptures, it appears, though our sins are freely forgiven, yet not without a full atonement, payment, or satisfaction made to the justice of God for them. Yet that all our sins are absolutely, freely forgiven, further appears.

1. In respect of all immediate or mediate transactions between God and sinners, simply considered in themselves; and so pardon is free on God's part, and in that respect.

2. Pardon is free in respect of God's eternal purpose, which was to magnify the riches of grace to such he designed to forgive; for there were none but he might justly have suffered to lay for ever under the guilt of their sin, and who must have perished for ever.

3. Free in respect of the means used to effect it. Whatsoever God did in order to bestow pardon in those transactions between himself and his Son, they were acts of his own free grace towards us. (1.) His entering into covenant with his own Son, the second person of the Trinity, about our redemption, and the remission of our sins. (2.) The Father's substituting and accepting of Christ in that covenant as our Surety, was an act (as you have heard) towards us, of his own free grace and sovereign love and favour. (3.) It was an act of God's free grace to lay our sins upon his Son, as our Mediator and blessed Sponsor, whom he so substituted. (4.) Pardon is also free, in respect of the tender or offer of it to sinners in the gospel, it being "without money, and without price," Isa. lv. 1, 2.

How our pardon appears to be free to us. 4. That it is an act of free-grace, in the condonation, or in giving pardon to us, and will further appear, that nothing can be freer on the part of the persons that are forgiven.

(1.) It is granted and given to us, without any satisfaction required of us, or made by us, or by any surety we had, or could procure to pay our debt, we being not able to find one.

(2.) Without any merit or desert that was in us; for all mankind were rebels, and ill-deserving, nay hell-deserving creatures.

(3.) In regard we have it without any penal suffering or satisfaction that way made here by us, or to be suffered or made hereafter.

(4.) Without any expectation of a future recompence, by us to be made to God for our pardon and forgiveness.

And as none of these things would, so nothing else can impeach the freeness of our forgiveness: whether therefore we consider the sin-pardoning God, or the pardoned sinner, it is every ways free; it is free on God's part as to us, who forgives our sins, and on our part that are forgiven.

Object. But you say it is not without an atonement or satisfaction made by Christ.

Ans. What of this? if God provides a Surety, or one to Satisfy both law and justice, this further magnifies his free grace. Is it not an act of greater grace in a prince towards a rebel, to sacrifice his own Son (to keep up and answer the sanction of the law) in the room and stead of that guilty criminal, that so he may with honour forgive him, than if he should forgive him freely, to the violation of the said law? if God hath provided himself a lamb for a sacrifice, if he saw in his infinite wisdom this way best comported with the glory and honour of his other perfections, as well as to advance the riches of his grace; shall we cavil and quarrel at it?

If the forgiveness of our debt this ways redounds to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, holiness, righteousness, severity against sin, as well as to the magnifying of his grace, love, and rich bounty; then if he should pardon us as a simple act of mercy, ought not we to admire the perfections and methods of the holy God in our pardon, and be silent for Dr. Owen. ever? Will not sinners (saith one) be contented to be pardoned, unless they may have it at the rate of spoiling or robbing God of his holiness, truth, righteousness, and faithfulness?

Object. But doth not this doctrine render God the Father to be severe to his own Son, to substitute him in the sinner's room, to bear his wrath, and to suffer for their sins?

Ans. Christ readily, freely, and voluntarily offered himself to the Father, to become

our Surety, and to pay our vast debt. Suretyship imports the obligation to be voluntary, for the law forces no man to be bound for another, much less to die for another. Had our Lord Jesus been imposed upon, or had he not freely, and of his own good will and free choice, accepted of this work and office, the objection might seem to have somewhat in it. But what saith the Son? "Then said I, lo I come, in the volume of thy book it is written of me, to do thy will. O God," Heb. x. 7. Though the Father appointed his Son as Mediator, to be the Surety of the covenant, yet hear further what he said. "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away my back; I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting," Isa. l. 5, 6. The love of the son was not less than the love of the Father. He tells us how he longed, or was straitened until he was baptized in blood and suffering. "I lay down my life; no man taketh it from me. I lay it down of my self. I have power to lay it down," &c., John x. 17, 18. My brethren, God the Father laid nothing upon his blessed Son, but what our Lord offered himself freely to undergo for his elect sake! and had it not every way consisted with his honour, and spotless holiness and glory, thus to substitute and deliver up his own Son, to satisfy both law and justice, be sure he had not, could not have done it.

Moreover, let it be considered, that if the Father had thus sacrificed his own Son, but not as a propitiatory sacrifice to atone and satisfy for our sins, but only (as the Socinians say) to make him an example or pattern of humility and patience, in doing and suffering; it might leave men room to say, God was severe indeed to his own Son, because he might have made one of his angels, or holy prophets or apostles, or some godly man, to become such a pattern of humility and patience; for some of the saints are set out as examples in this, and some other respects.

Object. But if God cannot pardon sin without a satisfaction, he is more weak and imperfect than man, who can and doth so.

Ans. 1. God cannot do many things which men can do; yet that doth not render God more weak or imperfect than they, but the direct contrary, viz., he cannot do them upon the account of his perfections; he cannot stain his own glory, nor do that which is contrary to his own nature and being, or is unworthy of him: God cannot lie, he cannot deny himself, he cannot change, which men do daily.

2. For God to pardon sin, without a satisfaction made by the debtor, or a surety, who in himself is absolutely holy, righteous, true, just, and faithful, seems inconsistent with the perfections of his nature: for he is not only just and holy, but justice and holiness itself; therefore it was absolutely necessary that satisfaction be made to him, that is the supreme governor of sinners, the author of the law, and sanction of it, wherein punishment is absolutely threatened, unless God should deny himself, or be like man, and so do what one infinitely perfect cannot do.

3. Our adversaries, who strive to obscure the freeness of our pardon, because we say it is not had without the obedience, redemption, and atonement made by our Lord Christ, are left inexcusable, and fully refuted by their own notion about pardon of sin, viz., they say that faith, repentance, and obedience, as the condition thereof, to be performed by the creature, is required of all the adult persons that God forgives; and until they answer these conditions God will suspend, may, deny pardon to every one. Now this renders pardon less free every ways, than what we say: for seeing God doth forgive sin, and can, as a simple act of his mercy, without any impeachment of his truth, justice, and holiness; then, say I, if the freeness of pardon consisteth in such a boundless notion as these men imagine, it is certain, that the prescribing faith, repentance, and obedience, as the antecedent conditions of it, is much more contrary to such a free pardon, than God's receiving satisfaction from another.

But if it be contrary to the holiness of God, to pardon sin unless the conditions of faith, repentance, and obedience be answered (as these men say it is) let them not be offended, if we believe what God says and declares, i. e., that it consists not with his glory to remit sin without the fulfilling his law, and satisfying his justice.

The sum of what we say is this, viz. (1.) That God is just; holiness and justice is his nature; and to magnify his grace, love, and bounty, he cannot wrong or eclipse those other perfections of his being. (2.) That God, not the debtor, found the Surety; that his love was wonderful in substituting his own Son to be this Mediator and Surety. (3.) So that this demonstrates greater grace and love, than if we had been pardoned without the sacrifice or payment made by Christ. (4.) That all the blessings and bene-

The Socinians depicted.

See Dr. Owen.

fits of Christ's undertaking are given to us freely. (5.) That the same God gives us the spirit, faith, repentance, and whatsoever is needful, in order to our being actually pardoned, justified, &c., and the satisfaction of Christ made effectual to all the elect of God. (6.) And that Christ died not only *nostro bono*, for our good (as the Socinians affirm) but in our stead and room; for where one is said to die for another, it is always so taken; the just for the unjust, that is, in the stead of the unjust. Christ put himself in our law-place in respect of what he did and suffered, that as a common head and Surety his obedience and suffering might be imputed to us, and accepted for us, as if we had actually kept the law perfectly, and borne the penalty thereof; yet it is our Surety's money that pays our debts, and we are in a way of free-grace wholly forgiven. It was not our righteousness, but Christ's righteousness; all was paid that we owed, not by us, but by Christ, he received all for us in a way of merit; but we have all through him, and for his sake, in a way of mercy and free-grace.

APPLICATION.

1. From hence we infer, that all mankind were by sin utterly impoverished and brought to beggary, being debtors to God's justice, owing a vast sum, and having nothing to pay.

2. That the gospel is a mystery, and the way of pardon not understood by many men, who boast of their own wisdom; and because they cannot see by their purblind reason, how that debt which is paid can be said to be freely forgiven, therefore count the preaching of the cross in this respect (as well in some others) foolishness.

3. We infer also from what hath been said, that though the debts of all the elect are paid, yet it is not here as it is among men: for when a surety hath paid the whole debt for the debtor, he may demand his discharge out of prison; and it is injustice in the creditor to keep him one hour under restraint, or in bonds. But though Christ hath paid the debts of all the elect, yet they may not be immediately discharged, or forgiven; nor may any upon it demand an immediate discharge; nor ought they to reflect on the righteousness of God, in suffering them to abide for some time under the sentence of the law.

(1.) Because the sinner found not the Surety, but God, the offended Creator, and great Rector of the world, whose will (according to his nature and sovereign pleasure) is the rule of all his actions, and the discharge of sinners (as to them) being an absolute act of free grace, he is at liberty, or may at his own choice, give forth pardon and other favours (purchased for them by his Son) when and at what time he pleaseth; for otherwise pardon of sin cannot be said (in one grand respect) to be an act of grace, nor God a free Agent in the distributions of his favours.

(2.) Nay, I might argue the equitableness of this, as it is among men, viz., may not a price (with a satisfaction to the law) for a guilty rebel in slavery in another land, and in the hands of one who is a cruel enemy, into whose hands his sovereign lets him fall for his great wickedness? and now though the ransom be paid, and the law answered (and all at the charge, and as the sole act of that prince, out of love and pity to that guilty rebel and captive) must the rebel be immediately discharged, or else his sovereign be charged with injustice? Certainly all will say, the whole transaction being an act of mercy to the guilty criminal (though in a way of righteousness as to the law) he may keep him ignorant of what he hath done, or let him lie in the enemy's hand, before he gives him the discharge which he procured at a dear rate, in love to him; nay, resolve he shall seek and cry to him for it, and acknowledge his horrid offence before he be actually acquitted and pardoned.

(3.) My brethren, the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ to the law and justice of God was founded in a voluntary compact or covenant between the Father and the Son. Moreover, sinners are not only pecuniary debtors, but criminal debtors to punishment, or under an obligation to suffer eternally: and since the Son of God offered himself, and the Father accepted him to die in their stead; yet the time when, how, and by what method the sinner shall be actually discharged, must wholly be according to the agreement or result of that compact that was between the Father and the Son before the world began.

Take what a reverend writer saith on this account, viz., though Christ, as our Surety, Dr. Owen. hath made a full compensation for sin, or satisfied both law and justice, yet (saith he) sinners are not immediately acquitted; neither doth it follow, that on the supposition of satisfaction pleaded for, the freedom, pardon, and acquittal (of persons originally guilty, and liable to punishment) must immediately, and *ipso facto*, ensue. It is not of the nature of every solution or satisfaction that deliverance must. *ipso facto*, fol-

low; and the reason of it is, because this satisfaction, by a succedaneous substitution of one to undergo punishment for another; must be founded in a voluntary compact and agreement; for there is required unto it a relaxation of the law, though not as unto punishment to be inflicted, yet as unto the person to be punished. And it is otherwise in personal guilt, than in pecuniary debts: in these the debt itself is fully intended, and the person obliged with reference thereunto; in the other, the person is firstly and principally under the obligation: and therefore when the pecuniary debt is paid, by whomsoever it be paid, the obligation of the person himself unto payment ceaseth *ipso facto*. But in things criminal, the guilty person being firstly, immediately, and intentionally under the obligation to punishment, when there is introduced by compact a vicarious solution, in substitution of another to suffer, though he suffer the same absolutely, which the person should have done for whom he suffers; yet because of the acceptance of another person to suffer, which might have been refused, and could not be admitted without some relaxation of the law, deliverance of the guilty person cannot answer *ipso facto*, but by the intervention of the terms fixed in the covenant or agreement, for an admittance of the substitution. Thus Dr. Owen.

4. This shews, that though sin be called a debt, and for which satisfaction must be made, yet it is not to be considered as a debt, (and God a Creditor, and the law as an obligation to the payment of that debt) as some men do run it: but sin is a transgression of the law, and thereby the sinner is obnoxious and liable to punishment appointed in it, which another is substituted to suffer; and according to the time and terms agreed upon between God the Father, and God the Son (as our Surety) must the sinner be acquitted, and that is not till he be united to Jesus Christ, and by faith is helped to receive or apply the atonement.

Therefore let sinners that would be pardoned, acquitted, and justified, labour to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; for till then all stand condemned.

5. From the whole we may infer, that men while they abide in the first Adam are criminals, and are impeached both by the law and their own consciences, and cannot plead not guilty; neither can they plead mercy for the sake of mercy (as one well observes) for that were not to plead, but to beg: nor were it at all to be justified, but merely pardoned, or as if we were to be dealt with alone upon the score of grace, and not at all upon the score of righteousness; for justification is an act of justice as hath been showed) rather than of mercy. Though it is true, the salvation of sinners is both an act of grace and justice, and both these attributes meet together in our free pardon and justification. Sirs, when God pardons us, he displays his grace and mercy; and when he justifieth us, he displays and manifesteth his righteousness.

6. That though our pardon is free to us, yet it cost Christ dear.

7. Moreover, to conclude, let no man say he hath paid his own debt, because Christ, his Surety, hath paid it for him; for the Surety was not ours, I mean, of our procuring; nor was the Surety's money ours, i. e., it was not our obedience, our righteousness, but Christ's righteousness (though imputed to us, or put upon us.) Therefore let Christ have the glory; he is the pay-master, the Saviour, and we poor miserable sinners and debtors, who are forgiven and saved by him: therefore we remain obliged to give to the Sou, and Holy Spirit, all honour, glory, and praise, for evermore. Amen.

THE

PARABLE

OF

PLANTING A VINEYARD OPENED.

SERMON XXX.

Hear another parable, there was a certain householder that planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

And when the time of fruit drew near, he sent his servant, &c.—Matt. xxi. 33—44.

ST. Mark hath also this parable, Mark xii. 1. Likewise St. Luke, chap. xx. 9, 10, 11, &c., and they agreeing much together in the substance of the whole parable, I shall speak to it as it is here recorded.

Year of Christ, 33.

Of his ministry, 4.

The scope of the parable.

1. The scope of this parable, or the design of our blessed Lord in it, is to show the great favours, and signal privileges God bestowed upon the Jews or people of Israel, in making them his church and peculiar inheritance under the law. For they were then his vineyard, as he declares by the prophet, "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant," &c. Isa. v. 7.

2. To show the horrid ingratitude, and abominable evils of that people. (1.) In abusing and slaying the prophets; and, (2.) in their laying violent hands upon the Son of God himself, and in crucifying him.

3. As it is one of those prophetic parables spoken by our Saviour, it discovers the rejection of the Jews, and God's calling of the Gentiles, as also the destruction of Jerusalem, and utter ruin of the temple; likewise the reason or cause thereof.

"A certain householder," &c.

The parts opened and explained.

This householder intends the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, whom our Lord calls, an "Husbandman, who planted a vineyard, and hedged it about," &c. John xv. 1. This signifieth God's choosing, and taking the people of

Israel from all other people in the world into a legal covenant, and national church-state, for like as a piece of ground an husbandman designs for a vineyard, is taken out of a vast field or wilderness, and is pale'd or hedged round; so God secured that people from all other people of the world, for his own special use, design, and purpose, and bestowed much cost and pains upon them, in expectation of more fruit and service, or honour from them, than from all other people or nations of the world.

"And digged a wine-press in it." Mark saith, a place for a wine-fat. This may signify no more, than that God spared for no cost on the Jewish church, but provided every thing for them in respect of use, safety, and ornament, a wine-press was of use, hedging it round was for their safety; a tower might be for security and ornament both.

The church of the Jews let to the priests and Levites, &c., called husbandmen.

"And let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country;" that is, he entrusted that church-state with the high-priest, and other priests and Levites, &c., who gloried that they had the key of knowledge, and were guides to the blind, or keepers and dressers of the vineyard. "The husbandman going into a far country," may signify no more than that glorious residence of the Holy God in heaven, that is, his throne, or the place where most of his glory is manifested (though in himself he is an infinite, and an immense Being, and is omnipresent, or everywhere) yet his glory is not everywhere to the same degree revealed or made known to his creatures.

He is said to come down on Mount Sinai, and so might be said to ascend.

"And when the time of fruit drew near." Mark saith, at the season. Luke saith, "and at the season he sent his servants," ver. 34; that is to say, after the manner of an husbandman, who when he hath bestowed much pains and cost,

and the time of fruit is come, he sends to reap or receive the fruit of such or such a vineyard, so the Lord, it is said, after all he had done for that people, he looked for fruit. "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes," Isa. v. 2. The servants which God sent were his holy prophets. Mark speaks of three single servants, and Luke the same. By the first servant may be meant Moses, by the other all the prophets after him, and by the third John the Baptist, but according to St. Matthew, it may only refer to those prophets that were successively sent to the Jews, or people of Israel from first to last.

Who the first servants were that God sent.

"And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another," Ver. 35.

This clearly shows the horrid wickedness of the priests, rulers, and people of Israel, in persecuting and putting to death the holy prophets of the Lord, who were sent to reprove them for their cursed abominations. "O Jerusalem, that killest the prophets," &c. "They have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life," saith Elias, Rom. xi. 3.

"And he sent other servants more than the first, and they did unto them likewise." Ver. 36.

"Him they stoned," saith Mark xii. 4; "Him they beat and treated shamefully," saith St. Luke, intimating that they persisted in their vile and abominable spirit and practices. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers slain?" Luke xx. 11.

"But last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, they will reverence my Son," Ver. 37.

Mark saith, "Having yet therefore one Son he sent him," Mark xii. 6. Luke saith, "Then said the Lord of the vineyard, what shall I do? I will send my beloved son, it may be they will reverence him when they see him," Luke xx. 13.

By the Son is meant our Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the only begotten of the Father," or his Son by an eternal generation. My brethren, after God had sent all his prophets, he sent his Son (God here is rendered speaking after the manner of men) denoting what he might expect from them, or to discover what was their duty when they saw the Son, viz., to reverence and readily obey him, our Lord was first sent to the Jews. "He came to his own, but his own received him not," John i. 11, 12. His own by that external and legal covenant, made with their fathers.

"But when the husbandman saw the Son, they said among themselves, this is the heir, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance," Ver. 38.

Mark and Luke speak just after the same manner. These words show, that many of the Pharisees and priests, &c., were certainly convinced that Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God, though some of them, as Paul shows, were blinded, "and through ignorance did what they did." But it cannot be supposed of all of them; therefore their sin was with fearful aggravations, and their damnation dreadful, nor is it any marvel, though they were convicted in their own consciences, that Christ was the Son of God, that nevertheless they persecuted him, and at last put him to death, for is it not so now? How have some vile wretches (who reproached, and have persecuted God's people) declared that they did believe they were in very deed the servants of God, and holy persons, and yet left so to the power of the devil, that notwithstanding they would not desist persecuting, villifying, and reproaching them? Wicked men are under the power and influence of the devil, and often sin against most powerful convictions.

Mark xii. 7.
Luke xx. 14.

"And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him," Ver. 39. In these words our Lord prophesied his own death.

"When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" Ver. 40.

Mark saith, "What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do?" Mark xii. 9. Luke saith, "What therefore shall the Lord of the vineyard do unto them?"

This question our Lord asked, "They say unto him, he will miserably destroy those husbandmen, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their season," ver. 41.

Mark and Luke speak much to the same purpose, as if Christ spake these words, and all that they say was, God forbid, and so it is understood by our annotators.

A seeming difficulty reconciled.

Mark reads it thus, "What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others." This

seeming difference the learned Marlorate to me doth well reconcile, whose exposition I shall here give you; he repeating St. Matthew's words, saith, Our Saviour Christ by his former question, causes the unwise to confess the truth: for they are constrained openly, and with their own mouths to grant that which he would himself. Notwithstanding the evangelists do here vary a little, the evangelist Matthew saith, that they were forced to confess this themselves; Mark saith, that Christ did simply pronounce what punishment such wicked servants should have; and Luke more evidently, as it might seem, disagreeeth from them both; for when Christ had pronounced the punishment, they did dislike it, saying, God forbid. But if we do more deeply search for the sense and meaning, we shall find no repugnance or disagreement at all. For these priests not perceiving at first, that this parable pertaineth unto them, but thinking that Christ spake indeed of such wicked and unthankful husbandmen, they by and by said, such evil and unjust persons were worthy of destruction. But when they understood this parable was spoken against them, they retracted, and denied their former sentence, saying, God forbid, that the wicked should be destroyed, and that we should kill the Messiah; and this is always the manner of the wicked: when other men's matters are in hand, they will straitway define and give judgment against them; but if the case touch themselves, they are soon changed into another mind. Thus this learned and ancient writer. This is the way our late annotators take to reconcile the evangelists here.

"And Jesus saith unto them, did ye never read in the scripture, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner," verse 42.

I. By these words our Saviour shows, how necessary it is to read the scriptures, and that ignorance of the holy scripture is a most dangerous thing. "Ye err (saith he in another place) not knowing the scripture," &c. "Search the scriptures." "They are they that testify of me." Had these men with more care read the holy scriptures, they might have known what the blessed Messiah should meet with when he came, and in what a manner he should come, and also be cut off, or die a bloody sacrifice for our sins. The stone here spoken of was Jesus Christ; the builders were the Priests, and Scribes and Pharisees, the teachers and rulers of the Jews. Rejecting this stone, denotes their rejecting of Christ, or refusing to build their justification, hope, and salvation upon him alone. "This is the stone that is set at nought by you builders, which is become the head-stone of the corner," &c., Acts iv. 11.

The head-stone of the corner; that is, the only foundation stone upon which all that are saved must build. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. iii. 11. The corner-stone is the chief or great glory of all the building, and which also upholds it.

Our Lord here alludes to another metaphor; before he compared the church to a vineyard, here unto a house, and so it is in several other places of the scripture. 1 Cor. iii. 9. Eph. ii. 12.

"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes," verse 42.

I. To lay Christ for the foundation of his church is the Lord's doing, it is that which he himself hath done; first in his decree and eternal purpose. Secondly, actually in Christ's doctrine, and in and by his obedience and sufferings on the cross; the Father laid him as the foundation and chief corner-stone. "Behold I lay in Sion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation," &c., Isa. xxviii. 16. "This is marvellous in our eyes," i. e., that God should lay his own Son for the only foundation of his church. Moreover, it is marvellous that those who pretended to be the chief master-builders should reject the only foundation upon which they should build. But so it is; God hath for their rejecting of our Lord, given them up to blindness of mind. It is the Lord's doing, in a way of sore judgment, to leave these blind and unbelieving Jews, and ignorant builders, that he should become to them "a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence," instead of a foundation to build upon. Again, it was the Lord's doing to remove the church of the Jews, and erect his church amongst the Gentiles.

"Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and be given to another nation, bringing forth the fruit thereof," ver. 43.

Neither Mark nor Luke speak of this, but Matthew only; by taking away the kingdom of heaven from the Jews, signifies, (1.) The removing their church state, or the dissolution of the national church of Israel. (2.) The taking away the ministrations or dispensation of the gospel from them, and giving it to the Gentiles; not to one Gentile nation only, nor to make or constitute

exposition upon Matt.

God laid Christ to be the foundation of our hope and salvation, and this is marvellous.

What meant by taking away the kingdom of heaven.

any national church among them, but to send the gospel to many nations, and to gather in some both amongst the Jews and Gentiles into a gospel and more spiritual church-state, that was to consist of lively stones, or only of converted men and women, or such that professed faith in Jesus Christ. "For to make in himself of twain, one new man (or mystical body), so making peace," Eph. ii. 15. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.—And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone," &c., ver. 19, 20. This was the Lord's doing, he hath cast off the Jews, and grafted in the Gentiles.

"And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken," ver. 41.

Some take these words differently.

1. Some take them in a good sense, viz., fall on, or falling before Christ, by owning him, believing in him, and acknowledging him to be the true Saviour, and only foundation; and that the effects of this are such, that they are broken into pieces in the sight and sense of their sins, which always is the effect of true faith.

What is meant by falling upon this stone.

3. But others rather take it to mean stumbling on Christ, he being called a stumbling stone to some: and such that believe not thus, fall on him, and shall be broken and ruined for ever. I shall leave the reader to take which sense he thinks may be the meaning of our Lord. I rather adhere to the first. "But on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder," ver. 41. That is, such, whosoever they be, that persecute me or my members, so that I fall in a way of wrath upon them, they shall be ruined irreparably and irrecoverably, or with a final and eternal destruction; and indeed so shall all that stumble at him, or fall on him, as a stumbling stone; they shall find Christ will fall on them also, and grind them to powder (though they are not persecutors of him) and therefore I rather think by falling on Christ this is not meant; for certainly falling on him, and he falling on them, are quite different things.

What is meant by the stone falling upon persons.

And thus I have briefly opened, or given a concise exposition of every part of this parable.

From the principal things contained herein, I shall observe several points of doctrine raised.

Doct. 1. That the church of God is, and may fitly be compared to a vineyard. But because this proposition is opened in my expounding of another parable, I shall pass this by here.

Doct. 2. That the church of God, or his vineyard may be said to be let to farm by the great owner thereof. "And let it out to husbandmen," ver. 33.

In speaking to this point of doctrine I shall,

I. Show what letting out doth imply or denote.

II. Show to whom the vineyard of the Lord of hosts may be said to be let.

III. Show what fruit it is that God expecteth.

IV. Apply it.

First negatively.

1. This letting the vineyard to husbandmen doth not denote that any people have a lease sealed to them of their church-state, church-ordinances, and church-privileges; no, all are but tenants at will: we hold all our spiritual privileges at the will and pleasure of the Lord of hosts, who may give us warning, and turn us out of all when he pleaseth,

What letting doth imply. No people have a lease of the gospel.

2. It doth not imply that any people buy and pay for any spiritual blessing and good things which they possess; no, we have all freely, church, and church-privileges, the gospel-ordinances and promises, without money, and without price: we have no rent, no tribute to pay, but the tribute of praise, thanksgiving, and fruitfulness unto God; "What givest thou to him, or what receiveth he at thy hand?"

Nothing to be paid but the tribute of praise, &c.

But then affirmatively.

1. Letting denotes God's intrusting a people with the great blessing of the legal church, and also of the gospel church-state, church offices, church-ordinances, privileges, and all the treasures thereof; also it signifies the highest act of God's rich grace and bounty to the people; for what hath the Lord which he values more than these rich spiritual favours and blessings? It is no small thing to have the gospel, and a gospel-church, grace, gifts, ministers, ordinances, and promises.

What the letting the vineyard doth imply.

2. Letting out the vineyard implies, that a church, the word of God, and all the blessings of grace, ordinances, and spiritual privileges, are not man's own proper or natural right or inheritance; no, they are but stewards intrusted with all these things, or as tenants to the great Landlord, the Lord of hosts. Though Paul calls the gospel his gospel, yet see what he saith in another place; "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. All those things we are intrusted with are the Lord's goods: it is Christ's gospel, Christ's church, Christ's ordinances, &c.

3. Letting out to husbandmen signifies a mighty trust is committed to such; and to the very end that the gospel, gospel-ordinances, seasons, and all spiritual gospel-privileges should be employed to the glory of God, or that we bring forth the fruit thereof in due seasons. The Lord sent his servant at the proper time, to receive the fruit of his vineyard; they do not pay him rent (as other husbandmen do) to receive the profit and fruit themselves; no, those are not the farms of his letting out; the Lord keeps the whole possession in his own hand; therefore in this there is a great disparity. Other husbandmen receive the fruit themselves; it is only so much rent the landlord agreed to have; but Jesus Christ must receive in all the improvement we can make, all must be done to his glory; though it is true, those that are faithful, shall in a way of grace be well rewarded.

4. It signifies also, that if men do not bring forth unto God that holy fruit which he expecteth, they must be called to an account for it. He will first or last require the fruit of every gospel-sabbath, gospel-sermon, gospel-gifts, God's ordinances, and gospel-grace; and they that are entrusted with most, or such as he hath been most, bountiful unto whether ministers or people, must give account accordingly, in respect of what they have received; such as have received "two talents," Matt. xxv. 22, shall be called to account about the improvement of two, and he that hath received five talents, the improvement of five; and if the vine be planted in a more fruitful hill than some others, God requires it should bring forth more fruit to his praise than others.

II. To whom may the church or vineyard of Christ be said to be let?

To whom the vineyard of Christ is let. Answ. 1. Principally it may be said to be let to the pastors, teachers, and to such who are or ought to be helps of government; for the government of a gospel-church is not wholly committed to the pastor or presbyter, but it lies in the church or brotherhood. It is not said, "If he will not hear the elder, or the pastor; but if he hear not the church," &c., Matt. xviii. 17. They that Christ hath committed the care, the rule, and government of the church to, as the Jewish church was let out to the priests and elders of Israel.

2. It may in some sense be said to be let also to every member, for every member is an hired servant of Christ, and have their proper work appointed them by the Lord Jesus; they are entrusted with the gospel, the ordinances, and many spiritual gifts and privileges, and must be accountable to Christ, as well as the principal steward.

3. Moreover, in a remote sense it may be said to be let to all that accept the invitations of the gospel, and enter into the vineyard, and partake of the privileges and blessings thereof; nay, and not to them only, but to all to whom God doth vouchsafe the gospel and means of grace; they to whom the kingdom of God is given, or the ministration of the gospel, are entrusted, with which are all those nations, cities, and towns of the Gentiles, to whom the preaching of the gospel is afforded: and God expects fruit accordingly of them.

III. I shall show you what fruit it is which the Lord expecteth from those to whom he hath given or entrusted with the gospel, and the gospel-church.

God looks for fruit in respect of the quality and quantity of it.

1. He expecteth right fruit. He looked of old his vineyard should bring forth grapes, "not wild grapes." As he sows the seed of the word in his vineyard or garden, so he looks it should bring forth the fruit of the word, *i. e.*, the fruit of faith and conversion: and such that are united to Jesus Christ, he looks that they should bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, or the fruit of good trees. For "the tree must be first made good before the fruit can be good," Matt. xii. 33. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," &c., Gal. v. 22. This is part of that fruit Christ looks his vineyard should bring forth: these husbandmen should see that the fruit they bring forth be such as becomes the gospel of Christ. It must be the fruit of holiness. "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," Phil. i. 27, Rom. vi. vi. 22. Again the

What is meant by letting out the vineyard to husbandmen.

A disparity.

God will call to account for the gospel, &c.

apostle saith, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."

2. Christ looks they should bring forth the fruit of good works. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou constantly affirm, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men." (1.) Good works are works performed by a good man, or by a converted person. (2.) They are all such things that God hath commanded, or are materially good. (3.) Also they are performed by the influence and assistance of God's Spirit. (4.) To a right, holy, and sincere end and design, not to think thereby to obtain God's favour and acceptance, not for self-profit or vain-glory, but to honour and glorify God. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate," 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.

2ndly. As the fruit should be right in quality, so it ought to be in quantity.

1. It ought to be according to that cost and pains God hath been at with us, in order to our fruitfulness. God doth more for some vineyards than for others. May be some are planted in a very fruitful soil, as we who live in and about this city. Some vineyards have plentiful sowings and waterings also; so that God may say to them, as to his people of old, "What could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have not done," Isa. v. 4. The fruit should be according to the fruitful seasons God sends. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God." Some have but little divine rain, now and then a shower, whilst others have the rain fall, and the sun shine upon them every day. O how fruitful should such be!

God expects fruit according to the cost he hath been at with a people.

2. Christ's vineyard should bring fruit according to the time of its being planted. A vineyard newly planted cannot bring forth so much fruit as that which is come to a good growth, or to longer standing. The apostle alludes to this, to the rebuke of the Hebrew church: "For when for the time ye might have been teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God," &c., Heb. v. 12. They had made but a poor proficiency in knowledge, considering the time they had been planted.

God looks for fruit according to the time of our standing in his vineyard.

3. Fruit in due season. God sent his servants for to receive the fruit in the season. We must do good while it is in the power of our hand, and work "while it is day," John ix. 4. When the wind serves the mariner, that is the proper season for him to hoist up his sails and be gone. When the sowing time is come, the husbandman is at plough, and sows his seed; he observes the season of sowing, of weeding, and of reaping, and so should spiritual husbandmen also; when the rain falls, and softens the earth, it is good for ploughing. What can we do when the Spirit is withdrawn, or withholds his sweet, softening, and fruitful influences from us? Alas, some lose the season, and think to sow, when perhaps their reaping-time, or time of cutting down by death is come.

God looks for fruit in the season of it.

4. Fruit according to that measure or degree of grace and gifts received. Some receive more grace, and greater gifts than others: some receive two talents, some five. Some have much, or a great degree of knowledge, and others are entrusted with the riches of this world, by which means they are enabled to do much more for the church, the ministry, and poor, than others; and God expects fruit from them accordingly. "As every man hath received the gift, even so administer one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," whether they are spiritual gifts or abilities, or temporal gifts, God looks for fruit, and the increase of all he bestows upon his people.

God looks for fruit according to the degrees of gifts received.

5. Fruit according to those places or stations wherein God hath set us, whether pastors, deacons, fathers, or masters of families, or ancient members. Such that should be as fathers and mothers in Israel, God looks for more fruit from them than from others. Indeed all believers, or the trees of the Lord being full of sap, or should bring forth much fruit. "Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit, and so shall ye be my disciples," John xv. 8. So it will appear we are the disciples of Christ, or "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified," Isa. lxi. 3.

Fruit according to our places in God's vineyard.

APPLICATION.

1. I infer, my brethren from hence, that we have more to care for, work, and labour for,

than our own families. For the vineyard of the Lord is let out to us, he hath entrusted us with his vineyard or garden, to dress it, water it, and weed it, and to keep up the walls thereof, and to see it goes not to decay in our hands.

2. Also know, if through any fault or neglect of ours, it runs to ruin or decay, we shall be called to an account for it one day.

3. This severely reproves such that regard not the affairs of God's church. What, say some, shall I wrong my family to support the church? (God forbid there should be any such persons among you;) and let such know that God's family should be equally (if not more,) regarded than their own. Consider here a few things.

(1.) Will any wrong their own souls, or the church of God, to enrich themselves and their children? Shall they have great portions, and Christ be put off with next to nothing?

(2.) Is not the soul to have the preference above the body? Is it not more noble, more precious? And so ought not more cost and pains to be bestowed on that than on our outward man, or on children?

(3.) Cannot God blast what we have of the things of this world, or turn them into a curse, if we neglect his vineyard? nay, hath he done this formerly? See what the Lord by the prophet saith: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but ye are not warm; and he that earneth wages, doth it to put it into a bag with holes," Hag. i. 6. "Why, saith the Lord of Hosts, because of mine house that is waste. "And ye run every man in to his own house. I smote you with blasting," &c. "I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye lay it not to heart," Mal. ii. 2. Many complain of badness of trade, and how they waste their substance, and are grown poor; but the cause of this, I fear, is not laid to heart, may be the church and interest of Christ is, and hath been neglected.

(4.) Should not our love run in that channel that God's love, and Christ's love runs in? "He loves the gates of Sion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob," Psal. lxxvii. 2. Though he loves, and highly approves of family devotion, and the care of our own families, yet he prefers the public worship of his church above all family worship, and the care of his vineyard above the care of our own families or houses.

(5.) Should not the example of holy men of old be observed by us, and imitated? they are left as a pattern for us. What saith holy David, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." I am afraid many among us may rather say, the zeal of our own house hath eaten up our thoughts, our talk, our time, our strength, and our treasure too, and but little of it hath been eat up with zeal for God's house.

(6.) May it not be just with God to let our houses and families fail and sink when we are careless, and regard not the vineyard or house of God, whether that flourishes or decays, stands or falls?

(7.) Suppose God should say, because you have slighted and neglected my house, my vineyard, my worship, my ministry, my ordinances, my poor, or have not sought first of all my kingdom, "Therefore shall the kingdom of God be taken from you, and given to another nation, bringing forth the fruit thereof." Thus he dealt by the Jews, or people of Israel.

Exhort. Be exhorted to labour after fruitfulness, and to be more concerned for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts.

Take a few motives to press this upon you.

1. Consider God looks for fruit. "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes," Isa. v. 2. He expecteth this from us, considering the great things he hath done for us. What could he well in an ordinary way do more? What peace have we? What a time of liberty? What a clear ministration? What showers and shinings from heaven have we had, above all people in the world?

2. Do you not glory of that union you have with Christ, and doubt not but you are married to Christ? Why consider, "We are married to Christ, that we should bring forth fruit to God," Rom. vii. 4. May it not be feared, that many of you are deceived, and have not attained as yet to that blessed union, since you are so barren?

3. Consider that barrenness under fruitful seasons, fruitful showers, and fruitful shinings, exposeth persons to God's curse. "But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 8. But I will say with the apostle, "I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak," ver. 9.

4. Know however, that good fruits, fruits of righteousness are a certain evidence of the

Severe re-
proof to such
as neglect
Christ's vine-
yard.

growth of grace, and of our union with Jesus Christ. "Show me thy faith without thy works, I will show you my faith by my works," James ii. 18.

5. Nothing glorifies God more than much fruit, nor commends religion, and puts a glory upon it more (to convince a blind world,) than love, charity, humility, a contempt of the world, and a holy and heavenly life and conversation; and this also becomes the gospel of Christ, and the house of God for ever. Phil. i. 27.

One word to you that are sinners, or such as yet are unrenewed.

1. Consider, you must become good trees before you can bring forth fruit to God; you must be united to Jesus Christ, and be born again. All the fruit which unconverted persons bring forth is but the product of nature, and but dead works, it not being the fruit of the Spirit, nor of their being spiritually quickened.

2. Here is a prize put into your hands, a vineyard for you to take and improve for God. What do you say, are you willing to become husbandmen, the Lord's husbandmen, to work in his vineyard? I will tell you, though his wages is called a penny, it will be more in value than the crowns and kingdoms of this world.

3. Never think to become fruitful to God, unless you are joined to the Lord, nor honour him as you ought, until you join yourselves to his church, or enter into the Lord's vineyard.

Shall a choice plant or flower be suffered to grow in the common field, where it is in danger to be trodden down, or plucked up by every traveller? No, it ought to be transplanted into some vineyard; so should you that are good trees be set in God's vineyard, that you may be cared for, and preserved from all dangers.

But so much now.

SERMON XXXI.

Jesus saith unto them. Did you never read in the scriptures, that the stone that the builders rejected, the same is become the head-stone of the corner? This is the Lord's doing.—&c., Matt. xxi. 42.

I TOLD you by builders here, our Saviour meant the Scribes and Pharisees, and masters of Israel. Who the first builders were.

2. He may refer also to any particular person, who is compared to a builder. "Every wise man that hears Christ's sayings, and doth them, is likened to a builder," Matt. vii. 24.

3. Moreover, gospel ministers are spiritual builders; they build not only their own souls upon Jesus Christ, but others also; and not only particular souls, but churches also. "According to the grace of God given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation," &c., I Cor. iii. 10.

Note from hence,

Doct. I. That the ministers of Christ are spiritual builders.

Doct. II. That Jesus Christ is the only foundation, upon which all wise builders build themselves and others.

Doct. III. That some ministers or builders reject Christ, who is the foundation and chief corner-stone.

Doct. IV. That the laying of Christ as the foundation and head-stone of the corner, is the Lord's doing.

Doct. V. That Jesus Christ being laid for a foundation, and yet rejected by some of the chief builders, is a marvellous thing in the sight of God's people.

I shall begin with the first of these.

Doct. I. That the ministers of Christ are spiritual builders.

First, Let me premise some things, viz.

1. That God himself is the chief master-builder. "He that builds all things is God," Heb. iii. 4. He that built all things must needs be the great and chief builder. (1.) God built this world, the heavens, and the earth, and the whole fabric thereof; it was he that laid the foundation of the earth, and spread forth the heavens as a curtain. (2.) Our bodies and souls are of God's framing. "He is God our Maker—thou hast made us, and not we ourselves." Again it is said, "We are all the work of thy hands." (3.) The angels also were made and framed by the Lord; The great God is the chief builder.

it was he that gave them being. (4.) It was the Lord also that formed the blessed body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the great God is the chief Master-builder.

2. God is the chief spiritual Builder, in that Christ as Mediator was but his servant, by whom he builds his church, and ministers are his under-workmen. Also all that wisdom and skill they have, is given them from the Lord. "According to the grace of God which is given me as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation," &c., 1 Cor. iii. 10.

3. In that they ought not to do anything, but by his order and special directions, nor otherwise than according to the pattern he hath given them in his word; not one nail nor pin must be put into the building, without his direction.

4. In that the great God laid Jesus Christ for a foundation. "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a Stone," &c., Isa. xxviii. 16.

5. In that both matter and form of the building is contrived, appointed, and ordered by God himself, of what form, of what materials, what kind of stones, how hewn, squared, and polished by his word and Spirit. All is the Father's own appointment.

Secondly, I shall proceed, and show you how fitly ministers may be compared to builders.

1. A builder ought to be a man of wisdom, or one skilful in the art and mystery of building: so ought every minister to be endowed with wisdom in the mystery of spiritual building. An ignorant builder is not to be employed in any ordinary building, much less in the king's palace; but great care should be taken, that no ignorant preacher should be employed in building the souls of men, and church of the living God. What ignorant builders were they that called themselves master-builders in Israel, who knew not on what foundation to build, but rejected the chief Corner-stone?

2. A wise master-builder takes special care, first of all to lay a right foundation, and to lay it widely also. Moreover, he must know what matter, or with what materials he must build thereon, that the superstructure may suit or agree (in some degree at least) with the foundation. So should all spiritual builders see what kind of materials they lay into the spiritual building: and as Christ is a living foundation, so the stones that build up his spiritual house, should be also spiritual stones. "Ye also as lively stones," &c., 1 Pet. vii. 5, 6. Their care about laying a good and sure foundation, ought to be for divers reasons.

(1.) Because of the worth and preciousness of the souls of men, who are to be built thereon.

(2.) Because if they are built upon a false foundation, or a rotten foundation, the soul, and all that is built thereon, will fall and perish for ever; nay, and the fall of such will be exceeding great also, as our Lord himself shows us, Matt. vii. 27.

(3.) Because in this consisted the folly and ruin of those Jewish builders. This parable shows how they rejected Jesus Christ; "Yet other foundation no man can lay," 1 Cor. iii. 11. But on this foundation they did not, would not build, not on Jesus Christ, not on his merits and righteousness, no, but upon their own legal inherent righteousness.

3. A builder sometimes before he can build, hath an old building to pull down, and much rubbish also to remove, before he lay the foundation; like as the poor Jews had, that rebuilt the material temple. So it is here: (1.) For there was the Jewish church to be pulled down, it being grown old; and belonging to the old covenant, it must stand no longer. (2.) There was the rubbish of false doctrine, that was among them, about justification, to be removed also.

This was in the apostles' way, and made them to work hard to remove and take it quite away. The Jews were hardly brought to renounce their old church-state, and church-membership, which took in the carnal seed; they pleaded they had Abraham to their father. And as difficult it was to take them off of their own righteousness, circumcision, and other legal rites and ceremonies. Alas, these blind

builders would by all means build on the rubbish of their own good works, when indeed they had none, for their works were evil. Moreover, Christ's ministers now have much work to do, to remove the rubbish that lies in their way. Blessed Luther was raised up to remove the rubbish of the

Popish church about justification, and it was the main business he was to do, and he laboured hard, and like a wise builder. The opposition he met with from Popish work-mongers, was very great; and what rubbish he removed in the day time, Satan by his ministers strove to throw in his way by night.

We also in our days have not only like rubbish to remove, in respect of justification, and other doctrinal truths, but also in respect of self-constitution and discipline, which Luther concerned himself but little about. (1.) We have the old popish doctrine in a

Ministers of the Gospel are builders.

A sure foundation ought to be laid.

See the simile opened, Matt. vii. 24, 25.

Gospel builders have much rubbish to remove.

new disguise, lying in our way, about justification; many now striving to mix with Christ's righteousness, their own faith, obedience, and good works. (2.) The Popish constitution of the visible church, and many popish ceremonies, and stones of Babylon also lie in our way. How do some argue for a national church, and others for the fleshly seed to be church members, being ignorant of that twofold covenant God made with Abraham. (3.) We have also the rubbish of many errors, and damnable heresies, to remove; some denying Christ to be the Son of God, or of the same essence with the Father; also his satisfaction: some build on the light within, and others on the power of the creature. Moreover, many of late strive to overthrow at once the very foundation of the Christian religion, declaring that there is nothing mysterious in Christianity, the better to establish their wild notions, of crying up only natural religion, ridiculing the doctrine of the gospel about imputative righteousness, and magnifying depraved reason above the revelation of Christ in his blessed word; so that spiritual builders, Christ's ministers, have hard work, in withstanding these Sanballats, besides other rubbish they have to remove.

4. A builder's work is hard also, in hewing and squaring timber and stones for the building, some of which are rugged, knotty, and very cross-grained; so ministers (who build with proper material) find many sinners like knotty timber, or rough stones, viz., obstinate, stubborn, proud, and self-conceited, and of a scragged and perverse spirit or temper. Not one stone indeed can, without the hand of the Almighty God, the great Master-builder, be fitted for the building. My brethren, the ministry of gospel is to "bring hills and mountains low, and to fill up, or exalt valleys; to make the crooked straight, and rough things plain:" which is not easily done. O what unmortified spirits, cross and contradicting spirits do ministers meet with? They are Christ's axe, or instruments in his hand. "I have hewed them by the prophets," &c. The word of God is the hammer, by which rocks are broken to pieces, Hos. vi. 5; Jer. xxiii. 29.

5. A builder prepares his materials first, and makes everything ready before he raiseth the superstructure: so should Christ's spiritual builders. "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field, and then build thy house," Prov. xxiv. 27. (1.) Ministers must not lay stones into the building, as they come out of the quarry, or as they come into the world: let them be dug out of what pit or quarry soever, they are by nature the offspring of dead Adam, and children of wrath. "Look unto the rock from which ye were hewed, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged," Isa. li. 2. "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite," Ezek. xvi. 3. (2.) They must lay no unconverted persons into God's temple; they must be born again; not baptized and then taught, or made disciples; no this is contrary to the directions and pattern given in the mount. "Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them," Matt. xxviii. 18, 19; i. e., such that are first taught, or made disciples: to act otherwise is to pervert the order of the great commission. Our Lord would have his ministers to build with such materials, that there might be no need of the axe to hew them (I mean use means or pains to renew them) after they are laid into the building. The building of Solomon's temple was a type of this. "And the house, when it was a building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building," 1 King v. 7. But can this be expected by some builders now, who build with materials, or subjects incapable to be either hewed or squared, I mean infants, or such who only are once born, not being capable subjects of faith and repentance? and if they lay such stones in the building, will there not need both the axe and the hammer of the word afterwards?

6. I told you a builder is to consider the quality or nature of the foundation; if it be a rich and costly one, the materials ought to bear some proportion thereto. Now the foundation on which we build, is a precious stone, far exceeding the rich sapphire, sardius, or beryl; nay, a living stone, elect, precious, of infinite worth and value: therefore ministers must see they build not thereon unhewn wood, brick, or rough stones, but gold, silver, and precious stones, that there may be a suitableness between the foundation and the superstructure; they must be lively "stones that build up the spiritual house," 1 Pet. 2; i. e., men and women that have a principle of divine life in them, such that are born again, born of God, or new creatures.

7. A master-builder knows how many principal pillars, main pillars, the palace is to have, which he is to build for the king; and he knows also the proper placing of every one of them; so a minister ought to know the number of fundamental principles.

Ministers work hard like builders, in hewing and squaring timber and stones to build God's temple.

The word

Matter of a building must be prepared and made fit without.

The church must be built with precious living stones.

A Minister should know the number of the foundation of salvation.

(1. Fundamentals of salvation, or all the essentials of the Christian religion, which every believer should be established in, may and is established in, or he can be no true Christian: for he that errs in any fundamental point, or in an essential of salvation, is an heretic, and without repentance cannot be saved.

(2.) Moreover, he ought to know how many essentials, or fundamental principles there are contained in the constitution of a true regular gospel church, and also know how, and where to place them in order; for if a church want but one essential principle, it is defective, and no complete congregation, according to the primitive constitution: if it hath six, as it appears it hath, and wants but one, it is imperfect; the six are these, viz., "Repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, the belief of the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal judgment," Heb. vi. 1, 2; Heb. v. 12; Acts viii. 12, 17; Acts xix. 6. These are called fundamentals, or foundation principles. But certainly "baptism, and laying on of hands," are not fundamentals of salvation: for can none be saved, but such that are baptized, &c.? evident it is, the penitent thief was saved, but he was not baptized. These six principles therefore, as here laid down, are fundamentals of a gospel church: and as some are such, so they all belong to babes in Christ, or are the A B C of a Christian man, in order to his regular admittance into the church. True, a church may be materially a true church, and formally true, too, (i. e. they may give themselves up to the Lord, and to one another, as a congregation, to walk together in the fellowship of the gospel) who may not be baptized, nor own laying on of hands: but then they must be considered, not a complete gospel church, but in some things defective, in respect to its constitution and regular gospel form, or as wanting a pillar, &c. A house may be a real house, though it may want a principal post it stands on; it may be pretty firm, and may stand though one be missing; however, it is not so safe, to want one principle of the doctrine of Christ.

8. A builder of a great and famous house, hath not only his rule, but the mould or pattern of it also, he works by rule: so a minister hath the rule of God's word, the rule of the holy gospel, and also the pattern of the first apostolical churches: the church at Jerusalem was a pattern for all churches, being the first church planted, or built after Christ's ascension, and the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit.

9. A builder must see that all the building be well and fitly framed together, and all fastened upon, and fixed to the foundation: so a minister must endeavour, and see that all the saints or members of the church, are well knit or united one to another by the Spirit, and bonds of love, and well fastened and united by the same Spirit to Jesus Christ. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit," Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22.

10. A builder gives special directions about the door into the house, and that the way be plain to the house, that strangers may readily find it; so ought a minister to make known what ordinances are initiating, or which tend to the letting into a visible church. Now all protestants generally agree, that baptism is an initiating ordinance, and that no unbaptized person should be let into a gospel-congregation.

Lastly, a builder, after the foundation is laid, and he has raised the superstructure, goes on to finish or perfect the whole building; so ought every minister to see to perfect the whole work, or to press the saints to follow peace and holiness, even to go on unto perfection, that every member may be presented blameless in Christ Jesus.

APPLICATION.

1. Bless God for Christ, in that he is laid for a foundation. How safe is that house, and that soul that is built upon him. What a precious and durable rock is Jesus Christ? How happy are true Protestant churches which are built upon Christ? how firm do they stand? and on what a rotten foundation is the Popish church built upon, that is built, as they say, upon Peter? but it is built indeed upon the traditions of men, or upon the sands, or without a foundation, it having sprung out of the apostacy; and the Pope may as well be said to be its foundation, as its head; for he that is the head of the true church, is the foundation thereof.

Also the number and fundamentals of a visible church.

Ministers must do all by the rule of God's word, &c.

A spiritual building must be fitly framed.

Ministers should show the door into the church.

Ministers must build the saints up in their most holy faith.

2. It may inform also, of the great danger of rejecting Jesus Christ, the only foundation of the church, of our faith and salvation; and what do they less than reject Christ, the chief corner-stone, that rock on which he hath built his church, who deny his Godhead? "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," Matt. xvi. 16. God of the essence of the Father; the Son of Man, or Man of the seed of David, God-man in one person. On this Christ thus owned, thus believed in and confessed, is the church of God built; and what do they less than reject this foundation, who build their salvation on morality, on a sober life, or on the light within, or on their own inherent righteousness, or on the mere mercy of an absolute God, and are ignorant of, or own not Christ the Mediator?

The great danger of rejecting the corner-stone.

3. Also do not such reject this corner-stone, that believe not in Christ, or that refuse the offers of grace, or that live in a continual neglect of the means thereof, and defer the business of salvation out of love to sin, or this world?

4. Moreover, it informs us, what a great blessing faithful gospel-ministers are to a people, and to the church of God. Can a house be built without builders, or such who are skilled in that art and mystery? so how can souls believe without a preacher sent of God, or churches be built, unless God raise up some men, endowed with wisdom and skill in gospel mysteries, who well know both the matter and form of a true church, and how to build it by the rule Christ hath left? And how should such builders be encouraged and honoured for their work sake, they being labourers together with God, and stewards of the mysteries of Christ?

The blessing of gospel ministers great.

2 Cor. vi. 1.
1 Cor. iv. 1.

5. It may also be for caution to ministers to take heed what doctrine they preach, and what materials they lay into the building; not wood, hay, or stubble, but gold, silver, and precious stones. The day is coming that will try or declare "every man's work, of what sort it is." 1 Cor. iii. 13.

6. What comfort may this afford also to all such that are truly built upon the Lord Jesus Christ? such churches are precious churches, and souls blessed souls; their state is happy, and their standing is sure. There are many other uses that might be made, which I will leave to you to make.

I shall proceed to another proposition, viz.

Doct. That Jesus Christ is the chief stone, or the only foundation of God's spiritual building.

I. I shall prove this proposition.

II. Show what use Christ is of, considered as a foundation, and as a chief corner-stone.

III. Show who reject Christ, as the only foundation, and chief corner-stone.

IV. Apply it.

1. I shall prove that Jesus Christ is the only foundation, and chief corner-stone, upon which the souls of all true believers are built, and the true church is built.

Christ the only foundation.

1. He is called the foundation-stone. "Behold I lay in Sion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, elect, precious," Isa. xxviii. 16. In another place he is called the chief corner-stone; "Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious," 1 Pet. ii. 6. Now all know the foundation stone is the chief stone of all the building, because take away the foundation-stone, and the whole building presently is overthrown, and falleth down to the ground.

2. Because there is no other foundation but Christ alone. "Other foundation can no man lay, but that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11. Therefore such that build not upon Jesus Christ, build without a foundation; "Like a man that builds an house without a foundation," Luke vi. 48.

II. I shall show what use Christ is of, in the spiritual building, or show what Christ as a foundation does denote.

First, Jesus Christ is of the same use to the spiritual building, as a foundation is to a material building, which is well laid.

1. A foundation for a building that is well laid, is deeply laid, such dig deep; so Christ was deeply laid. (1.) In the eternal decree and purpose of God. God designed from everlasting to lay the Lord Jesus Christ, as the foundation on which all his elect should build (and on whom he would build every believer, and his church also) yea, the whole Trinity were concerned in deep counsel, to lay Christ as Mediator, on whom all that are, or shall be saved, were to build, or be built by God himself. (2.) And such that will build on him, must dig (as it were) deep into God's eternal purpose and decree, and there they will find Christ laid for a foundation.

The foundation is laid deep.

2. A foundation also is actually laid, when the builder is fixed in his purpose, and hath dug deep, and finds firm ground, or safe building, he then lays the foundation-stone; so the Father finding in his eternal wisdom, and according to that counsel held in eternity, good, safe, and firm building on his own Son as Mediator, he laid him for the foundation. (1.) In that holy covenant and compact that was between God the Father, and God the Son, before the foundation of the earth was laid; he foreseeing the fall of man, laid Jesus Christ in the covenant of redemption, or covenant of grace and peace, as the only foundation. Hence the Father saith, "Behold, I lay in Sion, for a foundation, a stone," &c. He had laid him in his decree, and in that holy compact, and therefore he in the execution of the same decree and covenant, actually also laid our Lord Jesus Christ, as the foundation-stone, &c. This I have spoken to in opening the parts of this parable; therefore I shall proceed.

3. Jesus Christ laid himself for a foundation. (1.) In his doctrine. "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" that is, upon myself, as thou hast confessed me to be the Christ, "The Man Christ Jesus; Jesus, the Son of the living God." Thus he hath laid himself for a foundation, on which we must be built. (2.) Christ laid himself for the foundation also, in his actual obedience, and his death, in bearing our sins, and that wrath that was due to us for them, and so satisfying the justice of God; or on his active and passive obedience, or on what he did and suffered, we must build our justification, pardon of sin, and salvation.

4. The ministers of Christ also lay Jesus Christ for the foundation; as Paul saith, "According to the grace of God, which is given to me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation." This is a ministerial laying of Christ for the foundation. Paul preached Jesus to be the foundation, and chief corner-stone, upon which he taught all he preached to build their faith and hope of salvation.

5. Every true believer, by the Holy Spirit, may be said likewise to lay the Lord Jesus Christ for the foundation; he refuses all other foundations, and will build upon nothing else but Christ alone. And thus Christ is laid as the foundation of the spiritual building, nay, and a believer lays Christ deep also. (1.) Deep in his judgment and understanding. (2.) Deep in his faith, trust, and dependence. (3.) And deep in his love and affections.

Secondly, Christ, as the foundation, is of great use, not only in respect of what a foundation is to a house, but also for direction.

1. In respect of what kind of foundation he is, viz., a precious stone. This shows the excellency and glory of this foundation, and also what a glorious fabric God intends to raise and build upon him. If you see a master-builder (who builds a house for a mighty prince) to lay the foundation with precious stones of an inestimable value, as jasper, sapphire, emerald, chrysolites, beryl, onyx, or the like; you presently say, O what a rare, a costly, and glorious house will that be, which he designs to build on such a foundation! for he concludes there will be some proportion or suitableness between the foundation and the superstructure. So it is here. Hence the new Jerusalem (a figure of the church) as the foundation, is laid with precious stones; "So the twelve gates were made of twelve pearls, and the city paved with pure gold," Rev. xxi. 21.

2. The Lord Jesus is not only called a precious stone, but also a chosen stone; for like as a wise builder chooseth out stones that are most fit for the foundation, both for beauty and duration, so the wisdom of God chose Christ as a most fit foundation stone in every respect.

3. Christ is also a tried stone, "Behold I lay in Sion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone."

(1.) Stones are tried by a wise master-builder, and then laid in the foundation, so the wise God and Father tried the Lord Jesus Christ by his infinite wisdom, and found none in heaven nor earth fit for this use and purpose, but Christ only.

(2.) The Lord Jesus also came under actual trial. (1.) The devil tempted, and tried and strove to mar and spoil him, and to render him unfit for a foundation for sinners Matt. iv. 1, 2. to build upon, by those temptations our Lord met with when he was baptized and led into the wilderness; but he abode as firm as a rock not to be pierced. (2.) The instruments of Satan also tried him. How was he tempted and tried

Christ actually laid for a foundation.

The Father found good ground in laying Christ for the foundation.

Ministers lay Christ for a foundation.

Believers also lay Christ for a foundation.

Christ as a foundation is for direction to the builder.

Christ a tried stone and by whom tried.

by wicked men, by their hellish spite and malice, but abode unmoveable, breaking all Satan's tools to pieces. (3.) The Father also actually tried him, by hiding his face from him. (4.) Divine justice likewise tried him, by drawing forth her glittering sword against him; and this at God's command. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts, smite the shepherd," &c., Zech. xiii. 7. But he bore this trial also and remained untouched or unshaken, or a firm and sure foundation. (5.) Moreover many thousands of poor believers have tried this foundation-stone, both before he came in the flesh, and since also, by venturing their precious souls upon him, and they all found him a firm and sure foundation. (6.) The whole universal church had tried him by building on him, and found he never failed her. And, my brethren, no sinner, though he had never so great guilt on his conscience, and tempted by Satan to say, there was no hope; and though sometimes ready to give way unto his unbelieving heart, utterly to despair, yet in believing and casting himself upon the Lord Jesus, he had help, or found this stone was a sure and firm foundation to him. No storms, no floods, no earthquakes, nor attempts of men, sin, the world, death, nor devils, could ever shake or move this foundation-stone.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ, as the foundation-stone, is of great use in the spiritual building, in that all the precious stones that tend to build up this spiritual house, are united to him (like as stones are cemented and united to a material building) or being fitly framed, are knit together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Fourthly, Christ, as a foundation, bears up, supports, or sustains the weight of all the whole spiritual fabric, as a foundation doth the whole superstructure. Christ bears up the whole, and every part, every member, or every stone or piece of timber laid in the building, for as the whole church relies upon him, and is sustained and borne up by him, so is every particular believer also. Every saint depends upon Jesus Christ for redemption, reconciliation, justification, pardon of sin, adoption, final perseverance, and eternal life; and likewise for every grace, and for increase of grace, for strength in weakness, and for succour in times of temptation, and for courage in times of amazing trials, and indeed for all supplies for the soul, and body also.

Fifthly, as the foundation of a building supports all the materials and whole fabric thereof, so it doth also the rich furniture of it: all is sustained by the foundation, though never so great a weight be put therein, so the Lord Jesus Christ bears up and sustains all the spiritual furniture of his church, and of every true Christian; every grace is supported by him; and he is the foundation of every ordinance, and of all spiritual gifts, and of all the promises, all the promises run primarily to Christ, and the elect in Christ, "For all the promises of God are in him yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God the Father," 2 Cor. i. 20. The success and blessing of the word wholly depends upon Jesus Christ; preaching, prayer, not any duty hath any efficacy in it or them, without Jesus Christ.

III. I shall show, that Jesus Christ, the foundation-stone of the church, far excels all material foundations.

1. Other foundations are laid with many stones united and cemented together: but Christ our spiritual foundation is but one entire stone, which adds to its wonderful strength. God hath not laid in Sion for a foundation, stones in the plural, no, but only one single stone; we build on none, on nothing, but Christ alone.

2. Material stones laid for foundation, are but of little worth, comparatively to this, though they should be precious stones. Jesus Christ is more worth than ten thousand worlds, he is God over all, blessed for evermore. They are lifeless stones, by nature congealed, &c. but Christ is a living stone, an active and lively stone; having life in himself, being filled with the Holy Spirit, he sends forth life, or a vital principle to cement and unite all the stones of this spiritual building to himself as the foundation.

3. Other foundations, it is true, may be laid upon a rock, but this foundation is a rock, "Upon this rock will I build my church," Matt. xvi. 18. Christ the rock of ages, rocks are firm and unmoveable, but how unmoveable then is this rock? rocks also are strong, permanent, and durable; but how strong, how permanent and durable then is this rock, this foundation?

4. Other foundations may be shaken and decay; length of time makes them moulder, by which means the building is in danger, and will fall, but "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. "I am God, and change not," Mal. iii. 6. Can he that laid the foundation of the earth decay, "And thou, Lord, in the be-

All believers, like stones, are united to Christ the foundation. Eph. ii. 21.

Christ supports the whole church and every believer, as a foundation the building.

Christ the foundation-stone, far excels all foundations.

ginning (speaking of the Son) hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years fail not." Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.

5. A foundation is oftimes found faulty or defective, and therefore it is digged up, and another laid, but no fault, nothing defective can be found in Christ, as a foundation; and therefore he shall abide, and no other be ever laid, for as man cannot, so God will not.

6. Another foundation, though very firm, may by an earthquake be shaken, and be removed out of its place; but my brethren, Christ is such a foundation that can never be shaken nor removed, the greatest revolutions, mutations, and changes, turnings and overturnings that can come, cannot overturn this foundation-stone. Commonwealths, national constitutions, and all false churches shall be shaken and brought down, and that quickly too; but Jesus Christ, the foundation of the true and invisible church built upon him, shall abide for ever.

7. Another foundation cannot preserve the house that is built upon it; but Jesus Christ is able, doth, and will, preserve that soul that is built upon him. "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him unto that day;" 2 Tim. i. 12. O blessed souls that build upon Jesus Christ! "They shall never perish, neither can any pluck them out of my hands," John x. 28.

8. The ground on which another foundation is laid may sink or give way; but the ground on which Christ our foundation is laid can never give way, because the ground on which he is laid is the eternal decree and unchangeable purpose of God, "The foundation of God stands sure." The absolute decrees of God are compared to mountains of brass. "I will not alter the thing that is gone out of my mouth," Psal. lxxxix. 34, 38. So much as to this.

Question. But of what use is Christ to the spiritual building, as he is called the corner-stone?

Answer. 1. The corner-stone of a building is the medium by which the walls are united, pull down the corner-stone, and the sides of the house are divided or separated the one from the other: so by Christ both God and man are united; he is our days-man, that lays his hand upon both; he, as Mediator, unites God to us, and us to God. Moreover, he united Jews and Gentiles in one body to make one spiritual house; and he, like a corner-stone, cements and joins all believers together in the hands of love.

2. The corner-stone of a building is for direction; the under-workmen are to take their rule from thence, and all other stones must be laid level and even with that, so Jesus Christ is our rule, or a believer's direction, in respect to his doctrine and holy example; all must lie level and even to the doctrine and pattern of Christ the chief corner-stone.

3. The corner-stone sustains the house against all threatening shocks or storms whatsoever, if the corner of the house gives way, down it goes. "The wind smote the four corners of the house, and it fell," Job i. 17. But how fast is the spiritual building! what wind, what storm can smite this corner? Christ is every corner-stone of the house, and so defends it from all winds, out of every quarter of the heavens. If it blows from mount Sinai, it cannot hurt our corner; if divine justice beat upon the house, yet will it stand; but the storm that justice once raised, is laid by Jesus Christ, nor can any storm raised by Satan, or in the conscience of a believer, endanger the soul, because the corner-stone secureth all.

4. The corner-stones are the strongest for bearing, and the fairest for beauty; they are oftimes curiously wrought, and that adds a comeliness and glory to the house; so Christ, as he bears all the whole spiritual building, being the corner-stone, he is the beauty and glory thereof; for what a curious wrought stone is Jesus Christ the Mediator and corner-stone of God's building!

Know that Christ far exceeds all corner-stones; for they may be marred or drop out, and the building be in danger; but Christ cannot, no enemy can touch him, nor can his beauty be marred or decayed.

APPLICATION.

1. This informs us that the love of God (as also his wisdom) is infinite and inconceivable in his giving, contriving, and laying Jesus Christ for the foundation for his church, and every believer to build upon.

2. We may infer, that God designed in and by Jesus Christ to build his elect upon

sure basis, and not to build us in the second Adam, as he did in the first. O what a vast difference is there between the nature of the first covenant and the second! The covenant of grace made between the Father and the Son "is ordered in all things, and sure," 2 Sam. xxxiii. 5. Our standing is firm; we are built upon a durable foundation.

3. We infer, that the state and condition of all that are in Christ is such that they need fear no adversary, no storm, no temptation; no devil can destroy them, or overthrow their precious souls.

4. Also it may inform us, who are true ministers, viz., such that build the souls of sinners upon Jesus Christ, or lay Christ for the only foundation.

Exhort. Since Christ is the foundation and the Corner-stone, that bears up the whole building, and is the beauty of it, let him have all the glory. The church and every believer ought to exalt and magnify the Lord Jesus Christ. O see you do this; "For worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour and glory, and blessing." Rev. v. 12.

Trial. Let us examine ourselves; are we built upon Jesus Christ? It behoveth every soul well to weigh and consider what foundation they build their hope of salvation upon.

1. Hast thou rejected all other foundations; dost thou not build on purposes and resolutions, what thou wilt do or become hereafter? nor on any thing thou hast already done; nor on man, because of their great learning or parts, and take what they say upon trust.

2. Dost thou prize and esteem Jesus Christ above all things? a hypocrite hath something or other that lies nearer his heart than the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Dost thou count all things loss for him, even all thy external privileges, a name among men, thy estate, thy own righteousness, &c.?

4. Dost thou accept him as a Prince to rule in thee, and govern thee, as well as a Priest to offer up the atoning sacrifice to save thee? art thou taught and led by him also, as the great Prophet God hath raised up, by whom he hath revealed his whole mind and will to his people?

Quest. What must I or a poor sinner do to build upon Christ?

Answ. 1. Let all thy sins go, resolve no longer to live in sin; for every sinner who walks in a course of wickedness, and yet says he believes in Christ, trusteth in Christ, his faith is nothing but presumption, and he is one that builds not upon Jesus Christ.

What a sinner must do, that would build upon Christ.

2. Let also thy former hopes of heaven go, and whatsoever was gain to thee, count it but dung that thou mayest win Christ, and build upon him, and be found in him.

3. Consult not with flesh and blood (as Paul saith he did not); do not say, "I will, first bury my Father, or bid them farewell that are at my house;" or first get leave of my father, mother, husband, wife, or friends: no, but resolve to follow Christ, though thou lose the love of all thy relations.

4. Yet consult what building upon Christ, and following Christ may cost thee: this thou art directed to do by our Lord himself, and it is great wisdom to weigh this well; for some for want of this have when troubles arose, been offended at Christ, and come to nothing.

See the parable opened, "who begins to build a tower," &c.

5. Be much in prayer, and attend with diligence upon the word of God. Faith is absolutely necessary, no man can build upon Christ without faith; "and faith comes by hearing the gospel preached," Rom. x. 17. It is the ordinary way by which God works faith in the soul; for who is it that buildeth upon Jesus Christ, but he that truly believeth in him? believing is building.

6. Dig deep to find what righteousness doth agree and suit with the law, justice, holiness of God: labour to see the evil of sin, and to know what it is that satisfieth, or hath satisfied for sin, and for the breach of the law; and labour to see the fulness of that grace that is in Christ, and what the Father hath made him to be to every one that believeth in him.

SERMON XXXII.

The stone that the builders rejected, the same is become the head-stone of the corner ; this is the Lord's doing, &c.—Matt. xxi. 42.

FROM hence note,

Doct. Some that pretend to be builders, do reject Christ, the chief Corner-stone, nay the only foundation.

IV. I shall briefly hint a few things, to discover who they are that reject or refuse Jesus Christ, the only foundation.

1st. Such reject Christ, that build their hope of finding mercy, and being saved, upon an absolute God, or upon the simple mercy of God (or as considered in himself) being ignorant of that Mediator who is between God and man; for hath not God given encouragement to any sinner to depend upon him, or to trust on his simple mercy, as in himself, and apart from Christ? Can they expect pardon of sin, justification, or eternal life, without coming to him by Jesus Christ? O, saith Luther, I will have nothing to do with an absolute God, (or to that purpose) that is, with God, as considered in himself, or without approaching to him by the Mediator. "No man cometh to the Father, but by me," (John. xiv. 9.) saith our Lord Jesus Christ; no, nor can they, for out of Christ "God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29. This was the blindness of the Jews, they cried, "we have God to be our Father;" that is, though they were ignorant of Christ, the way to the Father, as Mediator, yet they called him their Father, and yet at the same time rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. If you ask a Jew now, how he hopes to be saved, he will tell you his hope is in God, thinking an absolute God (or God as in himself) will save him, being ignorant of the justice and holiness of his nature, neither knowing how, or by what means justice is satisfied.

The ignorance of the Jews.

Though God is gracious, yet he is just.

Objection. Is not God a gracious and merciful God?

Answ. Yea goodness, grace, and mercy, is one of the attributes of God or a glorious perfection of his. Nay, goodness in God is that which renders his glorious Majesty the only object of the love and affections of all his saints. For had he not been a good and gracious God, a God full of love and mercy, he had never sent his only-begotten Son, to be our Surety and Saviour. What could show or demonstrate greater love and mercy? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," &c., John iii. 16. Yet (as you have often heard) God is just, as well as gracious and merciful, and not one dram of mercy will he let out in a way to darken or eclipse his justice and holiness; therefore all that will find mercy with God, must come to him in Christ, who hath satisfied the law and justice of God; for without a complete satisfaction, wrath would consume us. "God will in no wise clear the guilty," Exod. xxxvii. 7; that is, as a simple act of mercy. Mercy, my brethren, hath its proper channel in which it flows forth, and the Mediator Jesus Christ is that channel; therefore such who come not to God by Jesus Christ, reject the only foundation and head-stone of the corner. To confirm this take two or three arguments.

Arguments tending to force sinners to come to God by Christ only.

Argument. 1. If nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can satisfy the justice of God, or without a satisfaction no man can be justified, pardoned, or saved; then unless sinners plead that satisfaction made by Christ's blood, and his merits, they cannot be justified, pardoned, or saved; but the former is true, ergo, &c.

2. Arg. If any should come to God, and not by Christ, justice would plead against them, and have a stronger plea to condemn them, than mercy can have to justify, pardon, and save them; then all that would be justified, pardoned, and saved, must come to God by Jesus Christ, but the former is true, ergo, &c. This I have, in speaking to another parable, made evident.

3. Arg. If God should, as a simple act of his mercy (or as an absolute God) pardon a guilty sinner, it would reflect upon the honour of his wisdom, and love to Christ (as well as on his justice in laying our sins upon his own Son, and punishing him as our Surety;) then God will not, cannot in honour, &c., pardon any guilty sinner, as an act of simple mercy, or as an absolute God; but the former is true, ergo, &c. For might not Christ say, "O my Father, why didst thou make my soul an offering for sin, to satisfy thy justice, since

thou hast pardoned this and that sinner, as a mere, or simple act of thy mercy, without respect or regard had to the redemption through my blood?"

2dly. They reject Christ the chief Corner-stone, that build their hopes of heaven upon an outward conformity to the ten commandments only, or to the moral law of God. Thus the Jewish builders (of whom our Lord here speaks) rejected the head-stone of the corner; it was, my brethren, this way Israel sought after righteousness, to justify them in the sight of God; they trusted in the law, and in their obedience to it, for justification. "Behold thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God," Rom. ii. 17. Thou thinkest God is well pleased with thy righteousness; but what saith the Holy Ghost? "But Israel which followed after righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness; wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone," Rom. ix. 31, 32, 33. The very stone which they should have built upon, they stumbled at. Let me give you an argument here to confirm this particular.

Conformity to the moral law will not justify.

Arg. If the Jews by seeking justification by their conformity to all the precepts of the moral law, did thereby reject Jesus Christ, and instead of building on him, stumbled on him; then all who now seek justification by a conformity to the law, or by their own righteousness, or a holy life, do also reject Christ, the chief Corner-stone: but the former is true; ergo, &c.

Object. But some may object and say, that the Jews and Pharisees were not sincere, but hypocritical in their obedience.

Ans. 1. It is not true of some of them, though perhaps the greatest part were hypocritical: yet some others, as Paul, when a Pharisee, acted no doubt in moral sincerity.

2. The argument against justification by our obedience to the law, lies not in the want of moral sincerity, but in the imperfection of that obedience, and also for want of a satisfaction for the sinner's breach thereof.

Object. But did not Christ direct the young man to keep the ten commandments, when he asked what he should do to inherit eternal life?

Ans. 1. Our Saviour might bid him keep the commandments, to show that they must be all perfectly kept, either by man himself, or by his Surety, or none could inherit eternal life.

What meant by Christ's directing the young man to keep the commandments.

2. Also it might be to convince him, that he did not keep them perfectly, and so could not be saved that way, viz., "he did not love the Lord his God with all his heart, nor his neighbour as himself;" in that he loved his possessions above God, and would not sell all he had, and give it to the poor, by which it appeared he broke the sum both of the first and second table.

3. Our Lord might put him upon keeping the commandments, to try him, or to discover his great ignorance of the way of salvation, which was by believing in him, cleaving to him, &c.

Object. The young man said, all these things he had done from his youth up, and our Lord does not gainsay him.

Ans. The young man understood the keeping the commandments according to the Scribes and Pharisees exposition of the law, viz., as only forbidding the gross and overt acts of sin, in respect of murder, adultery, &c., not thinking that he, by the inward lusts, and evil motions of his heart had broken them. However, one thing he lacked, and that was faith in Christ; he could not part with his own righteousness, and count it but dung, nor sell his great possessious to follow Christ.

Thirdly. They reject this Corner-stone, that build upon their faith, repentance, Gospel obedience, or inherent righteousness, or whatsoever it be, whether in obedience to the law without, or the law or light within.

Fourthly. Such reject the head-stone of the corner, and only foundation, that deny the Godhead of Christ and his satisfaction, they that deny his divinity; for no mere finite creature could satisfy infinite justice; and they also who deny the man Christ Jesus, and render his blood, and the shedding of it to be mysterious blood, and count that blood shed on the cross but as the blood of another man: these also certainly reject this chief Corner-stone.

They that trust to anything short of Christ, reject him.

Fifthly. All that presume, or that presumptuously pretend to rely upon Jesus Christ, they reject this Corner-stone, or the way of building upon him, because they have no true faith: there is (I told you) no building on this foundation without true faith; these men do but dream they build upon Jesus Christ, it is but in fancy.

They that presume, reject Christ the chief Corner-stone.

If the only way by which sinners build on Christ, is by faith, or by believing (which faith always sanctifieth and purges both the heart and life of him that obtains it); then such sinners who say they trust in Christ, and yet live in sin and a wicked course of life, do but presume on him, and so through ignorance and love to their lusts, reject the Lord Jesus Christ: but the former is true, *ergo*, &c.

They that despair re-ject Christ. Sixthly. All that despair of mercy, help, and pardon, through the obedience and merits of Christ, reject the head-stone of the corner, or refuse to build upon Christ. Of these there are two sorts.

First. Such who despair, through unbelief, and grow thereby resolute and very desperate. "And they said, there is no hope," Jer. xviii. 2. Well, and what then? what will they do? we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imaginations of his own heart. They despair of ever being pardoned and saved, and therefore resolve to pursue their own horrid lusts. There is no hope; that is a desperate conclusion. But we will walk every one after his own devices; that is a desperate resolution: they find their sins great, and so think it is impossible God should pardon them; and their hearts so vile, and lusts so strong, that it is impossible they should overcome them, or get a conquest of them, and therefore wilfully go on and harden their hearts against God.

Quest. From whence is it, that this sort despair of all hope, and so reject Jesus Christ?

Ans. 1. It is (you hear) from the power of sin, and that power Satan hath got in them, and over them. "Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin: hearts they have exercised with covetous practices, cursed children," &c., 2 Pet. ii. 14.

2. These find not only an indisposition in them unto that which is good, but also an averseness, a hatred, an enmity in their carnal minds to all things truly and spiritually good. And from hence they say, "There is no hope." And also say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," &c. May be in times past they might have some kind of desires after Christ, but those desires are now quite gone, Job. xxi. 14.

3. It may not only rise from that natural proneness they find in their hearts to evil, but also from that wonderful and inordinate love they have to earthly things, and to the lusts of the flesh. "Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart," Hosca iv. 11.

4. It may arise from the sense they have of that great insufficiency they hitherto have found in the means of grace, as to them. They have perhaps heard many sermons, and have sat under an able and powerful ministry, and yet are never the better, but as vile as ever: also have (may be) had strong convictions, but those convictions are gone off; nay, perhaps have heard, that some sinners were converted by some of the sermons they heard; and from hence give up all hope, and fall into despair, and grow desperate. Many that were bid to the marriage-supper, refused to come, but pleaded to be excused.

5. Laziness, or a slothful spirit may have seized upon them; they love not to resist sin, temptations, and to be found in prayer: hearing of the word, or self-examination, is grievous to them: slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, their hands refuse to labour.

6. Or it may rise from their great ignorance of the infinite mercy of God in Jesus Christ; they are so vile and abominable, that they think God will not pardon them, though God saith, "His thoughts are not as their thoughts." May be they have sinned against much light and knowledge, and also against solemn vows, promises, and resolutions, when under great afflictions, and yet after all are as bad as ever, if not worse.

7. No doubt it riseth from Satan's temptations: he tells them there is no hope for them, and they believe him, and yield to his suggestions.

Lastly, It rises before from prevailing unbelief, which is the soul-damning sin. Though God hath assured the greatest sinner he shall find mercy if he return to him, in and by Jesus Christ; and he that believes not, the Holy Ghost says, makes God a liar; yet they do not believe, nor give credit to what the Holy God says. The state before of all such persons as these is very dismal.

Secondly, There is another sort of despairing persons, who also refuse Christ, or do not build upon him. They despair, but yet go mourning all the day long; and will not dare to run into sin, nor give over holy duties, but yet cannot, dare not rest on Jesus Christ. These are most to be pitied, for their condition is not so bad as the other. Alas, these look for some previous qualifications in themselves, and would fain get somewhat to commend them to God, not well observing that all absolute promises run to sinners, as sinners, as awakened and undone sinners. Moreover, they do not see how the wrath of God is appeased, and his justice satisfied in Jesus Christ: they poor souls have nothing

Despairing persons dare not sin against God, nor yet rest on Christ.

to do but to throw themselves upon Jesus Christ; but not believing this, and not knowing that Christ hath borne all the guilt of their sins, they build not on him, but through despair refuse him.

APPLICATION.

1. We may infer, that though God hath laid Christ for a foundation, yet but very few do truly build upon him.

2. See what unbelief or infidelity is in the heart of sinners. God says, Christ is the only foundation upon whom they must build; and Christ says, "On this rock I will build my church," Matt. xvi. 18; and again saith, "No man cometh to the Father but by me," John. xiv. 6. And the apostles declare that there is no "other name given, by which men must be saved," Acts iv. 12. And the Holy Ghost says, he that builds not upon the Son, or that believeth not on him, shall be damned, and that the wrath of God abides upon him," Mark xvi. 16; Job iii. 36. Yet for all this they will build their hopes of pardon, justification, and eternal light upon something else, and not upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. See also from hence, the different temptations of Satan, and what devices he has to destroy the souls of men: some he persuades to presume, though vile and ungodly, and others to despair, though sober and praying persons. But here a question may arise.

Quest. Which is the greatest sin, presumption or despair?

Ans. 1. Both are damnable, but certainly presumption destroys more than despair.

I shall add somewhat briefly to each of these evils.

1. Presumption casteth horrid reproach upon the word of God, and the ministers thereof: the word declares, that unless a man be born again, he cannot be saved; and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. But these persons are unrenewed, carnal, and live unholy lives, and yet presume upon God's mercy, and on Christ's merits, not doubting but they shall be saved, and so give (as it were) the word of God the lie.

Whether presumption or despair is the greatest sin.

2. Nay, such that presume cast contempt upon God himself, "and make God a liar;" for such that disbelieve the word of God, disbelieve God himself; therefore presumption is an abominable sin.

But despair doth more; for that doth not only cast contempt upon the truth of God (by disbelieving his promises) but also upon his mercy, his power, and faithfulness. The voice of despair is, that God is not only not to be believed in his blessed promises of pardon of sin in and through Jesus Christ, but also that their sins are so great that God cannot forgive them, though Christ saith, all manner of sins, and blasphemies against the Father and the Son, shall be forgiven unto men. And thus they give our blessed Saviour the lie also.

The evil of despair of God's mercy in Christ.

3. They that despair do cast disparagement also upon the great sacrifice our Lord offered up to atone for sin, and so lessen the virtue of his most precious blood, as if God's justice was not sufficiently satisfied for all sins, nor Christ's blood sufficient to wash away the guilt and pollution of their iniquities; and so they reflect upon the efficaciousness of Christ's blood, merits, and righteousness.

4. Such that presume or utterly despair, give more credit to the devil, than they do unto the holy God, and are guilty each of them of the great sin of unbelief; and whosoever dies in either of these sins they cannot be saved, but shall perish for ever.

Exhort. I. O then you poor sinners, whether you are such that presume upon or despair of God's mercy in Christ, labour to believe and build upon this foundation, and trust not in lying words, nor on any vain confidence; nor yet despair, but throw your souls by a true and lively faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ; and if you experience the effect of the faith of the operation of God upon your souls, you need not fear your faith is presumption, nor have any cause to doubt or despair of your interest in Christ. But know assuredly, that that faith or confidence any man pretends to, who lives in any known sin, or that is not regenerated, is a false and counterfeit faith. What is the faith of a swearer, a liar, a drunkard, good for? or a whoremonger, a covetous person, a proud person, or a back-biter, &c. Alas, if such say they believe and rest on Christ, upon the merits and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, they do but deceive themselves; for they believe not, but only presume, and their faith and hope at last will be but as the spider's web. They build alas without a foundation.

2. O rob not God of the glory of his grace, love, mercy, goodness, power, truth, and faithfulness.

3. Render not (O thou despairing soul) God guilty of perjury. who hath sworn, that He

“desires not the death of him that dies, but rather that he would return and live,” Ezek. xviii. 23. Wilt thou not believe God upon the big best testimony that ever was, or can be given to undone sinners? thou art a burdened sinner, a sensible sinner, a sick and wounded sinner, a thirsty sinner, and a lost and weary sinner: why pray consider, this being so, and how the promises run to you, and such as you are. “Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” Matt. xi. 28. “The whole need not a physician, but such that are sick,” Matt. ix. 12. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,” Mark ii. 17. That is, such that see they are sinners, and find they are sick and wounded.” The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost, Matt. xviii. 1, i. e., such who are lost in their own sight. “Ho every one that thirsteth, come to the waters,” Isa. lv. 1. But for encouragement consider further.

Persuasions
to build upon
Christ.

I. What, art thou weary, and wilt not have rest? What, art thou wounded, and wilt not have a plaster, or balm to cure thy wounded soul? What, art thou hungry and wilt not eat? or thirsty, and yet refuse drink? What, art thou condemned, and yet refuse a pardon? What, art thou polluted, and wilt thou not wash in that “fountain which is set open for sin, and for uncleanness?” Zech. xiii. 1.

2. Is the Father willing, the Son willing, and the Holy Ghost willing to save thee, and art thou not willing to be saved?

3. Wilt thou honour Satan more than God, believe the devil, and make God a liar, or render him not to be believed? nor his word nor his ministers believed? Wilt thou throw away, and destroy through unbelief, nay murder thy own precious and immortal soul? hast thou a mind to have all thy sins bound with chains upon thy precious soul for ever? for unbelief does and will do this. For the Lord's sake, for his glory and honour sake, and for the sake of thy own soul, labour to believe. O cry, “I believe, Lord help my unbelief.”

4. What, wilt thou reject such a tried stone, such a sure foundation? O what a multitude, that were as great sinners as thou art, have built upon the tried stone, and have found it never failed any one of them.

5. What other ground had ever any soul to build on Christ, rest on Christ, than what thou hast; is not the word of God enough, the promise and oath of God warrant sufficient or ground enough so encourage thee to believe and build upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

6. Wilt thou say there is no hope, when God hath given thee such ground of hope? Thou thinkest thy sins are too great and too many to be forgiven; but God saith, “My thoughts are not as your thoughts,” &c. Isa. lv. 8. Though thou art the man of iniquity yet return to God by Christ Jesus; hear what he says, I will abundantly pardon, multiply pardon. “Where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded,” Rom. v. 20.

7. Is grace upon the throne? does grace reign, and wilt thou not draw near to such a throne?

8. Doth God say in Christ, he is reconciled, well pleased, and that fury is not in him, and wilt thou say there is no hope? Have adulterers, murderers, yea, such that shed innocent blood, found mercy, and wilt thou say there is no hope? remember David, Manassah, &c.

9. Have the worst, the greatest, and blackest of sinners been pardoned, even blasphemers, persecutors, nay, such that murdered the Lord of life and glory, and wilt thou say still there is no hope?

10. Is it not better for thee to venture thy soul upon Christ? Trust in him, and if thou must perish, perish even at the foot of Jesus Christ; thou canst but be damned if thou shalt as sure be damned, as if thou wast in hell already. But pray what sinner was ever damned, that did believe in Jesus Christ? Hath not God said, Christ said, the Holy Spirit said, “Whosoever cometh to Christ shall in no wise be cast out?” John vi. 37. And that “he that believeth on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life,” John iii. 16.

Comfort. This may administer comfort and sweet consolation to believers, who are built upon Jesus Christ.

The safety
of believers.

1. It is an evidence of God's eternal love to you that have received Jesus Christ, and are enlightened by the Spirit, though others refuse Christ, reject Christ, because they neither know him nor love him; but ye know him, and know how to build your souls upon him, or rather how you are built upon him by the Holy Spirit.

Matt. vii. 25. 2. Satan cannot shake the foundation of your faith, and hope of heaven. Let the floods come, and the winds blow upon the house, it will stand, for it is built upon a rock.

Terror. Bewail all such that reject Christ as the Foundation and chief Corner-stone.

What a sad and woful condition are all such in! Let them build upon another foundation never so confidently that they shall be saved, yet they shall certainly be damned; for they build but on the sand, or without a foundation, because there is no other foundation but Christ alone.

Let all therefore take heed they do not reject Jesus Christ, God-man, that one blessed Mediator, neither in respect of his person, office, or doctrine. But O what multitudes are there in these days who seek to destroy (as much as in them lies) the foundation, which could they indeed effect, what would the righteous do? But Christ is laid so deep, so well, so sure, that none can destroy this blessed Corner-stone, though men may reject him; and in so doing they will perish for ever, as the Jews did.

SERMON XXXIII.

This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.—Matt. xxi. 42.

QUEST. What is the Lord's doing?

ANSW. I. The laying Christ for the foundation, and the chief Corner-stone of the spiritual building.

2. The casting off the Jews also, and all other who reject the Lord Jesus Christ as the chief Corner-stone.

“And it is marvellous in our eyes.” Whose eyes?

ANSW. Even in the eyes of all believers, all the godly stand and admire at this thing; nay, and the holy angels wonder also to see God to lay his only beloved Son for a foundation, to raise fallen man and build him up again to such a height of glory and happiness, as is amazing, and believers themselves stand astonished at this, crying out, “O what manner of love is this,” 1 John iii. 1, 2. O how low was Christ laid, and how high are we thereby raised! Note from hence,

Doct. That the salvation of lost sinners by Jesus Christ, as it is of God's doing, so it is also a wonderful and marvellous thing.

In speaking to this proposition,

I. I shall show you how this is of the Lord's doing.

II. Apply it.

I. By the Lord in this place is meant God the Father, it is his doing. “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone,” &c., Isa. xxviii. 16. “All things are of God,” 2 Cor. v. 18; that is, of God the Father.

1. As an act of his infinite love, sovereign mercy, and goodness to mankind, and not to the fallen angels. Love and sovereign grace was the efficient and first moving cause hereof. “God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life,” John iii. 16. This is wonderful love, marvellous love, “For verily he did not take on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,” Heb. ii. 16. There was no love, no pity showed to the fallen angels, no Redeemer found for them, though they were more glorious creatures than man. But this marvellous love was manifested to man, even to God's elect, who were in the first Adam. “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.—Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins,” 1 John iv. 9, 10.

1. It was the Lord's doing, as it was an act of his infinite wisdom, our redemption by Jesus Christ was the contrivance of the marvellous wisdom of God the Father. It was “he that devised the means or way that his banished might not for ever be expelled from him.” And hence it is said, “Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom,” Job xxxiii. 24. The love God had to poor sinners, moved or stirred him up to find out a way to magnify his own glory, and redeem them from sin, wrath, and misery: and such wisdom is marvellous in our eyes; nay, it is the top glory, or highest act of infinite wisdom, as I shall show you by and by.

3. It was the Lord's doing, as an act of his Almighty power. Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. “Christ is called the

In whose eyes this is marvellous.

Christ being laid for a foundation, an act of God's love.

Salvation by Christ an act of God's wisdom.

Salvation the act of God's power.

arm of the Lord, and the man of his right hand, whom he hath made strong for himself."

My brethren, that this is the doing of God the Father, is evident; for he indeed is the first and principal Author of our salvation, and therefore the apostle saith, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ," &c.

1. God the Father first proposed this thing to his Son (who lay in his bosom from all eternity) to undertake the work of our redemption, which God the Son readily consented to, and struck hands with the Father, and entered into covenant with him to become our Surety and Saviour before the world began.

God the Father proposed this thing to his Son in eternity.

2. God the Father (as one well observes) is held forth as the chiefest injured person, against whom our sin was primarily committed, to whom the first creation was ascribed: he was our Creator and glorious Sovereign; and therefore should not God the Father be the contriver of our recovery, but another, how would it eclipse his glory, divine love, goodness, and wisdom?

The Father the chief injured person by our sin.

3. It was God the Father, who well knew what was necessary to be done in order to build up or raise fallen man, what was consistent with the honour of his holy majesty, and would promote and raise the glory of all the blessed attributes and perfections of the glorious Deity.

The Father well knew what was necessary to his own glory.

4. We read often how our salvation is ascribed to the grace of God the Father; how often Christ himself is called the gift of God. "Hast thou known the gift of God?" &c., John iv. 10.

Salvation is ascribed to God the Father.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," Rom. viii. 32. As election is ascribed to the Father, and the gift of Christ is attributed to the Father; so all spiritual blessings which we have by Christ, spring from the Father. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 3, 4.

How often is God the Father called our Saviour? "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people," Luke i. 68. And hence he is called, "the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort," 2 Cor. i. 3.

5. Whatsoever Jesus Christ did, God the Father determined to have done; and therefore "this is the Lord's doings." "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," &c., Acts ii. 23. Moreover, it was no other thing than what God "declared by the mouths of all the holy prophets from the beginning of the world, should be done," Acts iii. 18.

The laying of Christ for a foundation was in the thoughts of God, as held forth and manifest to his people in all ages of the world, and many ways also made known, not only by visions, but by types and sacrifices also; so that we may say, "Many, O Lord our God, are thy wonderful works, which thou hast done, and thy thoughts towards us," &c., Psal. xl. 5.

6. The Father chose Christ for a foundation. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious," 1 Pet. ii. 4. The Father chose and appointed his own Son to be Mediator from eternity, that so he might be the foundation, and bear up the whole new creation, and so have the glory. Moreover, the Father prepared him a body (as I have often showed you) "A body hast thou prepared me," Heb. x. 5. The Father also sent him into the world. "Say you of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God," John x. 36. All these things prove that the work of redemption by Jesus Christ is primarily the Father's doings.

Yet take one or two further demonstrations to evince this, and I will proceed.

7. Whatsoever our Lord Jesus Christ is made unto us, it is expressly said, that he is so made unto us by God the Father.

What Christ is made to us, it is by God the Father.

(1.) Was he made a Priest? God the Father made him a Mediator, and, as so considered, a Priest. "No man taketh this honour unto him, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron: so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Heb. v. 5. (2.) Was he made sacrifice for sin? The Father made him this sacrifice. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed," &c., Isa. liii. 11. (3.) Were our sins laid upon him? The Father hath laid them on him. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all," Isa. liii. 6. (4.) Was he bruised? Why it was the Father hath bruised him, and put him to grief. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath

put him to grief," ver. 10. (5.) Was he raised from the dead? This was done also by God the Father, though he being God, could himself take up his life again; but it behoved the Father, as an act of justice (he being his prisoner) to discharge him out of prison, when he had paid all our debts. Hence it is said, "He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," Rom. vi. 4. "Whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead," &c., Acts iv. 10. (6.) Was he exalted at God's right-hand? It was the Father that exalted him. "Whom God exalted at his right-hand, as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sin," Acts v. 31. (7.) Is he a King? God the Father gave him that power and authority. "Yet have I set my King upon the holy hill of Zion." (8.) Is he a Prophet? It was the Father that raised him up also, and invested him with that office. "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear," &c., Acts iii. 22. (9.) Is he a Shepherd! God the Father constituted him a Shepherd. "Awake O sword against my shepherd, and against the man that is my Fellow," &c., Zech. xiii. 7, 8. (10.) Is Christ a Saviour? the Father appointed and sent him to save us. "God sent him to bless us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities," Acts iii. 26. "He hath raised up an horn of salvation, in the house of his servant David," Luke i. 69. (11.) Our election in Christ is of God the Father, the Father gave all that shall be saved to Jesus Christ. (12.) The Father sends the Spirit also in Christ's name. (13.) It is the act of God the Father to impute the righteousness of Christ to us, and to justify us, or to pronounce us righteous through Christ's righteousness. In a word, all things are of God, &c. "Jesus Christ, of God the Father, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." And thus "this is the Lord's doing," the Father's work, that all may rejoice in, and give glory to God the Father. "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified," Isa. xli. 3.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn from hence to know assuredly, that God the Father is full of love and bowels of compassion to his elect, as Jesus Christ our blessed Redeemer. O do not think the Son hath more love, more grace, more pity to us than God the Father.

2. And therefore let us learn from hence to ascribe equal glory to the Father as unto the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, they being essentially considered one and the same God blessed for evermore. Amen.

3. From hence we may learn to plead with God the Father to bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and to enable us to build in a right manner upon him, since the Father laid him for a Foundation; and he that builds all things is God.

4. Do not look upon God the Father in Christ Jesus, as an angry God, but as a tender and dear Father, and come to him in the name of Christ with holy boldness, and learn to delight in him, and make the Father an equal object of your soul's affections.

5. And let us all strive after holiness, because it was the design of God in this work, to magnify his own holiness; all the acts of God's doings, in and about Christ, and our salvation, lay us under the highest obligation to oppose sin and all ungodliness. He gave his Son not to save us in, but from our sins. "Even to deliver us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14.

6. Is the laying of Christ as a Foundation, and the whole of our salvation, the Lord's doing? Then this reproves such that reject this Corner-stone, or build upon any other foundation. Moreover, learn from hence to know that this is a firm and sure Foundation, it being the Lord's doing, or the work of the mighty God himself.

7. Yet let all take heed they do not lessen the glory and honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in magnifying the glory of God the Father; for though you have heard that it is the Father's doings, and that he is the first and prime Author of our redemption, and of all divine grace, and gracious operations; yet equal glory belongs to Jesus Christ, "and all are to honour the Son, as they honour the Father." Jesus Christ is our Surety, our common Head and Representative, he is our Redeemer; it was Christ that bought us, that redeemed us; he was both the Priest and Sacrifice; it is he that is the great Paymaster, the only Mediator between God and man; he it was that made our peace, that made an end of sin, and that brought in an everlasting righteousness. He is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; he is our strength, our life, our food, our Physician, our Bridegroom, Christ is the Shepherd that sought us, the Fountain in whom we are washed, and the Foundation upon whom we and the church is built; so that all will for ever be undone, that reject him.

“ This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

Quest. What is marvellous in our eyes?

It is a marvellous thing that Christ should be rejected.

Ans. (1.) That God should lay his own Son for a Foundation. (2.) That the chief builders should reject him; both these things are marvellous in the eyes of all God’s people, that the sheep should reject their Shepherd, the subjects cast off their Sovereign, a people despise their God, and murder his only begotten Son, and chiefest Prophet, and their only Teacher. As the love, wisdom, and goodness of God is to be admired in sending his Son: so also is the horrid sin, ignorance, and folly of men, whether Jews or Gentiles, in rejecting him. What, reject the Son of God, the Lord of life and glory, the Foundation-stone, the blessed Messiah, and only Saviour: “ be astonished O ye heavens !”

I shall chiefly speak unto this in respect to the first of these, but shall comprehend both.

Doct. That God’s laying Christ for a Foundation, is a marvellous thing; and strange it is that any should reject this Corner-stone.

I shall endeavour (in speaking to this point of doctrine) to do three things.

I. Show what things they are that are counted marvellous.

II. Show how or in what respects our salvation by Jesus Christ may be counted marvellous.

III. Apply it.

1. Some things are really marvellous in themselves, many things in nature being above the comprehension of man.

1. Some things are only marvellous to ignorant people, who by reason of the weakness of their judgment and understanding admire them, which other men can give a reason of, and look upon as no wonders at all. But salvation by Jesus Christ is really wonderful and marvellous in itself, and in the eyes of all the wisest men and saints of God that ever lived on the earth.

2. A thing is counted marvellous, and wondered at, that is rarely seen, or perhaps not once in a hundred years: yet it hath been seen or done before, and so is not so great a wonder.

3. A thing is counted marvellous that is far above the reach, reason, or comprehension of men of the greatest wisdom, and deepest judgment; they can give no human reason for it, being wholly supernatural, or without any natural cause, as the eclipse or dismal darkness of the sun at the crucifixion of our blessed Saviour, or the sun’s standing still, or going back several degrees.

4. A thing is counted marvellous that is a new thing, never heard of, nor done before; nor could it ever enter into the heart of man that such a thing should ever be, or come to pass.

5. A thing is counted marvellous in respect of the effects it hath on the subjects for whom it is done. As when strange, wonderful, yea amazing love and good will is showed to a virgin in prison, and in a dismal and miserable condition, tending to her perfect freedom, and to raise her to the highest honour; and yet after all that amazing love and good-will, his love is slighted and rejected, though the poor damsel was a slave, and the prince that comes to redeem her, comes also to court and marry her; and yet after all, she despises him, and rejects the offer of love and good-will. Would not all wonder at her, and say what a marvellous thing is this? thus it is in this case.

6. Or when a kingdom is exposed to utter ruin, by a merciless enemy, and bloody tyrant, who is about to destroy all with fire and sword, and just at the very nick of time a more powerful prince offers his help to save and deliver that kingdom for ever from such desolation; and yet his love and great pity is utterly rejected, and they suffer themselves to be undone and destroyed for ever: would not all nations that heard of such a thing, wonder at the folly and madness of the people of such a kingdom? thus it is here.

II. I shall shew how, or in what respects our salvation by Jesus Christ, may be said to be marvellous in our eyes.

1. Our salvation by Christ is marvellous, because God hath done a thing in order to save our souls, that could never have entered in the hearts of men or angels, both in respect of that amazing and marvellous love and wisdom that is displayed therein. “ God so loved the world,” &c., John. iii. 16. So loved, or with such an amazing, marvellous, infinite, and unexpressable love “ that he gave his only begotten Son,” gave him to be a sacrifice, and to die a miserable and ignominious death, and to be made a curse for us. And what were we?

Wherein the marvellousness of this does consist.

why his enemies, yea, such that had enmity in our hearts and minds against God; we that wererebels, who hated him, and had given up ourselves to the rule and government of the devil, having cast God off, rejecting the authority of our Maker, and merciful and only Sovereign. "Yet God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. Is not this marvellous love, and wonderful in our eyes? "Ye that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled," Col. i. 21. My brethren, it is counted a strange and marvellous thing for a man to lay down his life for his friend, or for his dear wife or child; all would say he shows wonderful love for them, who (though so near to him) yet deserved to die, having committed some grievous crime, but he will die for them, and in their stead. Such love is marvellous love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lays down his life for his friend," John xv. 13. But what saith the apostle, "But Christ died for us, while we were enemies," Rom. v. 8. He died for the ungodly, "For when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," ver. 10. The loving-kindness of God is called "marvellous, and many are his marvellous works," Psal. xxxi. 20, Psal. xevii. 1. But this exceeds them all, and it is therefore marvellous in our eyes.

2. That which adds to the wonder, and makes it yet more marvellous, is this, that God, who thus commends his love in giving his Son, and Christ Jesus who laid down his life, well knew (being omniscient,) that those persons for whom he died (and who were so unworthy of the least favour,) would, after he had done this thing, (for a time) slight and contemn his person, and this his infinite love to them, and shut their doors against him, resist his Holy Spirit, and grieve and wound his tender heart, and prefer their lusts above him; and yet notwithstanding all this, he would, and did die for them. O how strange and wonderful is this in the eyes of all that know and contemplate thereon!

3. The marvellousness of this divine grace and salvation appears yet further, in that although there is no other way of salvation, or for sinners to escape eternal damnation, and this is also clearly revealed in the gospel, and confirmed by the highest evidence; yet it is not received by multitudes, but they will seek salvation some other ways, and believe not in Jesus Christ, but reject him the chief Corner-stone.

4. Also, in that although the fullest and clearest evidence is given by the blessed Jesus, that whosoever believe in him, or build upon him, shall be pardoned of all their sins, though never so great and many, and for ever acquitted, justified, and accepted in Christ, and be adopted sons and daughters of God, and made kings and princes, and at last be crowned with endless glory. Yet all this is disbelieved, slighted, and contemned generally by all, or far the greater part of sinners, to whom there is a revelation made of this salvation.

5. Is it not a marvellous thing, that when God hath laid a Foundation for sinners to build upon, that east him more (or is more worth and precious to him) than ten thousand worlds, and a Foundation so firm and sure, that all the devils, and powers of darkness can never shake nor remove, or pull down them that build thereon; and yet sinners do reject this Foundation and Corner-stone, and will not build upon the Lord Jesus Christ? But many, like the Phari-sees, will build upon the sands of their own legal righteousness, preferring their own wisdom above the wisdom of God, because it lies above their natural reason, *i. e.*, that a sinner can be made righteous, and justified by another's righteousness, as imputed to him.

6. Is it not a marvellous thing, to see the King and only Potentate of heaven and earth, who hath thousands of thousands of angels ministering to him, to lay aside his glorious princely robes, and offer himself to die a cruel and ignominious death, for a few cursed traitors, beggars, and rebels? Or is it not marvellous to see him that was God (co-equal with the Father) to die for such sinful creatures, and to take them, who in themselves are as base and contemptible as carrion, worms, into union with himself, and lay them in his bosom, and set them down with himself in his throne for ever? Rev. iii. 21.

7. Our salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ is marvellous, because it is a great mystery. This I shall endeavour to prove, and clearly evince.

1. That which is so mysterious, that the wisdom of man cannot conceive of, or comprehend, is a marvellous thing, and great mystery; but our salvation by Jesus Christ is so mysterious, that the wisdom of men cannot conceive of it, or comprehend it, *ergo*.

Our salvation is a great mystery, or very marvellous.

To confirm this argument, take several texts of scripture. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom—which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto

him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8, 14. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," &c., 1 Tim. iii. 16.

But to proceed to a few arguments to demonstrate the mysteriousness of our salvation by Christ, and from thence how it is marvellous in our eyes.

Arg. 1. "That which the wise men of the world count foolishness, because it lies above their corrupt human reason to comprehend it, is doubtless a great mystery, and therefore marvellous; but our salvation by Jesus Christ is counted foolishness, because it lies above their corrupt human reason to comprehend it, *ergo*, it is a great mystery. The minor is proved by what Paul saith, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us that are saved, it is the power of God," 1 Cor. i. 18. The preaching of the cross; that is, justification and salvation by the obedience and sufferings of Christ upon the cross, or by that blessed one that was hanged on the tree. The men of reason of our age call it a contradiction, that a debt fully paid, is yet freely forgiven, and a mock payment, and so foolishness, and seem to charge the holy and wise God with folly, who saith, "He pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin; and yet will by no means clear the guilty," Exod. xxxiv. 7.

Arg. 2. That work which was the glorious contrivance of the infinite wisdom of God, yea, the deepest, the most profound part of his wisdom, or chiefest act of all his doings, must needs be a mystery, and a marvellous work; but such is the work of our salvation by Jesus Christ, therefore it is mysterious and marvellous.

Arg. 3. That work which non-plusses all the wise men of the world, and is so hid from them, that their wisdom perishes and is confounded, is a marvellous thing; but the work of our redemption doth thus non-plus and confound the wisdom of the men of the world; therefore the work of redemption is a mystery, and very marvellous. "Therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work, and a wonder among the people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent men shall be hid," Isa. xxix. 14.

Arg. 4. That work, art, or mystery, which the most knowing, and the greatest artists who study it, confess is so deep, mysterious, or so great and marvellous, that they can arrive but to a small measure of the knowledge of it, after their uttermost search and pains, and diligence, is a great mystery, and very marvellous: but the work of redemption by Christ, the apostles themselves, who were the most knowing, and the greatest spiritual artists in this mystery, after their uttermost care, diligence, and search into it, confess they knew but little of it, or knew but in part; therefore redemption by Christ is a great mystery, and so very marvellous. "For now we see through a glass darkly," &c. "Now I know in part," &c., 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Arg. 5. That which both angels and saints too greatly wonder at, and count a marvellous thing, is very mysterious and marvellous; but both the angels and saints too greatly wonder at, and count the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ a marvellous thing; therefore the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ is very mysterious and marvellous. "He was seen of angels," 1 Tit. iii. 16, that is, with wonderment. "Which things the angels desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 12. The word signifies, a bowing down the head, a stooping to pry or look into, as they cannot fully understand, but admire at. And then as to the saints, my text saith, "It is marvellous in our eyes."

Arg. 6. That work which no man can understand, know, or rightly conceive of, unless it be made known to him by Christ through the influences of the Spirit, in a supernatural way, is a great mystery, and very marvellous: but no man can understand, know, or rightly conceive of the mystery of Christ, the faith of Christ, or redemption by Christ, but by the influences of the Spirit in a supernatural way; therefore these things are mysterious, and very marvellous. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," Matt. xi. 27. As all saving knowledge of the Father is through Christ, so the knowledge of Christ the wise and prudent know not, nor any but such that Christ by his Spirit reveals the knowledge of these mysteries unto. "It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," &c.

Arg. 7. That thing, or glorious design which the holy God saw necessary (it being so deep a mystery) in manifold ways and methods gradually to reveal and make known to the sons of men, must needs be very mysterious: but our

The apostles confessed they knew but little, or in part, the mystery of redemption.

Angels and saints admire the mystery of our redemption.

No man can know the mysteries of the gospel, but by the supernatural revelation of the Spirit.

God made use of manifold ways to

redemption by Jesus Christ God saw necessary (it being so deep a mystery) in manifold ways and methods to reveal or make known to the sons of men; *ergo*, it is very mysterious, &c. How was it first made known by promises, then by types, and then by sacrifices, offerings for sin, and also by prophecies, even many ways, and by many gradations, though the clearest manifestation of it is by the gospel? and in that also God is pleased to make use not only of the word but of the sacraments, that we might be better able to understand and conceive of it: but after all, the Spirit must reveal these mysteries to us, or else in a saving manner we cannot know them; and when we do so know them, we still stand and wonder, and cry out, "It is marvellous in our eyes." Hence the apostles, to whom it was revealed, laboured "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which was hid in God; who created all things by Christ Jesus, to the intent, that now unto the principalities, and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God," Eph. iii. 9, 10.

reveal the mystery of our redemption.

Arg. 8. That work, that love, that wisdom which the glorified saints shall admire, when Christ personally appears, and to all eternity, must needs be a mysterious thing, and very marvellous; but the glorified saints, when Christ comes, and to all eternity, shall admire at this work, this love, and at this wisdom; therefore it is a mysterious thing, and very marvellous. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," 2 Thess. i. 10.

Arg. 9. That redemption-love, redemption-grace, is full of mystery, and is marvellous, may appear further, by considering the many mysteries and wonders contained therein.

Redemption-grace full of wonders.

(1.) Is it not a marvellous thing, that a woman should compass a man, as the Holy Ghost words it? "For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man," Jer. xxxi. 22. A woman that knew not a man, should conceive and bring forth a child; of her the Messiah shall be born, or in her formed and created, the body of Christ not being begotten by man, but created of God, yet of the flesh of the virgin: is not this "a new and marvellous thing," that a virgin should be a mother, and yet remain still a virgin? What, be the mother of him by whom she was created? Is it not above reason, though not above our faith, and so wonderful a thing, that he that made the world, should be born of a woman? In this, as one well observes, our Lord was the Antitype of Melchisedec, without father, as man, and without mother, as God.

(2.) Is it not a marvellous thing, that the "Ancient of days" should become a child of a day old; and that "he whose goings forth were of old, even from everlasting," should be born in time

The wonders of Christ's incarnation.

(3.) That blessedness itself should be brought under a curse for sinners, and vile rebels: "Christ was made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, through Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 13, 14.

(4.) That he that was the Heir of both worlds, Heir of all things, should be "laid in a manger; and that he who is God over all, should have "no where to lay his head."

(5.) Is it not a marvellous thing, that he that was so rich, that he in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, should become poor, and that through his poverty we are made rich?

(6.) That death should be vanquished and destroyed by death, and that we could not live, unless he that was God, as concerning the flesh should die? Is it not a marvellous thing, that the physician should die for his patient, and that unless he that was God died, man could not be healed; or that the blood of the Saviour should be shed, and applied to cure the wounds of the sinner? that a man should die, and yet by his own power raise himself again to life; or that he that was the Prince of life and glory, should be put to a contemptible and ignominious death?

(7.) Is it not a marvellous thing, that the offended God should give his only begotten Son to die for offending sinners, and that he that built heaven and earth should be laid for a Foundation for poor sinners to build upon? "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

He that built heaven and earth, is laid for a foundation to build his church.

(8.) Nay, and is it not a marvellous thing, that the divine Person of the Son of God should be united to the nature of man, or he assume to himself a real body, and human soul, and yet be but one Person? and that our nature should be exalted above the nature of angels, and that a man should be God's fellow, or equal to him, and sit at his right hand, angels, powers, and principalities made subject to him? nay, that he that is God should be a Man, and a man be the Most High God? For by means of the hypostatical union,

Man's nature exalted above the nature of angels.

the divine and human nature in Christ makes but one person; the Son of God did not take into union with his divine Person, the person of any man (who had a distinct subsistence of himself, in soul and body) but only the nature of man: for the human body and soul of Christ subsisted only in and by means of this divine Person being hypostatically united to it. So as the soul of man is the vital principle of his body, and an essential of the man; so the divine Person of the Son of God is the vital principle of the whole human nature, and an essential part of the true Christ; the human nature never subsisted, nor could, without the divine nature and Person of the Son of God so united to it: "and this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

Such that followed after righteousness obtained it not. (9.) Is it not a marvellous thing, that those that followed after righteousness, should not attain to righteousness, and such that followed not after righteousness, but were wicked and ungodly, should attain to the righteousness which is by faith?

But how comes this about, that the righteous Jews and Pharisees attained not to righteousness? the apostle answers, "Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone: as it is written, behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone, a rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed," Rom. ix, 32, 33. They sought it as it were by the works of the law, or by their own works of obedience (as many do now) and not by Christ's righteousness, as it is received by faith alone.

The wonders of justification. (10.) Is it not a marvellous thing, that a vile sinner that hath no righteousness of his own, should be made righteous, by the righteousness of another imputed to him? And is it not a greater wonder (since the holy God hath so clearly, in his word, revealed that this is so) that so many men, who pretend to be men of wisdom, reason, and learning, should not give credit to, nor believe this divine testimony, but account this foolishness, and seek (as the Jews did) to be justified by their own works, faith, and obedience?

The wonders of faith. (11.) Is it not a marvellous thing, that a sinner must believe unto righteousness, i. e., to believe he hath that righteousness put upon him, which he hath not inherent in him, or that the righteousness of one man, or his robe, should be the righteousness and robe to cover many thousands? yea, to believe, when every thing seems to be against it, and to see no more reason it should be so, than Abraham had to believe Sarah should conceive with child, when she was old and past bearing children? or to believe in hope against hope, or such things that are above common human reason, and utterly impossible, and contrary to sense? yea, and to believe when we neither see nor feel, but only act, in believing by a divine Spirit, not doubting of the testimony and revelation God hath given of these things? "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in men's eyes."

The effects and operations of grace are marvellous. Lastly, the effects and operations of grace are also marvellous, viz., that God should make men wise, by teaching them to become fools, or showing them that is folly they count great wisdom, and that the way to live is to die, and the way to see is to be made blind, and the way to be rich is to be made poor, and the way to honour is to be abased, and the way to be exalted is to be humbled, and the way to have all things is to have nothing, and the way to the crown is by the cross. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

APPLICATION.

1. This reproves the men of reason, such who affirm, that there is nothing mysterious contained in Christ's gospel, or that which is above reason (we say it is not against reason) but if it be not above human reason to believe many things contained in the gospel, why doth the apostle say, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness?" &c. 1 Tim. iii. 16. True, it is not above divine reason, or the actings of faith; for it is not reasonable we should believe what the blessed God reveals and bears testimony to the truth of, though we cannot give a natural demonstration how such and such things should be so.

2. Let none think it is easy to understand or comprehend the great mysteries of the gospel, and of the Christian religion; nor contemn it, because they cannot comprehend those mysteries by their natural reason.

3. What I have said may also stir us all up to labour after the saving knowledge of these gospel mysteries, and to say with the apostle, "I determined not to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 1. And not to regard any wo-

tions, any arts or sciences, learning or languages, in comparison of Christ, and him crucified; and to condemn all the men of reason, with all their vain flourishes and philosophical principles, by which they strive to ridicule and cast reproach upon the holy doctrine of Christ and his apostles.

4. Let them likewise take heed they do not slight and despise the infinite wisdom, love, and goodness of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, lest they raise the wonder, for what is or can be more marvellous than to see men condemn and utterly reject this unutterable gift and grace of God, and refuse to build upon Jesus Christ, and reject this chief Corner-stone? Dare any slight this love, this marvellous love, or reject this Christ, this precious Jesus? What will become of such, that so do, in the end? and who can wonder at their just deserved damnation?

5. But let none of us be wise in our own conceit, or one think we know anything as we ought to know, since the mighty apostle knew but in part. But let us all say, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways are past finding out!" Can men trace the Almighty, or find out the reason of his doings! Is he only to be considered as a Rector, and not as a Sovereign Benefactor, that distributes his favours and gifts of grace as seemeth good in his own eyes? What if he will be found of them that sought him not, and cast off such who did not duly seek him, and make the fruitful womb barren, and she that had no husband (but was barren) to be the mother of many children? "Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea," Job xi. 7, 8, 9.

6. This may serve also to discover what a vast difference there is betwixt a true believer, and a graceless sinner. (1.) The one believes and adores the manifold wisdom of God; a believer makes that an article of his faith and steadfast belief, which his senses and natural reason cannot see nor comprehend. And though he cannot as yet reach to a full knowledge of those great debts, yet he prys into them, and acknowledges his ignorance, and questions not the truth of the divine revelation thereof. But the antichristian and graceless sinner, because these things are such as his carnal reason cannot comprehend, he judges them foolish, as well as the preaching of a crucified Christ was to the learned Greeks of old, and so stumbles upon this stumbling-stone, instead of building on it, and expecting to be saved alone by him. "I have written to him the great things of my law, and they were counted strange things," Hos. viii. 12; that is, things not to be believed nor regarded, but to be esteemed as idle stories. Some of this sort cannot believe that sin is so evil a thing, or the greatest plague of all plagues; but it is looked upon a small matter by them. Moreover, they cannot see how Christ should be the most desirable and most amiable object in heaven or earth: no, they see no beauty, no comeliness in him to desire him; they cannot believe that there should be so much sweetness, peace, joy, delight, and satisfaction in the ways of God, nor in the enjoyment of God's favour, and the light of his countenance.

Question. But what may be the cause or reason why some men ridicule, slight, and condemn these mysteries, and count them as idle stories, mere fictions and dreams of men's imaginations?

Ans. 1. It is because the devil, the god of this world, hath blinded their minds; they are deceived and led away by Satan's delusions: many of them being left of God, are given up to believe a lie.

2. These things are counted strange things, nay, foolishness to them that perish, because they are without the Holy Spirit, by which these things are only seen and discerned; they having no other spirit in them, save the spirit of mere natural men.

3. Because these things suit not with that legal covenant and covenant-principles, which they (and all mere natural men) are born under: and as they agree not with the covenant of works, so they neither suit nor agree with the pride of their carnal hearts, the gospel wholly striking at the root and foundation of all they build upon, debasing man to the very dust.

4. Because the mysteries of the gospel, its light, principles, precepts and worship, are directly contrary to, or quite differ from the religious, ways, and worship of the world. If a man of another nation comes into a kingdom or city, which hath other habits or garbs of a quite different fashion, how is he gazed on, and wondered at! Thus how was Joshua the high-priest, and those with him admired! "Hear now, O Joshua the high-priest,

The difference between a believer and an ungodly sinner.

1 Cor. i. 23.

2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

Why the gospel is counted a strange thing by some men.

thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men wondered at: for behold I will bring forth my servant the Branch," Zech. iii. 8. What, build such a temple, be at such pains, such expense, run such hazard, and expect no secular advantage! this the ignorant and unbelieving Jews wondered at: and so it is now. What, build all your hopes of heaven upon a man that was crucified, upon his obedience, upon his death, one that was so mean and contemptible in the eyes of the world; and throw away that that was gain to you, and be exposed to a thousand sorrows and difficulties in the world besides? God here intimates, that like as Joshua was wondered at, who erected the type (I mean the material temple) so when Christ the branch came, he would be much more wondered at. "I and the children thou hast given me, are for signs and wonders in Israel," Isa. viii. 18.

Sirs, they who only seek to establish natural religion, because they cannot comprehend the gospel mysteries, do count them strange and idol stories: though I must confess I much wonder also that some Christians, who have much greater light and better principles, should wonder at any part of moral and natural religion, and cast contempt upon it; I mean that of singing the praises of God. But no more as to that here.

"And to close, O cry with David, open my eyes, that I may behold the wonderful things of thy law," Psal. cxix. 18.

SERMON XXXIV.

Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, Matt. xxi. 42.

I HAVE opened every part of this parable, and have prosecuted one or two propositions from hence.

The church of the Jews I showed you were principally meant by this vineyard, who brought not forth the fruit thereof; and "therefore (saith our Lord) the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and be given to another nation bringing forth the fruit thereof," Ver. 43. From whence observe,

Doct. 3. That a people may sin away the kingdom of heaven, both the gospel, and gospel church-state, and all the blessings thereof.

I. I shall, in speaking unto this point of doctrine, lay down two or three explanatory propositions.

II. Prove the doctrine.

III. Prove the kingdom of God is the greatest loss.

IV. Show what sins must endanger the losing the kingdom of God.

V. Apply it.

The gospel shall abide to the end of the world.

Prop. 1. The gospel shall never be utterly removed out of the world, though it may be taken away from this or that nation, or from this or that people (there is no need to give you proofs of this), the gospel hath been continued, and shall be continued to one nation or another, and shall be "preached to all the world before the end comes," Matt. xxiv. 14.

The invisible church is never taken away.

Prop. 2. That the universal or invisible church cannot be removed or taken away: that it is built upon a rock, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. "Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world," Matt. xvi. 18; Matt. xxviii. 20.

Prop. 3. That it is not for every small declension, nor for some degrees of barrenness, for which God takes away the gospel and the kingdom of God from a people; neither is he soon provoked to do it. We read of great sins and decays in some gospel churches, and yet their candlesticks were not soon removed, Rev. 2, and 3 chap. But,

H. That the kingdom of God, or a visible church-state, may be lost or taken away from a people.

A particular people or nation may lose the kingdom of God.

1. The Jews had the kingdom of God with them; but at last it was utterly taken away from them; they lost it, and are without it to this day; they were God's visible church; they had all the legal ordinances and statutes committed to them; after which they had the highest gospel privileges that ever any had, they had the personal presence and ministry of Jesus Christ afforded them; they had the extraordinary apostles, and extraordinary gifts and mi-

ni-

rales among them, and gospel churches; and yet they sinned away the gospel. Indeed the legal church-state could not properly be said to be sinned away, because the date of its standing was expired, and that could not abide longer (it being a typical church) when the anti-type of it was come, that ceased. No, it was the gospel and gospel church that was taken from them.

2. The seven churches in Asia are another proof of this proposition. Alas, what are become of those famous churches? In those very places and nations where the kingdom of God once was, and where those churches once flourished, is now nothing but thick darkness, nothing but barbarism and Mahometan deformity, and the blasphemous Alean instead of the sacred gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. I shall prove that the loss of the gospel and kingdom of God is the greatest loss a people or nation can suffer.

1. Because the gospel of Christ is the chiefest treasure that any people can be intrusted with or possess: for is God the chiefest of beings? and is Christ the chiefest of blessings? Why then, pray consider, the gospel hath the ever-blessed God in it; where the gospel comes, God comes. Moreover, the gospel hath Christ in it, Christ is the subject, and the sum, and substance of the gospel. True, men may have God as a Creator, and as a Preserver, who have not the gospel; and they may have God also as a just Judge, a God to condemn them, but no God as a Redeemer, or as a Father; no, those blessings come by Christ alone, and are enjoyed in and by the gospel, the gospel is the field where our chiefest treasure lies hid.

The gospel is the chiefest treasure.

2. Is the sun, my brethren, the chiefest blessing of this world, or of this nether creation? yea, doubtless you will say it is so. Why then know, the gospel is the great light of the world; where there is no gospel, there is nothing but dismal spiritual darkness. Jesus Christ is indeed the Sun, our spiritual Sun: all light is from him, and the church is that firmament in which the sun of righteousness is fixed; and when the firmament is vanquished, the sun is vanquished also. "Their sun," saith the prophet, "shall go down no more," &c. That is a promise to the church in the last days; but of what church can that be said that is in being now? God threatens a people that their sun shall go down at noon. If light is sweet, and the choicest of blessings, then to be utterly deprived of light is the greatest loss or the sorest judgment: but what is natural light to spiritual light, or the natural sun to the Sun of righteousness?

The gospel is our sun to give us light.

3. Is rain a great blessing, and to be utterly deprived of it a dismal judgment? Why then pray consider, the gospel is the heavenly rain; "My doctrine shall drop as the rain," Deut. xxxii. 2. Ministers are compared to clouds; but woe to that nation to whom God shall say, "I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it any more," Isa. v. 6. Without rain how dry, barren, and unfruitful is the earth? So without the divine rain, how barren and unfruitful are our souls? It is the gospel-rain that softens our hard hearts, and that causes us to bring forth fruit unto God.

The word of God is the spiritual rain.

4. Is the saving knowledge of God a great blessing, and the way of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ? O then what a blessing is the ministry by gospel? for it is thereby that we come to know in a saving manner the holy God, or God in Christ. How destitute are the Heathen and Pagan nations of the way of salvation? They know nothing of Jesus Christ: they may know there is a God by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; but they know not what a just, a holy, a good, gracious, and a merciful God, God is; nor how sin came into the world; neither how hateful it is to God, and how contrary it is to his pure nature, nor what an estate man is in thereby; nor the way by which the justice of God is satisfied, his wrath appeased, and he reconciled unto poor sinners. These things are only known by the revelation of the gospel, and such who have not the dispensation thereof are wholly in darkness, and ignorant of these things. "These things are written, that ye may know that Jesus is the Christ, and in believing ye might have life through his name," Johu xx. 31. Therefore to lose the gospel, or to have the kingdom of God taken away from a people, must needs be the greatest loss.

No saving knowledge of God without the gospel.

5. The gospel is the mighty arm of God, or an instrument of his power to the salvation of all that believe on Jesus Christ. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed," Rom. i. 16, 17, &c. Where no gospel is preached, the power of God is not revealed,

The gospel is the power of God.

nor the righteousness of God made known, nor the means of faith in Christ. "Can men believe on him of whom they have not heard?" Rom. x. 11. Faith cometh by hearing the word of God preached; but when the gospel goes from a people, they lose the instrument of God's power, and the ordinary means he hath ordained to work faith in the souls of sinners, and therefore this is the greatest loss.

6. The loss of the gospel, or taking away of the kingdom of heaven, is the greatest loss, because it is a soul-loss, or the greatest judgment. God may bring the sword, the plague, or famine upon a nation, and yet that people may be happy still, and abide still the people of God: how dreadful was that famine and judgment, when the women Lam. iv. 10. did boil and eat their own children? but such a famine, such a judgment, is but small to a spiritual famine; a famine of the word which they feel, who have the kingdom of God taken away from them. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord." And what dreadful words are, these, "they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." "From the north to the east:" we are in the north, and it looks as if the north shall lose the gospel and some will go into the east, hoping to find it there, where it first began to shine forth, but all in vain: what a loss is it when people have a craving appetite, and hunger after bread, and are ready to faint and die, but can find no bread, no food to sustain their perishing souls.

7. The loss of the gospel or kingdom of God is the greatest loss, because when the gospel goes, God goes, and Christ goes, and all spiritual good, and divine blessings are taken away from that people; "and woe to them when I depart!" 1 Sam. iv. 21. Such may cry, Iehabod, the glory is departed, and also may say with the church of old, "the crown is fallen from our heads, woe to us that we have sinned;" Lam. v. 16. The gospel is the symbol of God's presence, and when he departs, fearful judgments succeed and break in upon that people.

The removing the gospel a sign of God's dreadful wrath to a people.

8. The taking away the kingdom of God is a sign of God's direful wrath and vengeance on a people, and that he hath left them utterly to blindness of mind, and to hardness of heart. When the gospel was taken away from the unbelieving Jews, it is said, "wrath came upon them to the uttermost."

IV. For what sins does God take away the gospel from a nation or people?

Unbelief causes God to remove the gospel.

Rom. x. 3

Ans. 1. For the sin of unbelief: this is the plague of plagues, no sin hath so much evil in it, as the sin of unbelief; it is a contempt of God's greatest love and divine goodness, it is a contradiction to the resolute and fixed will of God: unbelief is a disliking and despising of salvation by Christ, and a non-submission to the righteousness of God; nay, it is an affront put upon the holiness and justice of God, in setting forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin; it is a refusal of Christ, and a nullifying the work of his mediation. It is a contemning of his blood, as if it was shed

in vain, and chargeth God with cruelty in sacrificing his own Son, and Christ with folly in dying to save sinners. This is the evil of unbelief in those men's hearts, who believe not the revelation of the gospel, but magnify natural religion above that religion and way of salvation revealed in the gospel; it is indeed to affirm the sacred gospel to be a mere feigned story, consisting of lies and falsehood; therefore it is no marvel that God for this sin takes away the gospel from such a wicked and unbelieving people.

For apostasy God removes the gospel.

Ans. 2. Another sin for which God takes away the gospel and kingdom of God

is apostasy, when a people depart from the true apostolical faith, and embrace errors, heresies, and superstitions. This was the cause why God took away the gospel and the church-state from the Romish church. What a glorious church was that which was at Rome, in the primitive time! but in process of time they departed from the true and ancient faith; and through that great and general apostasy Christ left them, and the gospel and kingdom of heaven was taken from them, and they became the kingdom of Satan and a most abominable harlot, being called the whore that corrupteth the earth, and so remain to this day, being a people loathed and hated of God.

Decay in love to Christ may cause it.

3. For decaying in love to God, and one to another, leaving off their first works. Pray observe, that for those sins which Christ threatens a people, to take away their candle-stick if they repent not; those very sins cause him to do it, *i. e.* to take the kingdom of God from them: but for leaving first love, and declining in zeal and holiness, Christ threatened to remove the church of Ephesus. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or I will remove thy candle-stick out of his place, except thou repent," Rev. ii. 5. Ergo. God may remove his

gospel and kingdom from a people, for waxing cold and carnal, though they do not utterly apostatize from the true faith of the gospel, but retain the truth firm in the notion of it.

4. When a people grow weary of the gospel, either upon the consideration of the strictness of the doctrine, or discipline thereof, or because of the charge and burden of it, they are not willing to be at the cost and pains of bearing up the church-state, nor in supporting the ministry. "Ye have said also, behold, what weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye have brought that which was torn and lame, and the sick," &c., Mal. i. 13. They thought the worst they had, good enough to give to the Lord, or a small matter, the halt and the lame, &c., and not the male of their flock. So when a people, through covetousness, will part with but little to support the house of God, God may take the gospel from them. See how he threatened this people for this sin and great wickedness, "Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces," &c. Mal. ii. 3. "Ye are departed out of the way, ye have caused many to stumble," &c. The people of Israel grew weary of the heavenly manna, and counted it light bread. Sirs, This is a God proving evil, *i. e.*, when the word is slighted and contemned, and men prefer the world above it, and grow weary of it.

5. When a people bring not forth that fruit God expecteth from them, but instead of bringing forth grapes, they bring forth wild grapes. "And when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes. And now go to, I will tell you what I will do with my vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down," &c., Isa. v. 4, 5. That is, I will utterly forsake them, and lay my vineyard waste. Lukewarmness and barrenness, if continued in, will cause the Lord to spue a people out of his mouth, as he threatened the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 16. So here. "Therefore shall the kingdom of heaven be taken from you," &c.

APPLICATION.

1st. From hence I infer, that ignorance of the worth of the gospel is an abominable evil, many know not what a prize they have in their hand; and God may therefore let such know the worth of the gospel, by the want of it. He knows how to raise this price and esteem of spiritual blessings. How little is plenty of bread, after a long time enjoyed, valued! but when famine comes, O how is the coarsest corn prized! We are full fed, but I fear are grown wanton, and weary of the heavenly manna.

2ndly. Let us learn from hence, to fear this dismal judgment, *viz.*, the loss not only of our liberty, but of the gospel itself, being unchurched, or utterly left of God. Consider these few things following.

1. Hath the Lord given us a lease of the gospel, or hath he promised us that he will never take away the kingdom of God from us? No, we have no lease, nor any such promise, and therefore let us fear lest our sins strip us of all these spiritual and good things which we now enjoy.

Sad signs of approaching judgments on this nation.

2. Did not God some few years ago shew us what he could do? and was not the gospel in our own apprehension near gone, or going? O what fears then filled our souls? well, but he soon scattered those fears, and in a marvellous way appeared for us, and hath given us such a time of liberty, that perhaps no nation for many years had the like: but have we thankfully improved these signal blessings? alas no, but are become certainly more dead, cold, and carnal than ever.

3. Consider what hath befallen our neighbour nation, I mean the people of God there: have you not heard, nor read, what carnality, deadness, and formality was among our protestant brethren in France, just before God took away the gospel from them, and gave them up to the wild-beast of the forest? O what contentions and divisions were among them? and how was the life and power of religion gone? and is it not as bad, or worse now at this very time with us, than it was with them?

Consider, (1.) What errors and heresies are amongst us; can any people or age parallel the like? was ever the blessed Jesus more dragged, and trodden under the feet of vile mortals? how is his holy and sacred person contemned, his Godhead impudently denied by many, both by public preaching, and books printed and published.

(2.) Nay how is all revealed religion despised, and natural religion magnified, as sufficient to bring men to happiness? was the sacred Bible ever in any nation had in contempt and ridiculed, as it is at this very time, in this city and nation?

(3.) Nay, did Atheism ever so abound amongst any people, as it does here and what multitudes are corrupted and paganized (as I may say) already, though done in a secret and satanical manner, by diabolical craft and subtilty?

(4.) Was ever sodomy so common in a Christian nation, or so notoriously and frequently committed, as by too palpable evidences it appears to be, in and about this city, notwithstanding the clear light of the gospel which shines therein, and the great pains taken to reform the grand and abominable profaneness that abounds? is it not a wonder the patience of God hath not consumed us in his wrath, before this time? was ever swearing, blasphemy, whoring, drunkenness, gluttony, self-love, and cursed covetousness at such a height, or abounding to such a degree, as at this time here? were there ever such unnatural monsters known, who to enrich themselves, care not how they ruin the whole land, and the trade thereof, notwithstanding all the laws made to restrain and curb their hellish practices.

(5.) And amongst professors, was pride and earthly mindedness ever known to abound among any religious people, as at this day they do here? or were there ever greater divisions, or contentions heard of among a people professing Christianity? or were ever the faithful ministers of Christ more slighted, despised, and trod upon, or more neglected, at least some of them, as they are here, and in many parts and places of this nation? was there ever among any people, clearer and more powerful preaching, and fewer converts, or less practice of true godliness? What spiritual blindness, and hardness of heart, and damnable heresies, are multitudes left, or given up to? And also are not a greater number carried away with a strange giddiness in their heads, who run after, and cry up foolish and non-sensical notions, as if they loved husks and mere chaff, better than the pure milk of the word, and the sound and orthodox doctrine thereof, whilst a multitude of others only please themselves with the form and shell of godliness, without the power thereof?

(6.) Is not that little heat, life, and divine power which now attends the word, a sad symptom that our sun is going down, and that the shadows of the evening are drawn long upon us?

(7.) In a word, was any people ever known to be so unholy, unfruitful, and barren, who had such fruitful showers, and fruitful seasons, and so long together as we, who live in and about this city and nation, have had, and still have? Now all these things being considered, and laid to heart, may we not fear the kingdom of God may be taken from us, and given to another nation, bringing forth the fruit thereof?

Lastly, what a multitude of able ministers hath the Lord taken away in a few years past? and how few are raised up in their stead, with their spirit? Certainly this is a dismal sign, that God is about to remove the gospel from us: "When the Lord gives out his word, great is the company of them that publish it," Psal. lxxviii. 11. But when he takes them away, what may we expect? It is observed by worthy writers, that when God removeth his most eminent servants, fearful judgments soon were let in upon that people, among whom they had preached.

4. Since the gospel is so great a blessing, and the removal of it so sore a judgment, let us praise the Lord we have it yet continued to us: how few nations have it? and amongst those few, how few enjoy it in such a clear and glorious ministration as we have of it? It may be said of God's Israel in England, as of that of old, "Happy art thou (O England) who is like unto thee? a people saved by the Lord, who is the sword of his excellency," &c., Deut. xxxiii. 29. O that our sun might never go down any more; sad will it be with us, if on a sudden darkness should cover us, and our day be turned into night.

5. This may awaken sinners to cry to the Lord, to enlighten their dark minds; what, shall any abide in darkness whilst the sun shines in such a bright and glorious manner? if the gospel goes not but remains, and still shines brighter and brighter, yet it is all one to you who are blind, and so unconcerned, that you cry not to have your eyes opened: the Spirit of God only can do this, and therefore see you do not resist the Holy Ghost, nor sin away all his blessed motions, and soul-enlightening influences, until he will strive with you no more.

6. Let us all learn by what hath been said, to prize and improve the gospel while we have it. Let us say with our blessed Lord "I must work while it is day, the night comes when no man can work," John ix. 4. Should England be humbled for its sins, and God's people reform their ways, and improve the gospel, and the gospel-seasons; may be God will not deprive us of it, but forgive our sins, and heal the land; the only way is to consider how we are fallen, and repent, and do our first works, lest God remove our candlestick out of its place. Sirs, as one observes, the eclipse of the gospel is a greater loss and judgment, than the loss of our trade, the massacring of our wives and children, or chains of slavery and captivity a thousand times: we had better have our childrens' brains

dashed against the walls, our houses burned, and our substance taken away, than for God to take the gospel from us. What a dolesome land would this be, should our enemies prevail, and popery be let in upon us? The glory of England lies in the gospel, in this it excels all nations of the earth; and when the gospel goes, our strength and glory goes also: it is likewise (as one observes) the ornament and honour of that nation or kingdom where it is; and if it be removed from this nation, what can we think, but that God designs the utter ruin and destruction of it? Moreover, should God take away the gospel, it may never be restored to us again any more; O what a long night would England then see! and yet should it be so, there may great light break forth in other nations, who have long sat in darkness: O how long hath Asia (where the seven churches were once planted) been without the gospel!

Lastly, let us all cry to God night and day, and plead with him, that he would not take the kingdom of God from England, nor send a famine among us, though we may fear it; for what a multitude are there here who hate the gospel, and the true worship of God, and strive to promote errors, and damnable heresies, and popish rites and superstitions also! nay, such we have in our bowels, who had rather popery was let in among us, than part with their errors and false ways, or rather than the purity of the gospel, and gospel-worship should spread amongst us, to the vanquishing of all their notions and idols. O cry that God would not depart from us, but yet dwell in our land, that it may remain a land of vision!

THE

PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER.

SERMON XXXV.

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, who went early to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.—Matt. xx. 16.

THE evangelist Matthew has only recorded this parable, the occasion of which seems to be from what was said in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, viz., “but many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.” The Jews who were first called into covenant, and a church-relation with God, shall be cast off, and the Gentiles shall have that great privilege allowed them, and have the preference of the Jews; yet when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, the Jews who were first shall be called, and so the first will be last.

The chief design of our Saviour in this parable appears to me as followeth.

1. To discover the early love God showed to the people of Israel, in choosing and constituting them his visible church, or before any other people in the world.

The chief design of this parable.

2. To discover the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles.

3. To show that those whom God calleth into his vineyard, he expecteth faithful service of, to the glory of his rich grace.

4. To let all men know, that salvation is not of merit, or by works, but of grace, and that God acts towards his creatures alone from his own sovereignty; he that laboured but one hour, had the same reward with those who had borne the burden and heat of the day, and wrought twelve hours.

5. To show the evil and envious temper of the Jews and Pharisees towards the Gentiles; God calling the Gentiles to equal privileges at the latter end of the world with them, which seemed much to disturb their haughty and proud spirits.

2ndly. I shall endeavour to explain the several parts with the greatest care possible, according to that small light and knowledge received (though some hint as if the scope

only of this parable ought to be attended, and no particular exposition given of the several parts, of which they give no reason.)

The parts explained. "The kingdom of heaven is like," &c.

The kingdom of heaven may mean the sovereign dispensation of God's favours, or those blessings and privileges bestowed upon the sons of men, particularly in calling whom he pleaseth into his visible church, to labour therein.

"Is like unto a man that is an householder."

The man refers to the great God (who is sometimes compared to an householder, and sometimes to an husbandman) his household is large, the whole world being his, and he provides for them all. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," Psal. xxiv. 1.

"Who went early in the morning to hire labourers into the vineyard."

By the Lord's going early in the morning to hire labourers, I understand is meant, his calling the Jews in the early age of the world, the vineyard of the Lord then, was the Jewish church. "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, is the house of Israel," &c. Isa. v. 7.

"To hire labourers."

Some would have our Lord refer here only to the Jews, under the dispensation of the law, that they had heaven promised them, on the condition of works of obedience, and the Gentiles only in a way of free-grace; but certainly this is an error, or a great mistake, for the way of salvation under the law and gospel, both to the Jews and Gentiles, is one and the same, being wholly of free-grace, through Je-sus Christ. The covenant of works, it is true, was a conditional covenant; do this and live. But the law was not given on Mount

What meant by hiring of servants. Sinai, to give life and salvation to the Jews, but rather to show how impossible it was for fallen man by the law to obtain eternal life. Therefore by hiring, here I understand nothing is more intended, but God's free promise of grace and glory, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to all that believe in him, and faithfully serve him; and he that accepts of God's call upon the terms of free-grace, may be said to be hired; for if it were such an hiring as the papists, and some others talk of, then salvation, as Paul shows, is of works, and not alone of grace. "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," Rom. iv. 4.

"When he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into the vineyard," ver. 2.

By labourers, as some signify, may principally be meant eminent persons, as the priests under the law, and ministers under the gospel; but I rather conclude, that our Lord means all persons who are called, and accept of that call, to work in his vineyard; and as to such he may be said to have agreed with them, they accepting of the terms propounded, either sincerely, or at least in show or appearance; for many are called who are not chosen, so not sincere persons.

"And he went out about the third hour, and saw others stand idle in the market-place."

As God was said to go out early in the morning to hire labourers, which may refer to the beginning of the Jewish church in Abraham's day; so the third, the sixth, the ninth hours, may refer to the succeeding times, in the days of Moses and the prophets.

Moreover, some think that our Saviour by the third hour, means such that are called in the morning of their days; and those at the sixth hour such who are called about the noon or middle of their days, and such at the ninth in their elder age; and the eleventh hour refers to such that are not called until old age, when they are just ready to go out of the world, but I do not think that this is directly and primarily intended here.

"And about the eleventh hour he went and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, why do ye stand here all the day idle?" ver. 6.

"And they said, because no man hath hired us; and he said unto them, go into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right that shall ye have," ver. 7.

Who are meant by them called at the eleventh hour. The calling these at the eleventh hour (all expositors, I think, generally conclude) refers to the calling of the Gentiles at the closing, or evening of the days of the Jewish church-state: the latter days, or the evening of days, not that the Gentiles were called into the Jewish church, no, but into the gospel church, the date or standing of the first being expired: and indeed the Gentiles, until the gospel-dispensation came in, might say, God, had not hired them; that is, had not called or offered grace to them, nor ever received them to be a distinct church; but then they were hired, called, and accepted as labourers in the gospel vineyard, and partook of equal privileges with the Jews that believed. "That the Gentiles should be fel-

low-hires, and of the same body, and partake of his promise in Christ by the gospel," Eph. ii. 6.

"So when even was come, the Lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first," ver. 8.

"And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny," ver. 9.

"But when the first came, they supposed that they should receive more, and they likewise received every man a penny," ver. 10.

It is concluded our Saviour in this parable alludes to the common hire that was given to labourers by the Jews; in those days, the Latin for a penny; as Marlorate notes, was Denarius, which is a kind of Roman coin, worth a groat; that is, (saith he) three French shillings and sixpence, as Gulielmus Budæus supposeth; and it is likely this was the reward of those times of a day's labour. My brethren, as you have often heard that parables run not always on all-four, but that there is oftentimes great disparity; so let none think that murmuring Jews received the same penny with gracious gospel-believers; for as there is a vast difference in the nature or quality of the talents, Matt. xxv., (as I shall show, God assisting) as well as in respect to the quantity of them; so also there is in respect of the penny here mentioned, (which the first labourers are said to receive,) and that which the last received; and for want of considering this, some run into great mistakes and errors.

The penny may not be the same in kind or quality.

My brethren, the Jews had their penny, or that which God promised them, viz., their legal and external privileges, the land of Canaan, and all the outward blessings of that legal covenant God made with Abraham, and his natural seed as such; yet they that believed (amongst the Jews,) received the same spiritual blessings, even free justification and eternal life, which was the same, and not more than the Gentiles had; but none of this sort of them murmured at the rich bounty of God to the poor Gentiles.

"And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, these last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal with us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day," ver. 11, 12.

If by the penny, our Saviour refers to rewards above, then (as I said) the penny cannot be the same in kind; for the unbelieving, murmuring Jews had not eternal life, but fell short of that; but if it refers to gospel-privileges, or the blessings of grace, they were offered to both Jews and Gentiles alike, though first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. But the Jews, when their Messiah came, expected more than Christ offered to them, namely, a deliverance from all their external enemies, and great glory and prosperity in this world; but when they saw Christ would give no more to them (that had been his covenant-people a long time,) than he gave to the Gentiles, they murmured. But I conceive, that the main design of our Lord should chiefly be minded in these words, which was to show, that the unbelieving Jews were not contented with what the Lord had given to them, or offered to give them, nor with that favour, grace, and bounty he showed to the Gentiles.

"But he answered one of them, and said, friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny?" ver. 13.

Did I promise thee more than what I have given thee, or do not offer to give thee? Thou knowest the terms which were proposed to thee in the covenant I made with thy fathers. I have done thee no wrong, I am not worse than my word. My brethren, God performs the promises which he made to the Jews; and it was a hard case (since he had been so rich in his bounty and goodness to them) that they should be offended, and murmur at his goodness to the Gentiles.

"Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee," ver. 14.

These words are as a key, as I conclude, to open the mystery; for by those words it appears, the Lord turns these servants off, or out of his vineyard, without giving them more than they had.

The Jews not contented with their penny were rejected.

"Go thy way," I have done with thee, thou art an evil servant. It was for the sin of unbelief, and murmuring of the Jews, that God cast them off, they being not contented with what they had, nor was offered equally unto the Gentiles with them, viz., the spiritual blessings of grace, justification, pardon of sin, and eternal life.

"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thine eye evil, because mine is good?" ver. 15.

The blessed God vindicates himself in his just and righteous proceedings with the Jews two ways.

I. That he agreed with them for a penny, which perhaps may denote those external privileges and blessings they had, and the promise of Christ, whom he sent and first offered to

them; and for their rejecting of the Lord Jesus, he cast them off, or for their unbelief.

2. By showing that he may do what he pleaseth with his own, he being Master of his own favours; and therefore since he acts in a way of sovereignty, according to the good pleasure of his will, it is abominable for them to charge him with injustice in bestowing his bounty to others, or to whom he thinks good.

“So the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.” This shows that the Gentiles, who were last called into the vineyard should first in a most eminent manner enjoy the blessings of the gospel, with the free and rich grace, love, and bounty of God. And the Jews, that were first the peculiar people of God, and had the first offer of Christ, for their unbelief were cast off, and be the last that shall partake of the gospel-privileges, and of God’s special favours. “Blindness in part hath happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, then all Israel shall be saved.” &c. Rom. xi. 25.

“For many are called, but few are chosen,” ver. 16.

1. These words show that many who were called, hired, or received of the Jewish people into their visible church, and vineyard of God, were not chosen and approved of God.

All the Jewish nations were taken into that vineyard; “but though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet but a remnant shall be saved.”

And so also many who are hired or called of the Gentiles, and do partake of the outward privileges of the gospel church; yet but a few by God’s eternal decree of election are ordained to everlasting life. For as the first may refer to the Jews and Pharisees, who were a proud, confident, and conceited people, looking with disdain upon all others, and were but very few of them chosen; so the first may also refer to such as are proud and conceited, and self-confident people among us, looking upon themselves to be the only true church, and despised of others; yet those that they disdain, like as the Pharisees did the Publicans of old, may first and before them partake of God’s special blessings; for very few amongst the first sort in either sense may be chosen. “For not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.” 1 Cor. i. 26. 29. By things the apostle means persons, such as wise men count fools, and learned men count ignorant, and the honourable esteem base and contemptible creatures.

And having thus briefly opened all the several and distinct parts of this parable by way of exposition, I shall take notice of nine points of doctrine from some particular parts thereof.

Doct. 1. That the legal church of Israel, and gospel church also may fitly be, and are compared to a vineyard.

Doct. 2. That God hires all the labourers whom he brings unto his vineyard.

Doct. 3. That God hath some faithful servants or labourers in his vineyard.

Doct. 4. That is an abominable sin, for sinners to stand all the day long idle in the market-place.

Doct. 5. That God calls some into his vineyard early, even at the third hour, or in the morning of their days, and others not until old age.

Doct. 6. That no man shall lose any thing by being truly religious, or faithful labourers in God’s vineyard.

Doct. 7. That the Jews were not pleased with the blessings and favours God bestowed upon the Gentiles, but expected more than God was pleased to give them; and for their obstinacy, unbelief, and murmuring, they were rejected and turned off with their penny, and so shall be the last that partake of God’s gospel-blessings and favours.

Doct. 8. That God acts towards the children of men in a way of sovereignty, and gives his special grace and favours how and to whom he pleaseth.

Doct. 9. That many who are called or hired by the external preaching of the gospel, are not chosen to eternal life, nor approved of by the Lord.

I shall, God assisting, speak briefly to all or most of these propositions.

Doct. 1. That the legal and gospel-church also may be, and are compared to a vineyard.

Having in opening one or two parables, already showed how fitly the church of God may be compared to a vineyard, I shall be very short in speaking to this, and do little more than hint the general heads, by way of parallel.

1. A vineyard is a piece of ground taken out of a wilderness, or other common ground, designed by the owner thereof for some special use, both in respect of profit and pleasure: so the people of Israel, or the whole nation of the Jews, God severed or separated from all other people and nations of the world, to be a peculiar people to himself, and made them his visible church under the law. "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth," Deut. vii. 6, &c. But this being a typical church, it ceased when the antitype came, and then God severed a people out of that national church of the Jews, and out of the Gentile nations, to be his gospel-church, which consisted of holy and regenerated persons, though not taking any one particular nation, as a nation, into such a church-state (as he before did the nation or commonwealth of Israel) and from hence it appears, that the gospel-church, or churches, are not national, but congregational, all not consisting of the carnal seed of believers, but of the true spiritual seed.

In what respects the church may be compared to a vineyard,

2. A vineyard is walled or fenced in, to separate it from all other waste ground, and to secure it from beasts or other enemies, that otherwise might spoil it: so God hath fenced in, and secured his gospel-church from all enemies that may arise against it, to spoil and lay it waste from without. Every attribute of God, with his angels that encamp about his people, and also his special providence, is a wall, or walls of security to his church, together with his special constitution, and the peculiar discipline thereof.

The church fenced in, and how.

3. A vineyard is planted with choice plants, or sowed with precious seed: so the church consists of choice spiritual plants, and is sowed with the precious seed of divine grace. "The men of Israel are his pleasant plants," Isa. v. 7. "Hence called the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified," Isa. xvi. 3.

4. An owner of a vineyard employs under-workmen to plant, sow, and prune, and water it; so hath God under-workmen. "I have planted and Apollos hath watered," 1 Cor. iii. 6.

5. The ground of a vineyard is digged, dunged, and well manured, before it is planted: so is the vineyard of the Lord of hosts. "Break up the fallow ground of your hearts, and sow not among thorns," Hos. x. 12, &c. This is done by the special convictions of the Spirit. What said the vinedresser about the barren fig-tree; "I will dig about it, and dung it," &c.

See the parable of the barren fig-tree, in the 4th book.

Divers things are included in special convictions. (1.) A disquieting sense of sin, in respect of the guilt of it, with respect to the law of God, nature, and holiness of God, or that great evil that is in it, as it is opposite to God, and a resisting of his will. (2.) Great and bitter sorrow, not only for the guilt, but filth also that is in it. (3.) Terror of conscience, it pricks them at the heart, and its wounds are deep. (4.) A continual restlessness and longing after healing, pardon, ease, peace, &c. (5.) If they for a time go off, they certainly come on again, if they are the special convictions of the Spirit; and (6.) they end in convictions of righteousness.

6. In a vineyard are divers sorts of plants, some old, and some young, being newly planted, and some that flourish and grow exceedingly, and others that seem to decay; and some more, and others less fruitful: so in the church of God are some old and experienced Christians, and some that are babes in Christ; and some also grow in grace, grow in faith and love abundantly, and others, through Satan's temptations, the snares of this world, and the corruptions of their own hearts, seem to decay and wither in their souls, or flourish not for some time; but if right plants, they recover again, and bring forth much fruit to God; "they shall revive as the corn."

Divers sorts of plants in God's vineyard.

7. It is observed that some young trees, or branches, bear and bring forth more fruit than some old trees; so it is in Christ's vineyard, some young converts are more zealous, more humble, more spiritual, holy, and lively than many that have been a long time planted therein; yet not withstanding the promise is, that the "trees of the Lord shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourish; they that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God," Psal. xcii. 12, 13, 14.

8. A vineyard must be often watered, and needs pruning and dressing also; so must the vineyard of Christ, and therefore God causes showers to fall daily upon it, and makes the spiritual clouds likewise to distil dew and sweet rain upon it. "My doctrine shall drop as rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herbs, and as showers upon the earth," Deut. xxx. 2. And also the vineyard of Christ needs the pruning of God's rod, and mortification by the Spirit, and the careful discharge of holy discipline.

9. A vineyard is continually watched, lest any break in to spoil it, rob it, hurt or annoy it; so God is said to watch "his vineyard of red wine, both day and night, lest any hurt it," Isa. xxvii. 2. 3. He himself watcheth it, and he hath set his ministers upon its walls to watch it also. "The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right-hand. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, he shall preserve thy soul," Psal. cxxi. 5. 7.

No idle persons ought to be suffered in a vineyard, but all sent therein, as servants ought to labour: so in the vineyard of Christ, neither pastors nor people should be idle, but every one labour to promote the glory of God, and the good, comfort, peace, and well being of the church; and as it is grievous to the owner of the vineyard if he see it is barren, or doth not answer his cost, pains, and expectations, and it provokes him also, if it abides barren, to lay it waste; so the Lord was grieved for the barrenness of the vineyard of old. "Forty years long was I grieved with that generation. I looked it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. Go to, I will tell you what I will do with my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof; and it shall be trodden down, I will lay it waste," &c. Isa. v. 6. 7.

APPLICATION.

1. Admire God's distinguishing love, in choosing you, and separating you from the barren wilderness of this world, to be a peculiar people to himself. "For who maketh thee to differ from another?" &c., 1 Cor. iv. 7.

2. From hence we may infer, that the church and the world are distinct, and such as would confound them together may from hence be convinced of their ignorance and folly. "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed," Cant. iv. 12. "Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you," 2 Cor. vi. 17.

3. Wonder that God hath not laid his vineyard in England waste long before now, considering how barren it has been: O what hath he done to make us fruitful! but may he not say, "I looked it should bring forth grapes, and lo, it brought forth wild grapes?" We are planted in a fruitful hill, London; London and Bristol, what fruitful hills are you? what precious soil have you been? Canaan certainly never flowed with such milk and honey, as England doth: what a patient God have we? that the wild bear is not let in, and our strong wall broken down, and we laid waste?

4. Let us labour to become more fruitful, and so prove and demonstrate ourselves to be plants of God's right-hand planting: shall such an husbandman plant a vineyard, and graft us into such a vine, and afford us such fruitful seasons, and we after all bring forth no fruit to him? then we may expect to be taken away, or plucked up, as not being Matt. xv. 13. planted by the heavenly husbandman. The plants of God's planting are united to a fruitful stock, not only implanted in his vineyard, but into the true vine. Were we well rooted in faith and love, and better established and settled in the vineyard where we are planted, willing to bear and forbear one with another, and live in love, or were better united to one another, we should flourish more than we do.

But I shall proceed to the next proposition at another season.

SERMON XXXVI.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a man that went to hire labourers into his vineyard, &c.
—Matt. xx. 1.

Doct. 2. The blessed God hires all the labourers whom he brings into his vineyard. In speaking to this truth,

I. I shall show you what hiring here doth denote or signify, both negatively and positively.

II. Lay down several explanatory propositions about this hiring.

III. Show what may be contained in the penny or reward which God agrees to give to his faithful labourers in his vineyard.

IV. Apply it.

I. What hiring doth denote.

First. Negatively. It doth not denote or imply, that the labourers can procure merit, or deserve anything, or that penny which is here mentioned.

What being hired doth not denote.

1. Because the new or gospel covenant is not a conditional covenant, as the covenant of works was, which was given on Mount Sinai; for there was a mutual restitution between the Lord and the house of Israel, with promises of earthly blessings upon their obedience, and threatenings of God's displeasure for their disobedience. But the new covenant contains in it (as to us) only the free promise of God, for the sake of Christ, or upon his merits. "In thee shall the families of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 3; that is, in Christ all the elect shall be blessed with grace here, and glory hereafter. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jer. xxxi. 33. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh," &c., Ezek. xxxvi. 26. These are free and absolute promises; is there anything required of us, as a federal condition, which we must on our part perform, that we may receive these favours? No certainly, who will say there is?

2. It appears, the new covenant is not a conditional covenant as to us, (though Christ for us, in bringing of it in, was obliged to perform meriting and federal conditions) because it is positively said, that the new covenant is not according to the old: and as I conceive it is not according to it, chiefly in this respect. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they broke," &c.

Hiring doth not denote previous qualifications, and federal conditions by us to be performed.

Object. This only refers to the Jews, when they shall be called in the last days.

Ans. God forbid it should only refer to them; but (1.) As Mr. Pool well observes upon these words, the apostle's application of this very place of scripture to gospel saints, in Heb. viii., puts it out of doubt, that this promise refers to the gospel times, and so belongs to all the called of God, whether Jews or Gentiles. Again, Paul shows, that "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs of the same promises," Eph. ii. 13. (2.) Nor is it said to be new, or not according to the old, in respect of the notion of a Testament, for the old bore the same notion; nor (3.) because it was revealed after a new manner, &c., but because it was not primarily made between God and us, but between God the Father and God the Son, for us, and without any federal conditions, which the old consisted of; nor a promise of an earthly penny, or earthly promises, but is established upon better promises, viz., spiritual and heavenly promises, and only made to God's elect, not to them that believe, and to their fleshly seed as such, but only to God's elect seed. And in these respects it is not according to the old covenant made on Mount Sinai.

3. Because (as I have often said and proved) salvation is only of grace, even from the first to the last; it is God's free gift. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." See how the apostle varies in his expressions, death is the true and just hire of sin; sinners shall be paid their wages in doing the devil's work: but he doth not say (as one notes) that eternal life is the wages of our righteousness, but it is the gift of God. He varies the phrase on purpose to show, that we attain not eternal life by our own merits, or by our own works or worthiness, not that we deserve it as our just hire, for labouring in God's vineyard.

See our Annotations on this text.

4. Because was it our just due, as the reward of our work, or a due debt (as it is among men that are hired to work in a vineyard) we should have whereof to boast; but our salvation is of God's free grace; that all boasting might be excluded. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith." The apostle farther argues in the case from Abraham: "If Abraham was justified by works, he had whereof to glory, but not before God. For to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt," Rom. iv. 2; that is, works to that end, i. e., that he may be justified and saved for his own work, or for labouring in God's vineyard. Compare this with what our apostle saith in another place: "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Again he saith, "Not by works of righteousness, but according to his mercy he saveth us," &c., Tit. iii. 5. "Whosoever cometh to us, or we have by works, we have as a just debt, and not by grace. "If it be of grace, then it is not of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Rom. xi. 6.

We have nothing as a debt, but all of grace.

5. Hiring doth not denote desert, because the terms of the gospel are quite different

from the terms of the law. The terms of the law run thus: "He that doth these things shall live in them; or do this and thou shalt live." But the gospel saith, "He that works not, but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly," &c., Rom. iv. 5. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. The one requires doing, and the other believing only, and not doing, or working for life: though it is by our works that our faith is known to be true faith.

6. Hiring doth not imply desert, because when we have done all, our Saviour teacheth us to say, "We are unprofitable servants," Luke xvii. 10. But he is certainly no unprofitable servant, whose works commend him to God, for which he serveth the penny, or Phil. iii. 8, 9. wages of everlasting life: besides, the apostle utterly in this case disclaims and renounceth all his own works and righteousness.

7. This hiring cannot denote, that labourers in Christ's vineyard have the reward as just desert, because we have all grace here, and shall have glory hereafter, for Christ's merits, or as the just reward of his works and complete obedience; and indeed none else could deserve anything at God's hand, because all our powers and abilities, or what we are, or can do, is of and from the Lord, what we are and can do is his. And this further appears by what we have in this parable; he that wrought but one hour had as much as he that wrought six, nine, or the whole day.

So much in the negative.

Secondly. In the affirmative, I shall show in one or two things what hiring doth denote.

1. Hiring is to be taken in the same sense, that the buying which our Lord speaks of is to be taken, viz., "buying of wine and milk," &c. As the one is buying without money and without price, so the other is our being hired without expecting anything by way of desert for our labour.

2. Hiring may denote the terms of the gospel, which God offers to sinners, which they are to accept of.

(1.) They are required to hear the gospel preached. "Hear, and thy soul shall live," Isa. lv. 3. Hearing is that which is required of us, and the promise is hire or reward, as an act of God's own free grace: yet know, it is God that must give us an hearing ear, and open our hearts, as he did the heart of Lydia, that we may attend upon the world preached.

(2.) To believe in Christ. This God requires of us, and the promise is our hire, or that which is our encouragement, which is our being saved. Yet faith to believe is also God's gift. Thus the hire here is but to be brought to accept of Christ, of life, of righteousness, and of eternal life alone, in a way of free-grace: and such who do thus truly and sincerely receive Christ, embrace Christ as he is offered in the gospel, may be said to be hired: and such God sends into his church or vineyard to work, or to serve him in a way of holiness and righteousness, discharging all those duties he requires of them, to show forth his glory, and to be made meet for the eternal kingdom.

II. I shall lay down several explanatory propositions to open this mystery a little further, and more fully.

A servant hired into the vineyard, renounceth all other masters.

Prop. 1. That he that is hired into a man's service, must renounce the service of all others. No man can serve two masters, who have direct and contrary interests and designs to carry on: so he that will, or is helped to accept of Jesus Christ, and enter himself into his vineyard, must renounce all his sins, and sinful ways, and also the inordinate love of this world. "A man cannot serve God and mammon."

A believer hired into the vineyard, shows he is no more his own, but the Lord's.

Prop. 2. He that is hired, and wholly gives himself up to another man's, i. e., to seek, and endeavour, and labour alone to promote his interest, honour, and designs in the world, is no more his own man; his strength, wisdom, time, and all he hath is his to whom he hath hired himself, and not his own; he is not any other man's servant: so that person that Christ hires, or who accepts of the Lord Jesus as his Lord and master, and voluntarily is helped to give himself wholly up to him, he is no more his own, he is no longer to live unto himself, nor seek his own glory, nor to promote any other interest, but the interest of Christ, and his glory only. "His servants you are whom ye obey," &c., Rom. vi. 16.

Christ and believers ac-

Prop. 3. There is in hiring a mutual agreement between the Lord Christ and believers. Christ accepteth of them to be his servants, and believers

accept of Christ to be their Lord. Every believer saith, I love my master, and promises freely, heartily, and sincerely to serve him, Christ says, I receive thee into my house, into my family, and I will provide for thee, own and acknowledge thee to be my servant, and one that I have accounted faithful, and do accept of to dwell with, and this mutual agreement passeth between Jesus Christ and every believer, before a believer is taken into the vineyard, and hath wrought or laboured there. We accepting or receiving Christ, and believing in him, are hired, and have received earnest money, viz., the Holy Spirit, and we are justified and adopted; for no man that is a servant of Christ, but is his son, his child also; for he ought not to serve God with a servile spirit, nor be attended with servile, or bondage fear, who hath received the spirit of a son, and so serves only with filial fear. "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Rom. viii. 15.

cept and approve of one another.

Prop. 4. A nobleman may covenant or agree, to take a person into his service (as a hired servant) from whom he expecteth true and faithful service, though he be weak, feeble, and able to do but little work, so Jesus Christ knows that we are weak and impotent persons, "and without him we are able to do nothing," John xv. 5. Yet what we are enabled to do, he expecteth we should do it with a ready mind sincerely, because we love him, and so serve him with all fidelity and constancy, nay, and work in his vineyard also, they that are accepted by the Father, called and justified, it appears from hence, ought to come into his church. "Take (saith our Lord) my yoke upon you, and learn of me," Matt. xi. 29. Such Christians therefore that look upon themselves to be hired, and yet refuse to go into Christ's vineyard, are worthy of the most sharp rebuke; it is not enough for such to say, why, I do what service I can for Jesus Christ in the market-place, which is the world; but they must go into the vineyard. "He sent him into the vineyard." There are but two places to be in, while we are in this body, viz., either the world (called here the market-place) or the church, the vineyard of Jesus Christ.

Prop. 5. The reward is first propounded to each person a man hires, and it is a motive to him, and a great encouragement; so it is here, because "they know their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." Our Lord told his disciples what they that served him should have, though they serve him from a principle of love, yet may eye, "or have respect to the recompense of reward, as Moses had," Heb. xi. 26. True, Christ's merits, Christ's righteousness gives us a right, or is our title to the life eternal; yet the promises are great motives to every true Christian to labour and endure hardness for Christ's sake as in Jacob's case, he served Laban fourteen years for Rachel; and though his work was hard, and he suffered in winter many cold blasts, and in the summer the scorching heat of the sun, &c., yet those years seemed to him but a few days, such was the love he had to her, who was his hire. Thus it is with every true labourer in God's vineyard, Christ being his hire, his reward, all the years of his service, though hard to the flesh, are looked upon as nothing; he finds Christ's yoke easy, and it is that help he meets with from Christ for ever, that causeth his yoke to be easy, and his burden light, to every true Christian.

III. The next thing I proposed to speak to was, to show what is contained in the penny which is said to be given to Christ's labourers.

I have before showed, that as there is a great difference between the vineyard of God under the law, or the national church of Israel, and the gospel-church, so there is also between the hire, wages, or promises made to the labourers, who wrought in each of them, though the hire or reward of all God's elect in Christ, under the law or gospel, are one and the same. But the promises made unto the whole house of Israel, considered as a legal church, were external or earthly blessings, which penny or reward God gave them, and kept up the fence or wall of their vineyard, until by their sin God cast them off, and laid it waste.

But to proceed. God's faithful and approved servants have a glorious penny or reward promised them.

1. God himself is their hire (as was hinted) and was from the beginning of the world, of all who truly believed in him, and faithfully served him. "And Abraham said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me?" this may seem a strange question, because in the very verse before it is said, "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision saying, fear not Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Might not one have said to him, what art thou not content with what God hath promised thee? is not God himself enough? what canst thou have or desire more? but he might have replied, if the promise of God be not performed, or if he withhold me from the promised

seed, through whom I know I am to have God to be my God, and no otherways, all my hope will be frustrated. "And he said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?—Behold, to me thou hast given no seed," Gen. xv. 2, 3. Lord God, I know it is in thy Son that thou wilt be my God; it is in my seed that I and all that believe shall be blessed; if Isaac be not given from whose loins my Saviour is to proceed, what wilt thou give? I see his day, and this rejoices my soul; but until thy promise is made good, that I have a son, all that thou hast given me cannot satisfy me, and God therefore renewed his promise, ver. 4. "He that comes forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir.—And he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness;" that is, the object of his faith, or Christ that should (as concerning the flesh) proceed out of his loins, should be his righteousness, in whom he should be blessed, justified, and God be his God, in a special and peculiar covenant. God was not the God of Abraham, nor of any man on earth, so as to be his exceeding great reward, and portion for ever, any other way but in Christ only. And this way Abraham foresaw he came to have a special interest in God; and now this is that which I say, viz., God himself, in Jesus Christ, is our hire, or our reward. And O what a penny is this, believers do not serve God for nought! hence David also saith, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, I have a goodly heritage," Psal. xvi. 5, 6. "The portion of Jacob, is not like them, for he is the former of all things," Jer. li. 19.

What a penny or reward God is. 2. God, giving himself to us, gives all that he, and all he hath, so far as he is communicable to creatures; his love to delight in us, his mercy to pity us, his power to uphold and strengthen us, his faithfulness to preserve us, his word to direct us, his promises to comfort us, and his angels to guard us, and to minister to us, grace to adorn us, and heaven to crown us.

3. These things being considered, it appears that Jesus Christ is our hire, or the Reward of all God's chosen servants, not only as God, but considered as he is Mediator, "My Lord and my God." Ours as a Redeemer, or to be a ransom for us, a Priest to atone for our sins, and to make our peace; a King to subdue our enemies, and rule in and over us; a Prophet to teach, to guide, and lead us, and a Physician to heal us, a Fountain to wash us from our uncleanness, a Sun to enlighten us, and a Shield to defend us, and a Bridegroom to espouse us, so that we may say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," Cant. ii. 16. "Who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

4. The Holy Spirit is our hire, or is comprehended in this penny, by which we are united to Christ, quickened, regenerated, and have the image of God formed in us, and to be an earnest of the whole inheritance, and a seal of the promises, and of all covenant blessings, and a witness of our sonship, and of eternal life.

5. Grace, or the fruits of the Spirit, and further increase of it, is part of our hire, or included in this penny.

6. Also all the blessings and privileges of the gospel, as justification, pardon of sin, adoption, free access to the throne of grace, communion with God, peace of conscience, final perseverance, and eternal glory when this life is ended. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. And from hence it appears, our reward is very great, and not a debt, but of mere grace, or of infinite love and favour.

APPLICATION.

1. This may inform us, that believers work not for life; we do not work that we may live, be accepted and justified, but because God hath accepted, called, and justified us. Hiring in the gospel-covenant, is an act of God's free grace to his chosen, not to all that are called, and seem to be hired or accepted, but only to such that he hath chosen. "Many are called, but few are chosen."

2. This in the second place shows, they err exceedingly, that seek to be accepted by their own works or obedience; for this is to render salvation to be a debt. What, will you dare to bring in your faith, obedience, inherent righteousness, or good works, as a federal condition of your acceptance with God, and justification before him, or in his sight? Will you have God indebted to you, and plead for wages for your work sake, through Christ's merits, in procuring such terms for you? I hope none here have received such unsound notions, which so much tend to eclipse the free grace of God in Jesus Christ. God hath first a respect to our persons in Christ, and then accepteth our performances or obedience, discharged also in his own strength. We can do nothing until we are first

quicken'd by Christ, and are united to him by his Spirit : therefore no good works can precede our union with him, justification and regeneration. Doth Christ send dead men, dead sinners, to work in his vineyard, or such that hate him, or have enmity in their minds against him ?

3. Be exhorted you that are sinners ; (1.) To look to Christ, that he may become a precious Jesus to you, and you enabled to believe in him, by receiving the Spirit of him. (2.) And then make haste into his vineyard ; he accepteth all that come to him. " He that comes to me, I will in no wise cast him out," John vi. 37. Are any of you willing to be hired ? do you want a Master ? Let me tell you there is a Master that wants servants, and he likes not those that stand idle all the day in the market-place : you cannot have a better Master.

As to motives to stir you up to enter into Christ's service :

1. Consider, that you must be hired, *i. e.*, called and accepted of Christ, and renounce all other masters before thou goest into the vineyard. Art thou willing to renounce and forsake all, and embrace Jesus Christ, and become his servant ? Thou canst not say thou hast no call, or no man shows a willingness to hire or accept of thee ; for Christ shows to whom the gospel is preached, his willingness to receive such sinners. What say you that seem to be called in the third hour, I mean you that are young, or you that are about the middle of your days ? Are you willing to be hired this day ? Shall a poor worm be helped to prevail with some of you ? What, not one soul cleave to my great Master ? What, none accept of Jesus Christ, not one ? O that one, though it be but one would say, I can stand here idle no longer ! What do you say, what answer shall I return ? shall I tell Jesus Christ, that there is not one in this great assembly that either loves him, or cares for his service, who is not yet come into his vineyard ? Young-men, are you willing to renounce the service of sin ? I fear you are hired already, but is it not pity, sin and the devil should have the morning and flower of your days, and you put off Christ until you are old ? What do you old sinners say ? What is your purpose and resolution ? will you forsake your old masters, your sins and folly, and cleave to Christ ? You will repent it one day, if you refuse thus to do. Let the time past suffice, that you have wrought the will of the Gentiles.

2. Consider, that there is not such a Master in the world, none so honourable, so great, and glorious ; all kings are subject (or shall be) to him, and lick the dust of his feet ; he is the only Potentate, Lord of lords, and King of kings.

Christ is the best Master in the world.

3. He exceeds all in love, goodness, and rich bounty, he espouseth all such that accept of him and his service.

1. He is rich, and clothes all his servants in glorious and noble robes, and puts chains of gold about their necks, and crowns on their heads.

5. He keeps also a very noble house, he feeds all his servants with fat things, nay, with the bread of life, and delights theirs souls with the strongest consolations.

6. He gives the best wages ; for rewards of grace far exceed all rewards of debt or merit, they are indeed the desert and merits of his own blood ; and by that you may perceive his wages, though freely given to sinners, must needs be very great, since they deserved such a price : the Father himself, and all true happiness is comprehended in the wages he offers to you ; and therefore you will say, you cannot deserve such wages.

7. Besides, he is able to defend you from all evil ; and when you die, your joys will be unspeakable. Will you accept of this Master ?

8. His service is not hard, his commandments are not grievous ; his yoke, you heard, " is easy," &c.

Secondly, This shows the ignorance, folly, and madness of such sinners, who refuse to accept of Christ, and of his service, and prefer the service of sin and Satan above it, who will eternally destroy their souls. O what a difference is there between the service of Christ and the service of sin, and the wages Christ gives, and the wages of sin ! Will you choose the wages of unrighteousness, and be damned for ever ? O lay your hands upon your hearts, and come to some fixed resolution this day, for Jesus Christ's sake, and for the sake of your precious and immortal souls.

The folly of sinners.

Thirdly, We also learn from hence, That the happiness of Christ's servants is very great. O happy, happy, eternally happy are you that are true Christians, or the faithful servants of Jesus Christ ! Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven ; be content with your present portion of earthly things, you that are poor in this world, since you are rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom.

The happiness of believers.

SERMON XXXVII.

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, who went early to hire labourers into his vineyard.—Matt. xx. 1—15,

1. I HAVE showed you why the church of God is compared to a vineyard.

2. What hiring of labourers doth denote.

I shall now proceed to the next point of doctrine proposed.

Doct. 3. That God hath some faithful servants or labourers in his vineyard.

In speaking of this, I shall

I. Premise or note one or two things about servants, &c.

II. Show what is necessary, or required in faithful servants or labourers.

1. That a master chooses whom he pleaseth to be his servant, they are persons chosen by him; so the Lord chooseth whom he pleaseth to be his special servants, as an act of his own sovereign pleasure. God made choice first of all of Abraham, and then of the whole house of Israel to be his servants under the law; and then in the gospel-time he chose the twelve apostles, and others, even such that he was pleased to call into his gospel-vineyard, both among the Jews and Gentiles also.

2. A servant ought to know his work, or what business his master hath appointed him to do; so every servant of Christ ought to know what his business or work is: "for the Son of Man is as a man taking a long journey into a far country, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch," Mark xiii. 34.

3. Those servants that are hired, or called into a vineyard, ought to have wisdom or skill in that proper employment they are set about. Moreover, the work of Labourers is commonly hard, and calls for strength and diligence also: so likewise such that Christ chooseth and calls into his vineyard, ought to be endowed with spiritual wisdom in the mysteries of the gospel, and to understand what their own work is, and in what manner and time every thing is to be done.

Quest. What is the work which all Christians ought to be found doing?

Some labourers in the vineyard are officers, viz. elders, deacons. Answ. Their work is to be considered according to their respective places and stations where they are set by our great Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Some are officers, or in places of higher and greater trust, as elders, teachers, and deacons, yet all are labourers.

The work of elders.

1. The Elder's or Pastor's work is to study the word, to show himself approved. "A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," 2 Tim. ii. 15. And that he may also give to every one his portion of meat in season.

2. He is to strive to plant more fresh, and choice plants in the vineyard, and also to strengthen and cherish such plants as were before planted.

3. He must be very laborious and constant in preaching the word. "Let the elders that rule well, be accounted worthy of double honour, especially that labour in the word and doctrine," 1 Tim. v. 17. Again he saith, "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them," &c. 1 Tim. iv. 15. "Preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine," 2 Tim. iv. 2.

They ought to be disentangled from all worldly affairs, and be very painful labourers in the vineyard.

5. They must watch it also, to prevent the evil seeds of error from springing up therein, and to give warning of approaching dangers, and to see no servant of Christ neglects his work, duties, or business; or if any plants seem to wither, they must strive to recover them if possible.

6. They must know as much as in them lies the state of the vineyard, and of all that are planted therein, and water them continually with comfortable and consoling doctrine.

Thus Apollos was said to water those that Paul planted, and if any rotten plants or branches be discovered, they are (after all due means be used) to see they are cut off by the axe of excommunication.

1 Cor v. 4, 5, Acts. 6.

The work of a deacon.

1. The Deacon's work is to take care of tables, viz. (1.) To see the Lord's table be provided for. (2.) To see the poor's table be provided for, and, (3.) the minister or pastor's table also.

2. They are to take special care to see that the aged widows who are poor, are not neglected; and also that none of the poor are idle, and so put the church to an unnecessary charge; and are also to know the state of all the poor.

3. Moreover, the deacons are to be helps in government. Some think Paul calls the deacons elders, when he speaks of "elders, that rule well," 1 Tim. v. 17. (as our annotators observe) though others judge he means ministers who are aged, and not able to preach the word, yet capable to help in ruling or governing the church; but some others think there were men ordained elders, that were not gifted to preach, but to be helpful in discipline, or in the government of the church; but we read neither of their qualifications, or how to be chosen (nor of their peculiar work, distinct from pastors, nor any such elders chosen in any particular church in the apostles' days) can see no ground for any such an office, or officers in the church.

4. Deacons should see to the poor, that are sick, lame, or past their labour, and such that are out of employment, being reduced to straits. The deacons are the fathers of Christ's poor, and therefore should be tender-hearted men.

5. They also should see that there is an equality in contributing to the necessary charges of the church, and to stir up and exhort the rich, and all that are able, to a free and cheerful contributing on all occasions.

2ndly. All are to be labourers that are called into the vineyard.

1. Every one has a particular spot of precious ground to dress, keep, and take of, viz., his own soul. "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently," &c., Deut. iv. 9. Every one is to watch his own heart, and see that no corruption, like weeds, spoil the growth of grace, and so deface or dishonour the king's vineyard, and spoil its glory. Some men's hearts are like the vineyard of the slothful, viz., "All grown over with thorns, and nettles have covered the face thereof," Prov. iv. 23.

The work of every person in the vineyard.

Let every one consider, (1.) What a sum was given to purchase this little spot of ground, i. e., the soul, namely, the blood of the Son of God. (2.) What precious seed Christ has sowed therein. (3.) Likewise the mighty charge given to every one of us, to watch and keep it; "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," Prov. iv. 23. (4.) "Consider the account which must be given of the soul at the great day, or when we come to die. (6.) If it be barren, consider how it is near unto cursing, and its end will be burned.

Heb. vi. 7, 8.

2. All that have families, have them to take care of; and there is no small work lying in a right discharge of all duties in that respect, both towards children and servants. Relative duties must be carefully minded, as duties of husbands to wives, wives to husbands, parents to children, and children to parents, masters to servants, and servants to masters. The families of Christians should be as little churches, where the worship of God must be kept up, as reading, prayer, exhortation, and singing of psalms. If we are not true worshippers of God at home, in vain is all our worship abroad.

Eph. v. 22-

Eph. vi. 6, 1-7.

3. Every one ought to take care of the whole vineyard. As every member of the natural body is useful to the body, so every "member of the mystical body should be of use to the whole body," 1 Cor. xii. 15-22. (1.) We must pray for the whole church. (2.) We must strive to visit, comfort, and strengthen every one that is weak or cast down, and sympathize with each other. (3.) See that we always worship God with the church, that God may have a whole church-obligation; the neglect of this grieves the church, and is dishonourable, it is a reproach to them that absent themselves to worship elsewhere, and also to that congregation that suffers it. (4.) All must labour to support the house of God, and labour to bear and carry burdens in his vineyard, which is very hard labour, to some especially. (5.) To provoke one another to love and good works, and to maintain peace and unity. So such as to the first thing proposed.

II. I shall show who are Christ's faithful servants.

1. They that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, who give themselves up to him and to his service, from a principle of love to him. Love constrains them, draws them into his vineyard, who follow him for his own sake. "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee," Matt. xix. 27. They love his person, not only the merits of Christ, but also the person of Christ. Some espouse the portion instead of the person; and as faithful men and women hate that, so doth Christ. One notes, that such persons live in a kind of adultery; and as the proverb is, such who marry those they love not, will love those they marry not. Faithful servants love Christ above

Who are faithful servants of Christ.

Matt. x. 37.

father or mother, son or daughter; and he that doth not thus, cannot be a servant or a disciple of Jesus Christ. They have a greater love to Christ than to their dearest relations on earth, and will rather displease them than Jesus Christ, or refuse to follow him, and rather incur their frowns than forsake Christ. They love Christ above themselves, nay, more than their natural lives; for they deny themselves and follow him, and choose rather to die than to deny him. They love Christ above heaven, or anything in heaven. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? neither is there any on earth that I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. The interest of Christ lies near their hearts who truly love him. Some will let the vineyard of Christ go to ruin before they will waste their substance to support and uphold it. But are these faithful servants? Why doth Christ give riches to some of his people, but to strengthen and uphold his interest, and support his poor?

Matt. 14, 26. 2. An approved servant is one that serves Christ in all humility. A servant is a name of subjection, or one of an inferior rank; yet a true Christian esteems it a greater honour to be a servant of Christ, than to be an earthly prince. Paul glorified more in the name of being the servant of Christ, than in his being an apostle. Paul, "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle." A man may be an apostle of Christ, but not an approved servant; for Judas was an apostle. How humble was he that called himself "less than the least of all saints?" Eph. iii. 8. Christ's faithful servants wear one and the same garment; they "are all clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. It is a contradiction to say, such and such are proud Christians; for he that is not humble and lowly in heart, is no true Christian. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble," James iv. 6. God sets himself in battle against such as are proud, defying and beating them down before him, so far is he from giving grace unto them.

A faithful servant of Christ is sincere. 3. From hence it appears that every faithful servant of Christ is sincere, or serves him with a perfect heart. Men may do that which materially is good and right in the sight of God, but not be accepted, because it is not done with a perfect or sincere heart.

4. A sincere servant of Christ is one that serves him believingly. He can trust Jesus Christ, or take his master's word. Will a master keep such a servant that will not believe nor trust him? A word or promise of Christ is enough to support a sincere and faithful servant. He can and doth trust in Christ for righteousness to clothe him, for grace to adorn him, for the Spirit to guide, lead, strengthen, sanctify and comfort him; for power to resist sin, to resist Satan, and to bear afflictions; for as he received first grace from Christ, so he trusteth in him for fresh supplies of grace; and as Christ was the author of faith in him, so he looks to him, to finish it also; he can commit both soul and body to the care and keeping of Jesus Christ; he aims at the honour of his blessed Master in all he doth, and seeks not himself.

5. A faithful labourer or servant of Christ is universal in his obedience; he doth not choose his work, or is only for the easiest part of it, but ready to obey him, as faithful Abraham did in the hardest matters, even when it was to sacrifice a beloved Isaac. "Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you." I assure you, as if our Lord should say, that it will appear you love me (when you are universal in your obedience to me) and that I do accept of your obedience, yea, and of you also, as my dearest friends whom I love.

6. A faithful servant of Christ is constant in his duty, and abides always in the place where the Lord hath set him, though his fellow-servants may little regard him, or esteem him, nay, slight and disesteem him; yet he keeps up in his duty, and attends his master's service, knowing he serves the Lord Christ. Will a servant (placed by his master to work in one of his vineyards) leave that vineyard in a pet (because some of his fellow-servants have offended him) and go to work in another, without his master's authority? no sure, as the righteous hold on his way, so he keeps in the station where he was placed, until his master doth dismiss him.

7. A faithful servant of Christ is contented with the lowest place and station in God's house, though it be but to be a door-keeper. "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness," Psal. lxxxiv. 10.

If some have not honour, or much notice taken of them, they are uneasy, and are not content with their place in the vineyard, which discovers they are not sincere labourers.

8. A faithful servant, one that Christ loves and approves of, doth all he doth to the glory of his blessed name, or to raise his honour, exalt and magnify his master. "I honour my Father," John viii. 49. (saith our blessed Saviour) so thus doth all his sincere servants also.

(1.) They seek not their own glory, but his. "I seek not mine own glory, there is one that seeketh and judgeth." Thus Paul, "I am resolved Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death," Phil. i. 20.

(2.) They ascribe all they have received to Christ. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in heaven, and in the earth, is thine; and thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted above all," 1 Chron. xxix. 11. And again he saith, "For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee," ver. 11. What wisdom, what knowledge, what grace, what riches, or what hearts to do good they have, they acknowledge it is all of God, of Christ. "What hast thou which thou didst not receive?" 1 Cor. iv. 7.

(3.) If he doth more than others, he ascribes it to God. "But I laboured more abundantly than they all;" Paul when reproached, speaks of what he had done, but not arrogantly glorying in himself, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me." Paul was something in the act, but the Spirit was the great Agent; he ascribes that which he did to God, wrought in him, aiding and assisting him in the doing of it. A sincere servant of Christ sees, and says, he hath done more to Christ's dishonour than ever he did to his glory, or more against him than for him.

(4.) They acknowledge they can do nothing without Christ, no not so much as think one good thought, though through Christ they are able to do all things.

9. A true faithful servant, if he be a minister, declares the whole mind and will of Jesus Christ; he speaks the word of Christ faithfully. "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and remember the words of our Lord Jesus, who said, it is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts xx. 35. Certainly it calls in question the faithfulness of a servant of Christ, if he forbears to declare any thing he knows is the will or command of his blessed Lord. Some perhaps through fear of displeasing men, may show their unfaithfulness in this matter. But what doth our apostle say further in this respect? "I kept back nothing (saith he) that was profitable for you, but have showed you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house," Acts xx. 20. And again he saith, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," ver. 26, 27. Whatsoever he had received in command from Christ, whether it was matter of faith or practice, he declared with all faithfulness, that so he might have the testimony of a good conscience towards God, and towards them; and if any perished under his ministry, he declares that he was pure from their blood. He would preach nothing but what was the counsel of God, neither omit the preaching of any thing that was the counsel of God, his care being not to please men, but God. "For if I seek (saith he) to please men, I am no more the servant of Christ." Moreover, if they are not ministers, but only members, every one that is faithful will neglect no duty, no part of his work, nor plead the neglect of others as an excuse, or why he may omit his. It was a high commendation of Gaius; "Beloved, thou dost faithfully whatsoever thou dost to the brethren, and to strangers," 3 John 5. A faithful servant will stick to his master's service.

USE.

1. This should stir all up, to examine ourselves about the sincerity of our hearts, and of our faithfulness unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and also whether through temptations we have neglected any part of our duty: and if upon a search we have, let us humble ourselves before the Lord, and confess our fault with shame to him, and speedily reform in what we have been remiss, and not be overcome any more: and to the end we may do this, let us cry mightily unto the Lord for strength, and watch against our own hearts.

2. But if we find our hearts do not reproach us, but that in all faithfulness we have acted towards God and man: what cause of joy and rejoicing may this administer unto us?

3. From hence we infer also, that Jesus Christ hath many who pretend they are his servants, but are not, or at least are unfaithful servants; not labourers, but loiterers, and rather seek themselves, or prefer their own interest above the interest of Jesus Christ.

4. And by what hath been said, you may know who are sincere and faithful labourers in Christ's vineyard.

But no more at present.

SERMON XXXVIII.

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place.—
Matt. xx. 3.

THROUGH the third hour refers more directly to those in Moses' time who were hired into God's vineyard, yet (as was hinted) it may be applied to the early age of our natural lives. God calls some in the morning of their days.

From hence note,

Doct. That God calls some idle ones into his vineyard, in the days of their youth.

Some are called, i. e., converted when young, and brought as members into the church; and others are not only converted, but also called in their youth to be ministers; for labourers may refer to both these.

Some not only converted, but called in their youth to be ministers.

In speaking to this truth,

I. I shall lay down several propositions by way of premise, for the better explaining this point of doctrine.

II. Show that it is the great duty, and true interest of young men to obey the call of Christ, to come to him, and enter into his vineyard in the morning of their days.

III. Show what those things may be that seem to hinder young persons thus to do.

IV. Apply it.

Prop. 1. That all young persons who do not enter themselves into Christ's service, are looked upon to be idle persons.

Idleness may be considered two manner of ways, or there is a twofold idleness.

(1.) Bodily idleness.

(2.) Spiritual idleness.

It is the last that is chiefly meant here: for let men be never so industrious or diligent about the affairs of this world, in their particular trades and callings; yet if they neglect soul-matters, or are not truly religious, or enter not themselves into Christ's vineyard, they are in the esteem of God, idle persons. Now take the character of one that was idle, in an external sense.

1. He is a person that loves not to labour, he will not (as we say) lay his bones to work, but is slothful: so he who in a spiritual sense is idle, loves not spiritual labour, he loves not prayer, reading God's word, nor to strive to mortify his sins, or to get an interest in Christ; he will not attend upon the means of grace, that he may obtain faith in the Lord Jesus, and get a changed heart, and so become truly religious. And as bodily labour is grievous to an idle person, so are these things grievous and unpleasant to all persons who give way to spiritual idleness.

2. It is looked upon to be a shameful thing to be a slothful or an idle person; such expose themselves to reproach: so, and in like manner, what is a greater shame, than for a man to be vicious or irreligious, or to lead an ungodly life? "Sin is the shame of any people," Prov. xiv. 34. (1.) Is it not a shame to a man to do that which is abominable in the sight of God, to despise God, rebel against God, and violate his holy and righteous law; to strike at God, or smite him with the fist of wickedness, or to condemn him, and cast dirt in his very face? What do sinners less, that yield to the devil, and to their own wicked hearts? sin is called a despising of God, a hating God, a resisting of God: would not all cry out strange, to see a child hate and despise his tender father? but O this that I spoke of is much worse, it is warring against God. (2.) Is it not a shame for a man to esteem his own evil lusts above God himself, and above Jesus Christ, and all the beauty and glory that is in him, and more than all those spiritual blessings he hath purchased by his blood. (3.) Is it not a shame to a man to be clothed in filthy and leathsome rags, or roll himself in abominable, nasty, and detestable filth; what do sinners less than this, who love and live in sin and wicked ways, "a wicked man is leathsome, and cometh to shame." Prov. xiii. 5.

3. Idleness is not only a reproachful or shameful thing, but it is also hurtful, yea, very destructive to the person that gives way to it. "Slothfulness shall clothe a man with rags." Prov. xxiii. 21. What poverty and sorrow have many brought upon themselves, through idleness? so those that are spiritually idle, or careless of their precious souls, bring ruin upon themselves; they are poor and miserable in this world, and shall be eternally miserable in the world to come, whilst the diligent hand maketh a godly man rich. Religion and true piety raise us not only to honour, "but righteousness delivers from death." Prov. x. 2.

4. Such as are slothful or idle persons bring want upon themselves, which they cannot escape. "So shall poverty come on thee as one that travaileth, and thy want like an armed man," Prov. vi. 11. Nay, such shall beg in harvest, and have nothing," Prov. xx. 4. Even so those that are spiritually idle shall want that which is truly and spiritually good; they shall neither have bread to eat, nor a garment to clothe them; when they come to die they shall beg, but have nothing; God in their extremity will not regard their cry. "Then they shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me," Prov. i. 28. Nay, God said, he will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh upon them. O how deplorable will their condition be at death, and in the day of judgment, all and because they refuse to labour, and are idle. The sluggard will not plough because it is cold. These idle persons cannot abide to encounter with difficulties, they love their ease; and so their hearts, like unto fallow ground, is all grown over with thorns, weeds, and nettles.

5. And as the body is pinched, and suffers by idleness, so the souls of these persons are also pinched, nay, starved through spiritual idleness. What a sad condition was the soul of the prodigal in, "who fain would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat," Luke xv. 16. Such persons, by means of their idleness not labouring for bread (I mean, the bread of life that perisheth not) never come to taste or eat of that which is bread, or to know what is truly good, and hence are said to feed upon ashes, and upon the wind, &c.

6. Idleness puts men oftentimes upon temptations, and on indirect and unlawful ways to provide for their necessities; many through idleness, take to thieving, stealing, nay, commit murder, and so are hanged, and come to a woful and miserable end: so spiritual idleness hath put many upon very unlawful and indirect ways, to have the wants of their souls supplied; they love not the hard doctrine of self-denial, regeneration, and mortification of sin, but rather choose to adhere to the devil, and suck in false doctrines, or corrupt opinions. Some think to be supplied by a false Christ within them, as if the improvement of natural light could save their souls: others think to be saved by what Christ hath done without them, who never regard, nor labour to find the work of grace, and a thorough change within them; nay some have by horrid delusions robbed Christ of all his glory, even of his very deity (so far as they are able to do it) and some of this sort have also been instruments to murder and destroy multitudes of souls of men and women, whom they have corrupted by their damnable errors and heresies. Dread the effects of spiritual idleness!

Prop. 2. God observes all such persons that are spiritually idle, his eye is upon them; if you are out of his service, or are standing in the market-place where God comes to hire his labourers, but regard not to be hired, but rather abide idle, or only employ yourselves in your own earthly business, or comply with Satan in doing his work: the Lord Jesus seeth you, his eyes are upon you; "he saw others standing idle in the market-place." Nay, furthermore observe, that God is said to go forth about the third hour; that is, in the morning: this may shew, that he takes notice of the younger sort, to see who among them are idle, or refuse to be hired by him, but rather adhere to Satan, and like his service better than the service of God. Young men and women perhaps think Christ overlooks them, or winks at them whilst in their youth; no, no, God comes to see who at the third hour are idle. Indeed we should at the first hour, or as soon as the sun is risen, begin our daily work, even in our childhood give up ourselves to Christ. It is sad that Christ hath but from a few a whole day's work; most lose two or three hours in a morning. Do young people think God sent them into this world to pick straws, or to gather cocklesbells? God overlooks indeed childish things in little babes, who are not come to understanding, but think as children: but when they come to be capable to discern between good and evil, they ought to consider wherefore God sent them into this world; he expects they should enter themselves into his service, and go into his vineyard, and not stand idle in the market-place.

"He went out about the third hour," &c., which may denote God's providential dispensations; as his eyes are said to run to and fro in the earth: or else to his sending out his ministers to call such or such young persons, in such or such congregations or assemblies of his people, whither they may resort with their parents; but perhaps think not that Christ's eye is upon them, to hire and send them into his vineyard.

Prop. 3. That the dispensation of the grace of God is compared to a day, even to an artificial day, which is twelve hours: and pray remember young

Idleness exposeth to utter want.

As idleness starves the body, so spiritual idleness starves the soul.

God's eye is upon all young persons, and sees who of them stand idle in the market-place.

The day of grace

a fixed time. men, that one fourth part of the day is gone, who are called at the third hour ; it is nine of the clock.

1. A day is a certain time : so many hours, God, my brethren, allows men a certain, a prefixed time to work in, and to provide for eternity.

The day of grace the time of light. 2. A day is set in opposition to the night, and it signifies a time of light : so the time of gospel-grace, or the day of Christ's patience, is the time of light, of spiritual light ; and as all that would work must work whilst it is day, there being no working in the vineyard when the night cometh, so we must work in Christ's vineyard, until our day, or the time of our natural lives is gone. " I must work the work of him that sent me, whilst it is day ; the night cometh when no man can work," John ix. 4.

3. It is day when the sun riseth, and night when the sun is set : so and in like manner it is our spiritual day, whilst the gospel-sun shines, and the means of grace are continued unto us or the ministration of the gospel is taken away, and vouchsafed no more unto a nation or to a particular person.

The labourers go home when the day is done. 4. When the day is done, the labourers go home, out of the vineyard or field : so when the day of our natural lives is ended, our working time is ended, and we are called out of this world : and wo to them whose day is gone, but their work is not done. But whether our work be done or not, when death comes, we must away.

5. Ignorance of that work which is to be done in such a precise day, is very dangerous, if the work appertains to a man's happiness, whilst he remains in this world ; so is the danger exceeding great, to be ignorant of the day of our visitation, on the improvement of which our eternal happiness depends ; lose this time, and we lose our souls. " O that thou, even thou at least, in this thy day had known the things which belong to thy peace ! but now they are hid from thy eyes."

6. The day brings great light with it, and makes a glorious discovery of things and persons, and of dangers to be avoided, and of advantages to be improved ; so what wonderful and glorious discoveries doth the gospel light make of God himself ? true, the heathen by the moon-light of natural conscience, know that there is a God ; the visible things that are made show that ; but they know not what God is, nor the manner of his existence, and though they may know what is sin, I mean against God as Creator, yet they know not how, nor by whom sin came into the world, by simple light of their consciences ; neither do they know the evil that is in it, nor how it is expiated, for it is by the revelation of the gospel that we come to know Jesus Christ the Redeemer. Poor pagans know not of that Saviour whom God sent into the world, they know not the way to be saved, they are in the night ; their light compared with the light of the gospel day, is darkness ; we have a glorious light, who behold the sun up, and shining bright upon us ; we discern, or may, how to be made happy for ever, and how to escape eternal wrath to come, which others, know not ; and therefore what a mercy is it, that it is day with us, while almost all the world are in the night, either of paganism, Mahometanism, or Antichristianism.

7. The light of the day is comfortable. " Truly the light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun," Eccles. xi. 7. And if it is, my brethren, so sweet to see the sun in the firmament, or to behold natural light ; O how much more sweet and pleasant is it to behold the Sun of righteousness, or to behold the glory of God shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ ! how lovely is it to behold the king in his beauty, or to see God's reconciled face in the Lord Jesus Christ, or to see our interest clear in him, to know Christ is our Christ, our Saviour, and that God is fully reconciled in and through his blood, and that our peace is made for ever.

8. It is the sun that makes the day ; so and in like manner it is Jesus Christ, the sun of righteousness, that makes the day of grace ; when he riseth and shines by his gospel on a people, it is day with them ; but when he takes away the gospel, it is night, and the sun is set.

Some days are clearer and brighter than others. 9. Some days are brighter than others ; we find by experience some days prove cloudy ; so some gospel-days are clearer or more bright than others ; our fathers saw much more light than they that went before them, and perhaps we see greater light than they ; but our children that come after us may see much greater light than we have ever yet seen. " For the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more to a perfect day," Prov. iv. 18.

A bright day may be overcast. 10. Sometimes we have seen a bright day overcast, and dismal storms and tempests have risen ; so though our day seems at present very clear and bright,

yet we know not how soon it may be overcast, and fearful storms and tempests may rise. Methinks I hear it already thunder a great way off, and a cloud as big as a man's hand to appear. O what a dismal day may be near, and yet many stand idle, as if the day would never be gone, or that storms would never arise!

11. A day hath its morning, noon, and evening: so likewise hath the day of grace, it may be eventide with many poor souls in this assembly.

12. There is one great disparity here, i. e., an artificial day cannot be shortened, it contains twelve hours, and not less nor more; and also a natural day cannot be shortened, it contains twenty-four hours, and no more nor less; but the day of gospel-grace may be shortened. God threatened the people of old, that night should be unto them. "Night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark," Mich. iii. 6. O that this may never be England's portion! "Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor of thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north to the east, to seek the word of God, but shall not find it," Amos viii. 11. I hope the day the Lord refers to here is past: no doubt it is that dismal day that hath overtaken poor Israel, I mean, the Jews. O what a long night have they seen! it hath been night with them near fifteen hundred years. But what a famine we may see, the Lord only knows: however, God can shorten our day of grace as he pleaseth.

The day of gospel-grace may be shortened.

13. The day suits not some men, they are for the night; the thief and the whorish woman are for the "twilight, for the black and dark night," Prov. vii. 9: so sinners are for the night; they love not the light, but rebel against it; they love darkness rather than the light: so doth also the deceiver and cunning impostor; he loves not the light of truth. Some men had rather popery, or anything came, than to have the gospel preached in the power of it; they desire to be indulged in their sins, and seek to have smooth things preached unto them, as if they had a mind blindfold to go to hell.

Some men wait for the night.

Lastly, There are many signs by which men know it draws towards eventide, or that night approaches.

1. As first when the heat of the sun is much abated, or gives but little heat after it hath for a time shone very hot: even so when the gospel-sun affords but little heat, or when the preaching of the gospel hath very little effect upon sinners' hearts, after a time when multitudes have found the blessed heat and influences thereof; and if this be so, may not we fear it draws towards night with us? O what a multitude of sermons have been preached, and hardly one sinner converted!

Some signs by which it is known the evening draws on, or night is near.

2. When the shadows of the evening are stretched out, or grow long, this sign I fear is upon us; for how long is the shadow above the substance, or a profession exceeding the power of religion?

3. When the labourers go home; and alas how many of our most able and choice labourers have we lost in a few years, and but few raised up in their stead! When a king calls home an ambassador of peace, what can be expected but war will follow? God no doubt hath a controversy with this nation, and not only against England, but against other nations also.

4. When the evening wolves begin to lurk out of their holes, and prey upon the sheep; the truth is, I think, no day abounded with evening wolves more than our day hath, and at this time doth: should I give you the characters of evening wolves, you would perhaps be of my mind, that we have abundance of these wolves, who boldly are got out, and have made a spoil of God's vineyard, and devoured many unwary souls.

But to proceed.

Prop. 4. "This world is like to a market-place where there are many idle persons, not yet sent into God's vineyard."

1. A market-place is no working-place; but here it is such a market-place where persons stand idle, but may be hired into Christ's vineyard. This world is no place for Christ's servants to work in; no, he calls them out of the world into his Church; these two are distinct places.

2. In a market-place nothing grows, but thither divers commodities are brought and offered to sale. This market-place may refer to the place of concourse, whither spiritual things are brought and offered by the ministers of Christ, by the commission he gave to

them; "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark xvi. 15.

3. There are many idle persons in the market-place, who are not yet hired or called into the vineyard, or who do not accept of Christ, nor enter themselves into his service.

SERMON XXXVIX.

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said, go into the vineyard, &c.—Matt. xx. 3.

DOCT. God calls some in the morning of their days into his vineyard; and it is their indispensable duty to obey his call, &c.

In opening of this proposition,

I. I shall endeavour to prove, that it is the indispensable duty of young persons to enter themselves into Christ's service.

II. Apply it.

Man naturally a rebel to God. I. Because until they enter themselves into the service of Christ, they remain idle; nay more, they are rebels against him. Sirs, we were born rebels to God, or in a state of enmity against him; and until our hearts and minds are changed, we abide in that rebellion: and is not this a horrid, unseasonable, and abominable thing, or piece of wickedness!

1. Consider what a Prince you have cast off, and revolted from, even the great God, and your most lawful Sovereign, from whom you received your very breath and beings: is it a light thing to be an enemy to God our maker, and oppose his will, despise and reject his authority?

2. Consider, what a master it is you serve (while you remain in your sins, or in a natural state) it is the devil, who is the the cursed enemy of God, and your sworn and implacable enemy also, and one that seeks to cut your throats, or to murder and for ever to destroy your precious souls, and your bodies also; "Who walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. v. 8. And next to Satan you serve another enemy, that Rom. vi. 23. is, sin, which is as bad and bloody an enemy as the devil: strange that you should be fond of his service, whose wages is eternal death! all men naturally serve their lusts. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Tit. iii. 3. And not our sin, but this evil world also, which hath by its deceptions and subtle snares, destroyed millions of souls.

3. Consider, that Jesus Christ died to redeem us out of the hands of these enemies; his precious blood was shed "to redeem us from all iniquity. We had sold ourselves, but are redeemed without money." Tit. ii. 14. See what the apostle Peter saith, "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from a vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. And now you young men, will you contemn such love, such redeeming love as this is, and despise such grace and favour, and choose to abide slaves of sin and Satan? Act. iv. 12.

4. Consider, that there is no other way to be delivered from the woeful condition you are in, but by Christ; you must accept him, embrace his gracious call, and own him to be your Lord and Master, to rule in you, and over you (as well as a priest and a Saviour to die for you) and until you accept of his call, and are hired into his service, you remain the servants of sin and the devil. "For to whom ye yield yourselves servants, his servants ye are." Rom. vi. 16. Is it not sad to think, that you have served the devil to this very day, and liked or approved of his service, and disapproved of Christ, and of the service of Christ?

5. Consider, that Jesus Christ hath made choice of you, I mean, young men and women, to be his servants: as under the law, "The firstling of the flock, and the first ripe fruits were the Lord's." He commandeth you now in the days of your youth, to remember your Creator, to remember he made and formed you for his own glory, and that he is your Sovereign, and that you came into this world to this end and purpose: and remember also, that your chief and only happiness consists in having him to be your

God, and in loving and living to him. Consider, that to remember thy Creator, is to esteem, or to set thy choice and chiefest affections upon him, and not a bare thinking of God, to think now and then upon Jesus Christ; but to have high and worthy thoughts of him, and of those glorious perfections that are in him, and what a fit object he is of thy love and affections, and of all trust, worship, praise, and adoration: and O remember what knowledge God hath of thee, and what power over thee, and also what great love unto thee.

6. Consider that this God, and blessed Jesus, is come this morning (by his poor and unworthy servant) to call you young men into his service, and to hire you into his vineyard; he esteems of you, and well accepts your persons, and your service, who shall embrace his call, and hearken to his voice: I say, you will be by him kindly accepted, as he had respect to Abel, and to his offering. But if you do not give him your hearts, and fall in love with Christ, no service you can perform will be regarded by him. Sirs, if an earthly prince should send his servant (or messenger) to you, to call and bring you to his court, with promises to confer great honour upon you, would you not presently go and wonder that he should vouchsafe such favours to you? and will you not think that this is far greater favour, and better news? what is the highest honour which an earthly prince can confer on us, to that honour God confers? what, to be an adopted son to the great God of heaven and earth, and become "an heir of God, and of a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Rom. viii. 17. Certainly you would not think yourselves too young to accept of the offer from an earthly king (I mentioned) and will you think you are too young to become the servants of Christ, and put him off until old age, and resolve at present (nay, until then) to serve your lusts, and the devil? Certainly you would be ashamed to send such an answer to him. Well, what answer then is it we must give, should he call for your reply? shall we say, here are, Lord, some third-hour persons, that stand idle, or some young men and women? but they say in their hearts, and by their hearts, and by their practices, that they will not obey thy call, nor accept thee to be their Master, to serve thee, nor renounce their old master; they slight and contemn all thy favours, and those honours thou offerest to them, thinking the service of sin and the devil better, would you like such an answer to be returned from you to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Christ calls and hires persons by his ministers.

What answer may be given to Christ from some young persons.

7. Consider, that you have lost three hours of your day already, it is nine o'clock: O let that time suffice, in which you have wrought the will of the Gentiles, in walking in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquettings, &c., 1 Pet. iv. 3. Is it not infinite grace that God will pass by your former rebellion, and vanities of childhood? nay, perhaps some of you are 20, 25 years of age, and so have lived many years in those abominable evils, to the dishonour of God, and to the utter ruin of your souls, if God's great love and goodness prevent it not, but if you now hear his voice, and accept of his call, all you former sins he will forgive, and blot out for ever.

8. Consider the advantages of your early age; religion now is most likely to make the deepest impression, and holy habits to be sooner acquired: your minds are now most at leisure, and not so engaged or lured with multitude of worldly thoughts, cares, and projects about earthly business, which others find by woful experience. That ground that hath lain long barren or unploughed, is hard to be broken up, or is not so easy to manure. A plant set but the last year, is sooner plucked up than an old tree; a colt is sooner broke than if you let him run wild till he becomes an old horse; you can bend a twig sooner than a great arm of a tree: also we put our children to learn any art or mystery when young, because youth can learn sooner than elder persons. And may not all these things convince you, that this is the best time to learn the mystery of religion and godliness? moreover, they are young maidens princes choose to marry, and young men that they choose for soldiers; not such that are old; who cannot endure hardness, nor tedious marches: and would you have Christ espouse you when you are old, and choose you for his soldiers, when you are not capable or fit for any service at all?

Youthful days have advantage above old age.

9. Consider, what a good master Jesus Christ is; do you think you can find a better? is not he worthy your best days, who spent all his days to open a way for you to enter into his service, and bought you with his own blood, that you might not be the servant of sin, of the devil, nor of this wicked world. Is it not a great honour to be the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be chosen, accepted, and hired by him? moreover, is not his pay, his rewards of grace enough to win your hearts? you shall have him, and all his riches for your hire; his righteousness, his grace, his glory for ever, if you will consent this morning to go and work in his vineyard: nay, hear further what he himself

Christ the best Master.

saith, "if any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be: and if any man serve me, him will my Father honour," John xii. 26.

10. Consider, will it not be a great dishonour and indignity to Jesus Christ, to find others preferred before him? will you cast such contempt upon him, and say in your hearts, you cannot love this Christ; no, I love the lusts of my own heart better, the pleasures and delights of the world better. You dare not say thus with your mouths: but pray take heed that this be not the voice of your hearts, and of your ways and works; for all that refuse the call of Christ, and continue in their sinful and evil courses, speak this forth to all the world; for actions speak louder than words.

11. Know, O young man, that though thou, my text says, art standing idle in the market place, yet thou art in some respect mighty busy and active; but soever thou dost employ thyself about, thou dost but rob God of his just-right until thou art hired by him, and comest to be his servant; for thou art his creature, he made thee for himself; and hath not he redeemed thee also? What wast thou made for, or why redeemed? to what end was it? know assuredly, that that portion or part of time thou dost devote to the service of sin, or to this world, thou dost go about directly to frustrate the design of God, both in creation and redemption: it is (as one observes) to snatch away sacrifice from God's altar, and to offer it to an abominable idol. Some sacrifice their youthful days to the idol of pleasure, and others to the idol of earthly honour, and some to the idol of money; and shall Satan be first served? and wilt thou rob God to serve the devil?

12. Consider, that the whole day is the Lord's, and it is a mercy thou art not in hell, for wasting three or four hours of it as thou hast done: we are all day labourers. Men that hire servants or labourers by the day, are not satisfied unless they begin to work early in the morning: and will God pay thee a whole day's work, that comest not into his vineyard until nine or ten of the clock? We ought to begin in the morning: the first fruit of time is the Lord's, the first of the called, the first fruit of the ground and trees was the Lord's; and the fat or best of the sacrifices. We are to begin the first day of the week, and the part of every day with the Lord; all shews that we must first begin in the morning of our days to serve the Lord. But O how doth the Lord Jesus outdo all other masters, to accept some labourers, who have lost many hours of the day, and yet give unto them as if they had worked the whole day!

13. Consider, that the first of thy days is the chiefest part of time; the faculties of thy soul then have more vigour, beauty, and strength, as the face of youth is most beautiful, and their strength most firm and excellent, and then, as was hinted, such are most capable to engage in any great and noble undertaking, as to run a race, or to fight a battle, youth is full of activity, beauty, and agility, the memory strong; they excel in capacity, quickness of fancy, and vivacity of spirit, and shall not the highest and most noble and sublime enterprize in this world, be set about at this time, and wholly be dedicated to the Lord?

14. Consider, that God saith, "It is good for man to bear the yoke (of Christ) in his youth," Lam. iii. 27; that is the best time to take this yoke, though it be not pleasant to the flesh, it is profitable and also very honourable. Some think the Lord only here refers to the yoke of afflictions, others to the yoke of the law, or legal yoke; but it is not good to be under that yoke long, I mean, the yoke of legal terror and bondage; but it is good to bear Christ's yoke. "My yoke (saith he) is easy, and my burden is light," Matt. xi. 29, 30.

There is, it is true, a twofold yoke.

1. The yoke of convictions.
2. The yoke of obedience.

It is chiefly the latter, no doubt, which our Lord intendeth; yet they that never come under the first, will never rightly come under the last. Let me hint a few things about the yoke of Christ.

(1.) It is a holy yoke, it binds or obliges us to holiness, in subjecting to all the commands and holy precepts he requires us to submit unto; the end and design of precepts, promises, and threatenings, is partly to promote holiness. "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1.

(2.) It is a spiritual yoke, a soul-yoke, it binds the soul, in all faculties, in obedience to the Lord Jesus, not but that the body, as well as the spirit, ought to bow to this yoke. We are obliged "to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which

Vain youth,
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The youthful
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What a yoke
Christ's yoke
is.

is our reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1. And the great motive to this obedience is the mercies of God, even his mercy in free justification, pardon, adoption, &c.

(3.) It is a strict yoke, it requires a most exact circumspect walking with God or a strict conversation, to walk by the exact rule of God's word, and by the holy pattern and example Christ hath left for us. "As many as walk according to this rule, peace on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God," Gal. vi. 16.

(4.) It is a just and reasonable yoke; is it not a righteous, a just, and reasonable thing, that the child should obey and honour his father, and a servant serve and honour his master, and subjects serve and honour their wise and faithful sovereign? but much more just and reasonable it is that the creatures do serve and honour the Creator, and the redeemed their most gracious Redeemer.

(5.) It is an abiding and lasting yoke; when once put on, or took unto us, we must never cast it off; we must never cast off obedience to God, and to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ's yoke
an abiding
yoke.

(1.) It is easy to the souls of such that dearly love Jesus Christ; love to him makes hard things easy. "And his commandments are not grievous." Who said this? why one that was a true lover of his Master.

How Christ's
yoke, is easy.

(2.) It is easy comparatively.

(1.) It is an easy yoke in comparison of the law, that was a very hard yoke, which the poor Jews were not able to bear; what a multitude of precepts had they, and some very hard and chargeable also?

(2.) It is easy in respect of the yoke of the devil, for that dreadfully galls the neck (I mean the conscience) of all who have any due sense and feeling in them.

It may be somewhat hard at first, but it is much easier afterward; such that are accustomed to it, find it very easy.

Quest. But why is it good to bear this yoke in our youth?

Ans. (1.) Because the earlier this yoke is taken up (as one notes) the easier it will be. Anything, saith he, is the more easily compassed by the earliness of the undertaking; of all that were possessed with evil spirits in Christ's time, it is observed, that none were so hardly cured, as they that had been possessed from their youth. Satan will not easily quit his hold, especially where he hath had long and quiet possession. How seldom doth grace graft upon a withered stock? That question of Nicodemus is not improper here, can a man be born when he is old? O how few are converted in old age! evil habits are not easily broken, rooted prejudices against religion are hardly extirpated.

MF. Mead on
early obedi-
ence.

Mark ix. 21,
29.

(2.) It is good to take up, and bear Christ's yoke betimes, because it is commanded; "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," Eccl. xii. 1; this is the sacred precept, and the commandment of God is holy, just, and good. "First seek the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness," &c. Is it not good to yield to the will of God? whatsoever God requires is good; that is, it is right and seasonable to do it, and evil to neglect it.

(3.) It is hereby we come to draw God-ward, Christ-ward, and heaven-ward, no drawing unless we take the yoke on us; when we are hired into Christ's service, we come under the yoke, as servants are said to be under the yoke. A solemn vow lays great obligation on him that makes it. "I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous precepts," Psal. cxix. 106. As it is reasonable that we begin with God, or dedicate to him (at his command) the prime of our days, so by putting on this yoke we see a necessity to work and labour all our days in his vineyard. When a virgin hath granted her full consent to become a man's wife, she dares not think of any other lover. "I have vowed (saith David) and cannot go back."

(4.) It is good because it is profitable. "He is a blessed man that God chooseth, and causeth to approach unto him, that he may dwell in thy courts; he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even thy holy temple," Psal. lxxv. 4. "Godliness is profitable unto all things," 1 Tim. vi. 6; and it is great gain. Is it not good to have our souls rich, or to have store of spiritual riches? Is it not good to have chains of gold put about our necks, and a crown on our heads? My brethren, grace doth this, it enriches, it adorns, and renders us truly honourable. "The godly are the most excellent in all the earth," Psal. xvi. 3. And from hence, "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren," Chron. iv. 9, 10. Is it not profitable to be richly clothed, to have in youth the best robe put upon us, as well as gloriously decked with jewels? You young maidens, what think you, that love bravery, or fine and rich attire? When once you become truly religious, you

will be richly adorned, yea, with ornaments that are comely in the sight of God, and in the eyes of Christ, so that he will be ravished with your beauty, as he speaks concerning his spouse; "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy eyes, with the chain of thy neck," Cant. iv. 9.

It is the highest honour to be truly religious.

(5.) It is good therefore, because it is honourable; grace makes us like God, and can there be greater honour than that? Such that put on this yoke, or come to Christ, and take his yoke on them, "They put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24. Every one of these resembles the son of a king. "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee," Isa. xliii. 4. What is it to have honour of men? "They that honour me, saith the Lord, I will honour." 1 Sam. ii. 30. Wicked men are a base and ignoble sort of people. True honour begins in religion, when we enter into Christ's vineyard, and are accepted in his sight. "I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour him," Psal. xvi. 14, 15. Is it not an honour to be a son or daughter of God, to be espoused to Christ, to walk in communion and fellowship with the Father and the Son? these things render it good to bear the yoke in our youth.

Christ remembers our love.

(6.) It is good, because early love to Christ will be remembered by him. "I remember thee, and the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals," &c. Jer. ii. 2. What most intimate acquaintance did some (who closed with Christ in their youth) arrive at with God and Jesus Christ! as Moses, David, Josias, John, Timothy, &c.

Christ's yoke frees us from the devil's yoke.

(7.) It is good, because hereby young men will be freed of the cruel yoke of sin and the devil. Satan's yoke is unbelief, and that binds all the guilt of thy sins to thy soul, yea, binds thee down under the bitter curses of the law, and under the wrath of God, nay, binds thee over to eternal wrath, or everlasting burning. Now is it not good to cast off such a yoke, and put on a yoke that will free thee of all that evil and danger which doth attend thee, or thou art exposed to?

Christ's yoke is a marriage yoke.

(8.) It is good to bear the yoke in thy youth, because it is that which binds thee to Jesus Christ, to draw with him; thou wilt hereby become Christ's yoke-fellow. Faith unites the soul to him. Sirs, this yoke is a marriage-yoke; and is it not good to have such a husband in thy youth? Christ is a beautiful person, and he is clearly for espousing such that are young; and will you not marry him until you are old, out of present love to sin, the devil's yoke?

15. Consider, this may be the time in which the Holy Spirit strives with thee; now he labours to bend thy rebellious will, and work grace in thee; and pray observe. (1.) It is the Holy Spirit that hires thee, and brings thee to consent to go into the vineyard; it is he that changes sinners' hearts, and makes them willing to fly all youthful lusts and vanities. (2.) Thou knowest not how long he may strive with thee; and if once he utterly departs, all hopes of thy being saved will be gone for ever. (3.) It is horrid ingratitude, and a most wicked thing to resist or quench the Spirit; besides, the danger is great, when a fire is almost quenched, it is hard to kindle it again. Can a sinner kindle this fire again? you may sin away all the good motions of the Holy Spirit, lose your convictions. "The yoke of sin is broken, because of the anointing," Isa. x. 27. Consider, under the law, they who gathered not manna in the morning, found none all the day. If when you have seasons, and want hearts, the time may come when you may have hearts, and want seasons; when you have a mind to be saved, God may have no mind to save you.

The Holy Spirit hires us into the vineyard.

Young Christians bring most glory to Christ.

16. Thou must now at the third hour enter into the vineyard, because thou art likely thereby to do the more service for Christ, and so bring the more glory to him, and be prevented to do more against him. (2.) To begin with Christ with the first, and to hold out with the last, is the glory of a Christian. Shall the flower of life, which is of Christ's setting, be of the devil's cropping? Such that rightly, or in sincerity, set out at the beginning of their days, shall hold out to the ending of their days; that is a lying proverb, a young saint, an old devil. A man may seem an early saint, and prove at last little better than a devil; but he that was ever indeed a saint, shall never cease to be one. (3.) Consider, this is the way to prevent bitter sorrow in the time to come. Job's youthful sins lay heavy upon him; and they made David cry, "Remember not the sins of my youth," Psal. xxv. 7. Youthful sins will be bitter first or last, and many times the sins of youth are the sorrow of old age. It is sad (saith Cayl,) when young sins, and old bones meet together. Indeed sins of youth, though

pardoned, being great, may be presented to a child of God as not pardoned, through Satan's subtlety. Know assuredly, that so long as thou neglectest the service of Christ, thou chooseth the service of the devil; all men are either the servants of Christ, or the servants of Satan.

17. Youth is the most proper season for religion. Infancy is too soon, then we were too young to work; and old age is too late, then we are generally past our labour; that is called the evil day; besides, they that refuse to embrace Christ's call in youth, may be hardened in sin when they are old. Therefore consider, delays are dangerous, God's patience may be wearied out, or thy life may be cut off; how many little graves mayest thou behold? I have heard of a young man, who passing through a church-yard, beholding many small and short graves, was so smitten, that he went home very sorrowful; his master seeing him, asked him what was the matter, O said he, sir, I think of dying; tush, said his master, thou art a lusty young man, why dost thou talk of death? Ah, replied he, I saw this day many small graves where such lie buried that were not so old as I am, O I fear death; or to this purpose he spake, and as I remember, upon it was converted.

Youth the proper time to work for God.

How uncertain is life? our days are compared to a shadow, and to the flower of the field. A tile from a house may knock out our brains, or be as fatal as a disease; may, a bit of bread may end our days as soon as the pestilential fever. A seaman (as one no-teth) being asked where his grand-father died? he said, at sea. Well, Mr. Mead, and where did your father die? he said, at sea also: then replied he, I wonder you dare venture to sea. Why, said he, I pray where did your grand-father, and your father die? he answered, in their beds; why, replied the seaman, I wonder then you dare go to bed.

Consider, O young man, that thou never indeed dost live until thou dost believe in Christ, or art quickened by him; many are dead whilst they live.

18. Religion will sweeten all other things to thee, which thou dost enjoy: what is health, and no Christ; riches, and no Christ, a good wife, and no Christ, or children, and no Christ? and hereby also thou wilt learn how to use the world, and wisely to improve what God gives thee to his honour, and thy eternal comfort.

Lastly, This will be a great evidence of thy sincerity, it may furnish thee with better arguments in this case, than perhaps an old disciple may meet with. "I thy servant feared the Lord from my youth," 1 Kings xviii. 12.

SERMON XL.

And he went out about the third hour, and found others stand idle, &c.—Matt. xx. 3.

THOUGH the early age of our lives may not primarily be meant by the third hour; yet I have begun to improve it that way, to stir up young people to enter into Christ's service, and have laid down many arguments to press it upon them.

I shall now come to consider some questions and objections that young people commonly bring in.

Quest. What would you have us who are young do? You talk of hiring us, and sending us to work in Christ's vineyard; but pray what is it to be hired?

Ans. 1. Negatively. It is not only to live a sober moral life; for morality is found in the field of this world: true religion doth not consist in mere acts of morality; though this is required of all, and such who do not thus live, are not fit to dwell among men, but ought to be punished by the just and good laws of nations.

2. Moreover, to be hired into the vineyard, is not to learn the articles of the true religion, or to have much head-knowledge. Men may talk religiously, and live wickedly; they may have God in their mouths, but sin and the devil in their hearts.

3. It is not barely to submit to this or that external ordinance, and to be of this or that sect of religion, or be visible church-members; for all these things you may do, and Christ never yet to this day have hired you.

2ndly. In the affirmative: (1.) It is wholly to give yourselves to the Lord, to be his covenant children and servants: such that take hold of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and who being united to him, are become new creatures, and are made able to renounce the service of sin and Satan, fleeing all youthful lusts, hating that

What it is to be hired.

which is evil, and falling in love with Christ, setting a great value on him, and esteeming him above father or mother, or life itself, such are hired; or whosoever do sincerely espouse Jesus Christ, may be said to be hired by him.

(2.) And being thus hired, it is your duty to go into the vineyard, or to join yourselves in communion with a true church of Christ, and so lead a holy gospel-life and conversation, in contempt of all the sinful honours, riches, pleasures, and evil customs of this world.

Object. But does not this tend utterly to spoil and mar all the pleasures, sweet delights, and comforts of our youthful days?

Answ. 1st. What do you mean by the pleasures and delights of youth? for either they are lawful delights and pleasures, or else sinful; if lawful, and your hearts are not inordinately set upon them, you will not be deprived of such pleasures: religion debars no man or woman of any lawful comforts or delights of the world; but if you mean sinful unlawful delights and pleasures, it is true, the grace of God will utterly spoil them, nay, and make them to become bitter to you; and to such a degree, that you will loath and hate them as much as you ever loved them: and to make you willing to cast all such delights

The vanity of
earthly plea-
sures.

away.

1. Consider, that all sinful pleasures are brutish, sensual, and devilish, being such that tend to gratify your carnal and fleshly hearts; and would you have such delights and pleasures which are so abominable to God, and dishonourable to yourselves? would you unman yourselves, and choose to be brutish? no man, unless he offers violence to his reason, but would abhor and condemn such delights and pleasures. Many of the heathens, by the help of the light of nature, have shewed their abhorrence of a vain, filthy, and sensual life; and will any of you plead for it, who have greater light to convince you of the evil that is in these things?

2. Consider, that sinful pleasures are soul-debasing pleasures; the soul is your most noble part, it being high-born, it is capable of communion with God, and to be filled with true spiritual delights and pleasures, such that saints and angels in heaven are ravished with, do you not believe that the delights and joys of heaven excel all earthly pleasures and delights whatsoever? why they, as to their nature, are spiritual, and a taste of them Christ gives to his faithful servants in this world, though the fulness of those joys is reserved for hereafter. And now will you subject your precious and noble souls to brutish lusts, which defile and pollute them, and utterly mar all its beauty, and refuse the other?

3. Sinful pleasures, know, O young man, are forbidden fruit; you cannot touch them, but you violate God's holy law. Will you carouse, sport and play with the old serpent, and condemn God in your hearts? these things God calls youthful vanities, and for which Eccles. xi. 9. he will bring you to judgment.

4. Sinful delights and pleasures are the devil's bait to catch fools, and destroy their Gen. iii. 6. souls; with this bait he caught Eve, the fruit she saw was pleasant to the eye, the devil, no doubt, suggested to our first parents, that God denied them that which was the most sweet, and most desirable fruit in all the garden, and rendered all things he allowed them worth little, in comparison of that; and so he strives to do still, and hath laboured to do ever since, as if God was a hard master, or loved not his creatures, or knew not what was good, and therefore he represents himself more kind to them, when all his whole design is to make poor mankind as miserable as himself, if possibly he can do it.

5. Sinful pleasures are deceitful, and hence they are called deceitful lusts, Eph. iv. 22. Satan suggesteth that there is that goodness, that sweetness, that delight and pleasure in such ways, that is not to be had any where else, no not in God himself; when it is all a lie, and an abominable abuse of the Holy God, which all who have tasted of his love can bear witness to, and declare and testify, the pain and anguish that attends all sinful pleasures, or follows them, shows they are deceitful delights and pleasures; and such "who follow lying vanities, forsake their own mercies," Jonah ii. 8. See here they are called lying vanities, they are vanities, and a lie; such young people that are taken with them, believe lies. Consider what they deceive, or strive to deceive poor creatures of. (1.) They deceive them of true peace, true joy, and comfort; even "Joy unspeakable, and full of glory." 1 Pet. i. 8. Those joys none can taste the sweetness of, until false and deceitful delights and pleasures become bitter to them, by means of that change of heart they obtain of God: for a carnal and sensual heart can taste nothing sweet but carnal and sensual things. (2.) What honour do they deceive you of? and (3.) Of what riches? (4.) They deceive or cheat you of your best days, and of the best opportunities and advantages to arrive at true happiness. Why is there a prize in the hand of fools? (5.) They deceive you of your reason, and render you mere fools, or void of understanding: See what Solomon

saith of one that followed an adulterous woman ; “ I beheld among the simple, I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding, passing through the streets, near her corner, and he went the way to her house.” Prov. vii. 7. O young men, you that are for merry meetings, to carouse it among your ungodly companions, and lay the reins loose upon the neck of your lusts, see here your character ; God calls such young men void of understanding, and if you were not such, you would never contemn God and Christ, out of love to sinful vanities, nor seek ways to murder your own precious souls. (6.) They deceive you of all the blessings purchased by Jesus Christ, and of that crown and kingdom he hath in store for all that love and serve him.

6. Consider the shortness of the time of the enjoying all your foolish vanities, they may not last one day ; you may be sporting to day, and in hell to-morrow : and will you, for the sake of these things, slight those joys and pleasures that are at God’s right-hand for evermore ?

7. Consider the shame they oftentimes bring upon poor deceived mortals in this world, besides that eternal shame in the world to come : you think with Jacob in another case, you have got beautiful Rachel, when it is bleary-eyed Leah in her room. You cry out as if you had found a rich diamond, when it is but a sorry flint stone, cut diamond-wise ; and these things will bring eternal shame upon you. You think none hardly so wise as yourselves, and yet know not how to take one good and safe step, but are posting down to the chambers of death. O what a sentence will one day pass upon you ? Go ye cursed into everlasting fire. “ God will then bring to light all the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts,” 1 Cor. iv. 5. Your secret acts of wickedness shall then be laid all open. O do nothing now but that which you are willing all men should see and know of ; for it will be made manifest then to your horror and everlasting shame, and confusion of face. Two things will follow sinful pleasures.

(1.) Pain. (2.) Shame.

These things will abide for ever, though the pleasures were gone long before.

8. And from hence it appears, that sinful delights and pleasures (as I told you) are dangerous, nay, soul-damning ; they are like the way of the harlot. “ Her house inclines to death, and her path to the dead.” Prov. ii. 18. Again it is said, “ Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death,” Prov. vii. 27.

9. Sinful pleasures satisfy not ; they rather disquiet and distract, than satisfy ; there is sweet peace and satisfaction in leaving and loathing them, but none in the enjoying them : ask your own experiences, but if you have not found them so yet, ask such who gave up themselves, through madness and folly, to them, whose eyes God hath opened. Ask Solomon, and he will tell you much more.

Secondly. Consider the nature of spiritual delights and pleasures, which come to be enjoyed, in casting off, and abhorring of those pleasures you speak of.

(1.) Spiritual delights, to rejoice in God and in Christ, and in his love and favour, suit with the soul, or most sweetly gratify the inward man : you young men that love the vanities of this world, you never yet tasted that which is truly good, nor ever will till you taste of God ; then you will know how good he is, and how sweet his love is.

The nature of spiritual joy and delight in God.

(2.) Spiritual pleasures, and inward joys, are of a soul-raising, soul-ennobling, and of soul-exalting nature. “ I will set him on high, because he hath known my name,” Psal. lxxxii. 14. To have communion with God, and to lie in Christ’s bosom, is a soul-ravishing, and a most sublime thing.

(3.) Spiritual pleasures are real, not seeming or deceitful, but substantial, such that the soul filled with them, is not able to express ; and as they are real, so they are increasing, and durable, they will be much more than now they are, when all the bitter of sin, of sorrows, and temptations (we meet with in this world) are gone : for if there is so much real and sweet joy and consolation experienced by us now, who believe, whilst we meet with so many bitter things, what will that peace and joy be, when we shall have all sweet, and no bitter ? Furthermore, how have many found the worst of bitter things in this world (that a child of God can meet withal) turned into sweet, by the enjoyment of Christ’s love, and gracious presence ?

(4.) Spiritual joys and delights bring no shame along with them ; no, they are far from having any such effect, for they cause boldness and confidence at all times ; and when we are most reproached, such can always, and in every place, lift up their heads and show their face. “ And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,” Rom. v. 6.

(5.) They are commanded, as all others are forbid: God allows freely these delights. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart," Psal. xxvii. 4. "Commit thy way to him, and he shall bring it to pass," ver. 5.

(6.) They are soul-satisfying: Moses found more delight and satisfaction in bearing the cross of Christ, or suffering reproaches for Christ, than in all the pleasures of sin for a season. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures," Psal. xxxvi. 8. See here, O you young men, there are rivers of pleasures, both to drink in, and to swim in.

What do you say now, will you be hired, and go into Christ's vineyard.

Object. Every man must have a time to sow his wild oats, some allowance to please himself in his youthful days.

Ans. Thou hast sowed too much of that seed already, which thou callest wild oats; and pray consider what a crop you are like to reap of them.

1. A crop of filth, yea, most abominable filth and pollution; for it is a most odious and hateful sort of seed. Youthful lusts defile and pollute the whole man. Sin is fitly compared to a leprosy, or to filthy running sores, that stink and are corrupt, or to a "filthy sepulchre." Do you not read how David cried out, "that his wound stunk, and was corrupt, because of his foolishness." "For my loins are filled with a loathsom disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh," Isa. i. 5, 6; Matt. xxiii. 27; Psal. xxxiii. 5, 7. Now all this was the effect of his sowing the seed you call wild oats.

2. You will reap a crop of inward guilt more than you will be able to stand under, when God awakens your sleepy consciences. O how will you roar out in distress and anguish!

3. Ofttimes many have also hereby reaped the crop of want and poverty in this world, like as did the prodigal, by wasting all he had upon harlots.

4. You will, if you go on, at last reap a crop of God's divine wrath and vengeance: for you do but hereby "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath," Rom. ii. 5. They that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh "reap corruption," Gal. vi. 8. If you like these crops, go on and sow your wild oats; but O that you would be more wise! May be you are convinced of your folly, but yet object.

Obj. Many have begun to be religious, but have come to nothing.

Ans. 1. A profession of religion, taken up upon false principles, or for base ends, is the cause that some turn with the dog to his vomit. Where there is not uprightness, there will not be long perseverance. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall grow stronger, and stronger," Job xvii. 9. Because some imitate a true Christian, or counterfeit Christians come to nothing, doth it follow a true Christian may come to nothing also? Or because an artificial motion may fail, must a natural motion fail likewise? The sole of your shoe wears out, but the sole of your foot grows thicker and harder, and wears not out by going barefooted; because there is not life in the one, but there is life in the other. Hypocrites fall, but the upright in heart remain unmoveable. "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but transgressors shall fall therein," Hos. xiv. 9.

2. You may thank the Arminians for this objection, who affirm, a man may be a child of God to-day, and a child of the devil to-morrow. Can a child cease to be the child of the Father that begat him? True, he may offend his Father, but cannot cease being his child. Can such that are truly united to Christ, that living root, wither and be cut off? or because some do, who were only in him by an external profession, or in appearance only, and not in reality. "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. Are not all Christ's sheep put into his hands to be preserved unto eternal life? or is not the covenant of grace sure, and well ordered in all things? or is not the love of God unchangeable? "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40.

Obj. The service of Christ is too hard and difficult for such unexperienced young persons as we are, and tends to dull and besot, or breed melancholy thoughts in our minds, and render us fit for no business.

Ans. 1. Both not Christ say, his "yoke is easy and his burden is light?" Matt. xi. 29, 30. You take notice of the duties of religion, or hardness of some precepts, but consider not the promises, which assure us of strength and continual support. It is no matter how heavy the burden is, if God gives us strength to bear it.

2. This objection is made by such that never tasted that the Lord is gracious. Those that work in Christ's vineyard are allowed to drink of the

What a crop
the seed of
lusts produc-
eth.

The reasons
why some
young men
back-slide
from God.

Such that are
in Christ can
never finally
fall away.

Such that
know what

wine which is the fruit of the true vine, which is so cheering and reviving, that it delivers them from all that dulness, and those melancholy thoughts of which you speak, and renders such who taste thereof, more capable and fit for any business, than such can be who are under the accusation of their own consciences, and the dread of God's eternal wrath, not knowing, when it is morning, but that they may be in hell before evening.

good is in religion, will never dispraise it.

guilty consciences, and the dread of God's eternal wrath, not knowing, when it is morning, but that they may be in hell before evening.

3. You should make a trial of an excellent cordial before you condemn it, or to say it has no virtue in it. How should such know the comforts and consolations of God, who never tasted of them? Those that obey Christ's precepts, and apply his promises, will never say his service is hard, or his commandments are grievous.

It is base to condemn the ways of God without making trial of them.

4. The sorrows and dejections of spirit that some Christians are under, are rather for the want of more strict godliness, and not for being religious, and professing of godliness; or else through ignorance of some cheering and soul-reviving principles. Sorrow for sin brings joy, if it proceeds from true grace and right principles, or from evangelical repentance.

5. Consider what your easy way in gratifying the flesh will bring you unto in the end. Is it not better to walk in a hard and strait way, that leads to the possession of a crown, than in a green and pleasant way that leads to shame and utter ruin and destruction? Is it not much better to be sometimes a little sad and heavy here for a moment, than to cry and howl in hell under horror for ever hereafter?

6. Besides, is not the work and toil you take in finding, and in seeking the world, harder than the service of Jesus Christ? How do you weary yourselves for very vanity! Moreover, what lawful pleasures and comforts of this life doth religion deprive us of?

Obj. But is it not hard to pull out a right eye, and cut off a right hand? Such things as these we are told religion puts upon us.

Ans. 1. Would you not rather have an eye pulled out, or a hand cut off, than to die a bitter, languishing, and miserable death? when by bearing that pain and loss, you shall live a happy life, without feeling more pain, or knowing sorrow.

Better have corrupt members cut off than lose our lives.

2. Or is it not better to pull out a right-eye lust, or a right-hand lust, than to have your whole body and soul cast into hell?

Object. We shall be reproached and scoffed at, and had in derision, and who can bear such things?

Ans. 1. Was not our blessed Saviour reproached? And were not holy Job and David made the song of drunkards? "And now am I (saith Job) their song, yea, I am their by-word," Job xxx. 9. And saith David, "When I wept and chastened my soul by fasting, it was to my reproach," Psal. lxxix. 7, 8, 12. "I am become a stranger to my brethren—I have borne reproach, shame hath covered my face.—They that sit in the gate speak against me, I am the song of drunkards."

2. Shall Jesus Christ suffer such hatred, shame, reproach, and spitting on for you, and do you think it too much to suffer a little shame from wicked men for his name sake, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen on me." "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair," Psal. lxxix. 9. "I hid not my face from shame and spitting," Isa. l. 6. Which is hardest, the cross Christ bore, or that which we bear?

Christ suffering reproaches for us should teach us to suffer reproaches for him.

3. Which is better to suffer, shame for Christ's sake in this world, or eternal shame in hell, in the world to come, for the sake of your youthful lusts and vanities.

4. Did not "Moses esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, and rather chose to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?" Heb. xi. 25, 26. And did not Paul say, "He took pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, and distresses for Christ," 2 Cor. xii. 10. And hath not our Lord pronounced them blessed, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake," Matt. v. 11. And thus the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ.

5. Which is the best, to bear shame for Christ, or to have Christ to be ashamed of us in the great day, as he says he will be ashamed of such? Mark viii. 30. Acts v. 41.

Will you count that hard and grievous, that all wise and good men have rejoiced in! alas, the Spirit of grace and glory resteth upon such that are reproached for Christ and religion sake. 1 Pet. iv. 14.

Object. There are such diversity of opinions, what way shall I choose! were there but one religion, I might soon resolve what to do.

Ans. Because there are many religions, will you be irreligious, or of no religion at all?

There is but one true religion.

who shut out

No necessity of being of this or that sect.

2. It is a mistake, there is but one true religion, though many true Christians differ about small circumstantial things in that religion, yet all that are truly godly do agree in all the essentials of Christianity as one man. Such of heaven all that in every thing are not of their opinion, or of their church, seem to be void of charity, if not of true religion itself.

3. It is not of such absolute necessity that thou must be of this or that sect, provided thou art a regenerated person, and holdest the head, nor being guilty of any capital error, and also walkest up to the top of thy light, and in nothing seekest to stifle the convictions of thy own conscience, and improvest all means to inform thy judgment, and canst say with the good man of old, "What I know not teach thou me.

4. Search the scripture, which is a perfect rule, and the only rule both of faith and practice; and be of that sect which thou art persuaded is nearest in their own church-state and communion to the primitive churches.

Object. This word repentance you talk of, I do not like; it is a melancholy word, or very unpleasant, what, rend the heart, and be always weeping.

Repentance is a sweet word.

Ans. It is one of the sweetest words that is contained in the book of God.

For,

1. Consider, the law affords not a word of this, that admits of no repentance, but all the transgressors of the law of Moses died without mercy.

2. Consider, it is the effect of God's infinite love to open a door for repentance; neither could it be had without the shedding of the blood of the Son of God, "For as there is no remission without the shedding of his blood," Heb. ix. 22, so there is no evangelical repentance without it.

3. Consider that repentance carries in it pardon of sin; and would not a condemned criminal, brought to the place of execution, think it a sweet word to hear his prince's free pardon read to him? being bid to repent, and throw himself down at his sovereign's feet, would he not accept it as an act of his grace! why thus it is here.

4. Repentance is a choice gift, and vouchsafed but to a few, as the effects of God's distinguishing love and favour; his unconceivable goodness is the spring and motive of it. "Him hath God exalted at his right-hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins," Acts v. 31.

What repentance is.

Rom. viii. 7.

5. Would you not have your evil hearts and minds changed, to love the Lord your God, rather than have the enmity in your wills and carnal minds against God, remain in you? for this is the greatest part of repentance, it is

not legal terror; no, that repentance which ariseth from thence is a melancholy thing indeed, and caused Judas, and some others under despair to hang themselves. But to see our sins laid upon Christ, to behold him pierced, and to look up believingly, trusting through his blood for remission, and from thence to mourn bitterly for sin, to see what he endured for our sakes, and to be grieved that ever we offended God, or caused Christ Jesus to endure so much misery for the sake of our sins, is a sweet repentance.

6. Is repentance unto life a melancholy word? what, forsake your sin and live; repent, and you shall not perish: repent, that your sins may be blotted out; are these unpleasant words? "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," Acts xi. 18. God granted, it is a gift given and granted of God, and it is called repentance unto life, because God hath appointed that it should precede our entrance into life, for as none can see God without holiness, Heb. xii. 12, so none shall see life without repentance; though it is not our repentance that brings us hither, neither is it our title to eternal life. No, no; but where there is no true repentance, there is no true faith, for true faith and

Faith and repentance are twins.

true repentance are twins, they are always born together; though repentance appears first, yet it proceeds from faith, all grace is infused into the soul (in the seed) when one grace is infused.

Great blessings accompany repentance.

7. Consider what it is that accompanies true repentance. Would you have the guilt of sin removed, would you have your sins cast into the depth of the sea, or blotted out, or cast behind God's back, and put away from him and you, as far as the east is from the west, or the north from the south? would you have the heavy burden that lies upon you (if you are a convinced sinner) taken off? would you have your wounded souls healed, and have rest and peace for ever; why all

these things attend or accompany faith and evangelical repentance, though not from the worth of these graces, no, but for the worth and sake of Christ's merits only. Faith and repentance do not purchase them, but faith and repentance always do accompany them. It is in this way faith always leads the soul, no man is eased of his weight until he feels it; he that never repenteth is never pardoned,

8. I told you that there is more sweetness, more ease and comfort ten thousand times in leaving and loathing of sin, than there is in the committing it. Which do you think is best, the pleasures of sin, or peace of conscience; why do you think that unpleasant now, which you and all men (awakened at death) would esteem above ten thousand worlds, what would some men give for true repentance on a death-bed? Why should that be unpleasant in God's time, which you would prize in your time, but cannot find it? God's time is now; "To-day if you will hear his voice," and repent. Your time perhaps will not come till you can live no longer. You would leave your sins when you can sin no more, or no more commit those sins that you loved. Ah, how few have repentance at death, and how hard is it to know true repentance then, when there is no time left for a trial or experience of the nature thereof.

9. That which there is an absolute necessity of is vain to dispute about, or cry, O it is difficult. You must, O young men, repent or perish, "I tell you nay, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3, 5. Repentance is of absolute necessity.

Would a man, whose house is all in a flame over his head, say, it is too hard a work for me to get out, though if he strives to break through the flames, he may save his life; no, no, he will venture through the midst of danger to escape death. And shall any say, the work of repentance and mortification is so hard and difficult, they will not set about it; yet it is said, if they do not repent, if they are not born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God but must perish in hell for ever. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," Rom. viii. 13; that is, be damned. As God hath ordained and determined that no man shall be saved, but he that is regenerated, so there is a moral necessity of it; no unholly person can taste the joys of heaven (could he enter into that holy place) because they are spiritual.

Object. There are multitudes (say what you will) that mind not religion any more than we, nay, not so much, for they will not hear the word preached; and some of them are counted very wise men.

Answ. Because multitudes walk in the broad way, and go in at the wide gate, will you also? Moreover, know that the greatest part of mankind shall certainly perish. Also such that the people of this world call wise men, God calls fools, because the God of this world hath blinded their eyes, are you not willing to have your eyes opened?

Object. But may we not believe and repent, and go into the vineyard hereafter, even at the eleventh hour?

1. God calls you at the third hour, he may not call some others until the eleventh; but what ground have you to hope God will call you at last, who refuse his call now and resolve to live in rebellion against God all your days, or until you are old?

2. Because some have escaped, who suffered shipwreck, will you therefore wilfully run your ship upon a rock? Besides, we read but of one in all God's world, who found mercy at last. O therefore do not presume, and trust to latter repentance!

3. Hath not God said, that he will not hear them who call upon him in their distress, who refused to hearken to him when he called them? see Prov. i. 25,—27. Say not therefore that you are too young, for if you are old enough to be damned, are you too young to be saved? Be assured, if you make a good beginning, you have a blessed ending; the fire which was laid on God's altar never went out. Grace may be shaken in the soul, but it cannot be shaken out of the soul; it may be a bruised reed, but such reeds shall not be broken: he that is the Beginner and "Author of our faith, will be the Finisher of it. And he that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ," Phil. i. 6.

SERMON XLI.

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said, Go ye also into the vineyard.—Matt. xx. 3, 4.

Doct. That God calls some, hires some, and sends them into his vineyard, in the morning of their days.

That it is the indispensable duty of young men to obey this call, I have proved, and answered many of their objections.

I shall now proceed to the application.

First. We infer, That great is the folly, ignorance, and vanity of youth: for alas! very few regard the call of Christ. "Childhood and youth are vanity," Eccl. xi. 10.

No age is more subject to folly and vanity than childhood and youth. "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child," Prov. xxii. 15. Moreover, the way of young people is very filthy; and hence it is said, "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?" Psal. cxix. 9. "All bring polluted hearts into the world with them, and quickly they by their actual sins add much more filth unto it." "They go astray from the womb, telling lies."—"I saw among the simple ones a young man void of understanding," Prov. vii. 7. One, what but one? Certainly it signifies, that young men generally are vain, simple, or without spiritual understanding.

Let me show wherein the sin and folly of youth lies, appears, or doth consist.

Wherein the sin and vanity of youth doth consist. First. The sin and vanity of youth is intimated in my text, viz. idleness; morning sinners stand idle in the market-place. It holds good in the mystical sense, as well as in the literal. Many young people love not to labour, but the worst of idleness they are most prone to, they love not to labour for their souls; they care not to take pains to search their own hearts, they think it is a long while to night, and that they shall have leisure time in the afternoon to prepare for an eternity; towards night is time enough, they say, to make ready to go to bed, but night comes upon thousands of them before it is noon.

Young men rash and inconsiderate. The sins and vanities of youth consist in that rashness and inconsiderateness which attends their spirit and age; they are like a wild ass's colt. How hard is it to persuade young people to think of their souls, or to believe they are in a state of wrath, and dead in sins and trespasses? would to God you would be brought to consider the woful condition you are in. O ye young men and women, know assuredly, that if you are not renewed, nor converted, you are enemies to God, yea, under the curse of an angry and incensed God. O will you be so inconsiderate as not to lay it to heart! O how unconcerned do you seem to be! Besides, you do not appear as if you gave credit to what is said unto you, neither regarding your danger, nor your duty. Shall I put you upon asking your souls a few serious questions?

Proper questions for young men to ask their souls.

1. Say, Am I born again or not, regenerated or not?
2. Is my soul in a saved and safe state or not?
3. What will my sins bring me unto in the end, if I persist in the ways I now take?

4. What, O my soul, is sin? how evil is it? Is it not the plague of all plagues?
5. Whose influences am I under? Who is it I am led by? Do I follow the dictates of the good Spirit of God? or am I led by the devil, who labours to destroy my soul?
6. What is my state by nature, and what would become of me, if I should die this night?
7. What is the only way to be saved, or how may I attain unto eternal life?
8. What is man's chiefest good, and what is the only way to be happy in life and death?
9. How shall I stand at God's tribunal, in the great day? and in whose righteousness must I be found, if I stand the judgment, and am not sentenced to eternal flames?
10. Am I able to dwell with everlasting burnings, or in devouring fire; the fire that cannot be quenched, and the gnawing worm that never dies?

11. Is not Jesus Christ worthy my acceptance?

12. What is my main business which I should mind, or wherefore was I sent into this world? and have I answered hitherto man's last end?

13. Is not the love of God the Father, and the love of Jesus Christ, better than all the pleasures of sin, or earthly vanities?

14. Are not the company I keep, and the people I love to converse with, the enemies of my immortal soul?

15. Had I not better displease my earthly parents, who are ungodly, and close with Christ, though they turn me out of doors, than for Christ to shut me out of heaven, and thrust me into hell?

O how few young people either consider of, or ask their souls questions of this nature! do they not rather say, "Who will show us any good?" How may I attain to earthly honour, and raise my condition and grandeur in the world? or how may I attain to riches? or what may I do to have many merry days, and fill my heart with earthly joys and pleasures, and vanquish sorrow and sadness from my thoughts, that my heart may cheer me in the days of my youth? Such things as these poor inconsiderate youths think upon. And when enticed by Satan and his instruments, and the evil of their own hearts, to pride, sports, and pleasure; how soon (though unadvisedly) do they yield, and like the young man, straightway follow? See, O young man, your character and shameful folly and madness, and labour to be more wise, and to get serious thoughts of God, of eternity, and of your own souls, and how uncertain your life is, and abide no longer under stupid ignorance, but observe what God commands you to do.

Thirdly, The sins and vanities of youth appear in those strong inclinations that are in them, to gratify their sensual appetites, and lay the reins loose on the neck of their lusts; they are more governed by fancy and imagination than by solid reason, or merely by sense, like brutish animals, not knowing what faith is, nor what it is to live above, in the enjoyment of true peace and felicity. How ready are they to be taken with pomp and vain glory! if religiously inclined, and not sparingly enlightened, then they are swelled up with pride and ambition, and aspiring thoughts, admiring themselves, and contemning others, as if they were wiser than every body, and seek to be had in admiration, loving the applause of men. And if irreligious, then they scoff at, and jeer all that are virtuous, or truly godly, and affect the honour of this world, and glory in their strength, beauty, or great wit, or natural, or acquired parts and accomplishments. Youth is naturally inclined to have a high opinion of themselves.

Youth inclined to gratify their sensual appetites.

Fourthly, The sin and vanities of youth consist in their obstinacy; they commonly are very head-strong "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," not regarding the good advice and counsel of their pious parents. They are indeed much like some young scholars, who having got a little learning, think they equal the greatest critics, or most profound men for parts and learning in the world, or old experienced ministers. These are like some, who having learned a little of the art of navigation, take upon them to steer a ship at sea, and will not be ruled by a skilful pilot, and so run the ship on some rock or sands where she is split to pieces: and hence it is that some young men, though perhaps gracious, are so quarrelsome, headstrong, contentious, peevish and ungovernable; there is no dissuading them out of their opinion, but they are "wiser in their own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason," Prov. xxvi. 16.

Young people obstinate and self-willed.

Fifthly, The sins and vanities of young men lie in their choleric, and violent passions. Children are observed to be very peevish, and youth full of wrath and anger, if crossed in their way. Not that all young people naturally are alike in these respects; no, no, a good nature, and a good education, makes a vast difference in some, above what is in others: general rules do not always include all particulars.

Youth prone to anger, and heats of passion.

Sixthly, Levity is another sin that cleaves commonly to youth. O how full of vanity are they in their behaviours, loving vain garbs and fashions, foolish and antique dresses, though it exposes them to shame, snares, and temptations; loving foolish sights, frothy songs (and some of them obscene pictures) and idle romances, and to delight in mirth and music. Also how vain and wanton are they in their talk and discourses, and in their demeanours and deportments, and behaviour! these things are some of the vanities of youth, which religion teacheth utterly to flee.

Levity a sin of youth.

Seventhly, The sins and vanities of youth partly consist in the "Lusts of the flesh," or uncleanness, and also in gluttony and drunkenness, nature being in its full strength and vigour, and they not having principles of grace to restrain and subdue their inordinate desires. What filthy and unclean thoughts continually possess them? and how subject are they to be overcome, to commit actual fornication and uncleanness, and lose their chastity! which sin, thousands (it is to be feared,) in these days are overcome by. Moreover, great drinking, gluttony, are the inlets to this abominable sin, which some committing in their youth, bewail in their old age, and go mourning to their graves; but the blot will never be taken away. And this sin also is the

Youth prone to uncleanness.

inlet oftentimes to theft. How many are put upon stealing to gratify their lusts, and the lusts of lewd women, and so many of them brought to shameful deaths?

8thly. Lying is also another sin to which youth are inclined. How from the cradle do many show a proneness to this abominable evil! "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies," Psal. lviii. 3. God positively saith, "That all liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." Yet how guilty are multitudes of them of this soul-damning sin, which they learn of the devil, "who is a liar, and the father of it," John viii. 44. Many young people, to avoid the anger of parents, or masters, contrive lies, dreading their displeasure more than the wrath and vengeance of an offended God. But ah! is it not better to take shame for a fault here, than to be put to eternal shame hereafter?

9thly. Prodigality likewise is another sin, and vanity young people are prone to; they will not grudge at any expense to please and gratify their sensual appetites (it is said, the prodigal spent all he had on harlots,) and those who waste not their substance that way, yet do it by drunkenness, gluttony, or by rich and costly apparel.

10thly. Inconstancy is another youthful sin and vanity; how fickle and unconstant in their promises, resolutions, and purposes are some young people? One while all of a fire in their love and affections, and presently stone cold. New things strangely take with them, as new fashions, new notions of religion; and it is a marvel if they are not for new preachers. Also, a small matter offends them; they are soon hot, and soon cold, or not steady and established in their minds, or not settled in their affections and judgments. In the morning of their days, they are too much like the early clouds, and morning dew, that passeth away. So inconstant and fleeting is their goodness, and their desires, purposes, and resolutions.

Lastly. Their evil appears also in delays and excuses about setting themselves upon minding eternal things; they are subject to put the evil day afar off, and defer repentance, and the seeking Jesus Christ to another day, saying, it is time enough to mind such matters.

Quest. What should we that are young do, to avoid these and other sins, and youthful vanities and pollutions?

Ans. I know some give many directions, but alas, all signifies but little until you get changed hearts. Common grace, and good education, may, it is true, restrain or bridle youthful lusts, but the way is to obtain special grace; to root out your vicious habits, or pull up the evil roots of sin so far as possible, is the most effectual way and course you should take; it is to be hired by Jesus Christ, to accept of his call, to receive him by faith into your hearts, love, and affections.

Secondly. If it be so hard for youth to obey Christ's call, (they being prone to so many evils) then what cause have you that are old Christians (who from your youth have been truly religious,) to bless God, and to admire his grace to you, which wrought so effectually in your souls! O what evils have you been helped to avoid! Besides, you are arrived to the honour of being old disciples, and have attained to great and long experience of God's goodness. Use hath made you perfect in the way and work of godliness; that which is hard to others (nay, impossible to such who are not renewed,) is easy to you.

Thirdly. And you that are young, that are truly gracious, have likewise cause to praise God that he hath overcome you, and given power to you, to resist all the temptations of the devil, and to mortify the corruptions of your hearts, and to feel the power of converting grace.

Fourthly. Be exhorted to take heed and beware still of all youthful lusts, lest some weeds spring up again from the body of sin; for in you still are some remainders of the evil root; and this made holy Paul to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom. vii. 24. And hence the same apostle exhorted Timothy "To flee youthful lusts, to follow righteousness, faith, charity, and peace with them that call on the Lord, out of a pure heart," 2 Tim. ii. 22. That more especially which I would exhort you to, is that you labour under humility, strive to be lowly-minded! Ye young men, who are gracious, and subject still to be conceited, and lifted up with pride, watch your own hearts when any foolish people praise or admire you to your faces; for such are but the devil's instruments, Satan stirs them up so to do, that he may cause you to fall under his condemnation. He fell by pride, and that way many young men have fallen also, and come to nothing.

Fifthly. From hence also I may see cause to exhort you that are parents to see you discharge your duty towards your sons and daughters; take heed you train not up your children for the devil, by indulging them in any evil way, to gratify their inordinate

lusts and desires, through the fondness of your affections, by sending them to dancing schools, or balls, or to keep company with profane and debauched young people, or to feed their proud and ambitious inclinations. Is this the way to train them up in the way they should go, “and to bring them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord?” Eph. vi. 4. To please your children in things that are evil and hurtful to their souls, is but to hate them, and prove yourselves their worst enemies, instead of showing true love to them.

The fond love of parents re-proved.

Bring them up to read their mother-tongue. Whatever you do not for them, neglect not this, that they may be able to read God’s holy word, and put them upon praying to God betimes, to renew and regenerate their souls, and instruct them into all the principles of true Christianity; and be sure bring them, if possible, under the clear preaching of the gospel, and have a watchful eye over them, as such that must be accountable for their souls. And the like care take also of your servants, I mean, in bringing them to attend on God’s word, and exhort them to lead a holy life. O cherish every good motion, and soberly answer any serious question about religion they may ask you, as well as you can.

The duty of parents to children and servants.

Take a few motives to press you to these duties.

1. Consider, God hath entrusted you with the care and charge of your children’s souls. Ministers have the charge of your souls committed to them; but the care and charge of your children’s souls is more your business than theirs, until they are converted, and come into the vineyard, and so are under their eye, and holy watch.

2. You take great care (whilst under your wing,) to feed and clothe their bodies; and when their clothes are worn out, you will provide them new ones; and when they are sick, you will send to some physician. And will you not much more take care that their precious souls are fed, clothed, and healed? You would not (when children,) see them fall into the fire, but cry out, and strive to save their natural lives; and will you not strive and do what you can, that they may not fall into everlasting burnings, or cry out to God to save their souls? Would you let hungry lions tear them in pieces, and you not help them if you can? and will you suffer the devil, that roaring lion, to devour them, without crying to Christ to deliver them from being a prey to him, and so be destroyed for ever?

3. Consider, that all godly parents ever took care of their children in this case. “I know (Abraham,) saith the Lord, that he will command his children, and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord,” Gen. xviii. 19. Joshua likewise said, “I and my house, will serve the Lord,” &c., Joshua xxiv. 15. And thus all the godly ever did; and therefore it should be our care to do the like, and follow their example.

The godly always took care of their families and the souls of their children.

4. Consider, how Eli, for his neglect, or being remiss in his duty, provoked the Lord, and was severely chastened; God charged him with despising him. “They that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed,” 1 Sam. ii. 30. What had he done? Why, he did not severely rebuke and restrain his sons from committing those great sins they were guilty of, to the dishonour of God, and reproach of his people.

1 Sam. ii. 14, 15, 22.

5. Remember, (as I hinted,) you must also give account for the souls of your children, and if they perish, and you warn them not, will not God require their blood at your hands?

Sixthly, Young men, will you resolve to give yourselves up to Jesus Christ? Will you be hired this day? O know, that as it is your duty, so it is your true interest so to do, in respect of honour, riches, joy, peace, and safety.

Take a few directions in order to your entering yourselves into Christ’s service.

1. Strive to understand, or be informed what your condition is, whilst you are strangers to God and Christ, and in the state of nature; know, you that are the children of believers, as well as you that are children of ungodly parents, are all naturally in the same state and condition. “All are dead in sin, and children of wrath by nature,” Eph. ii. 1—3. And that no external ordinance, nor act of your parents, or as done by yourselves, can put you into the covenant of grace, or make you the children of God; no, it must be done by God himself; it is his own work by his Spirit upon the soul, that makes the difference.

The children of believers in no better state by nature, than others.

2. Though you are young, and may be ignorant of God at present, yet “labour to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” See David’s advice. “And thou my son Solomon, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart. No service performed to God will be accepted till you arrive to a true and saving knowledge of God in Christ, who though he is a just and holy God, yet in his Son he is reconciled; all that know not God

The knowledge of God in Christ absolutely necessary.

shall perish. "My people perish for want of knowledge." It is not enough for you to be taught to live sober, moral lives; no, no, but God promised "to give his people pastors after his own heart, that should feed them with knowledge and understanding," Jer. iii. 15. Ignorance is dangerous. "They know not me, saith the Lord," Jer. ix. 3.

3. If God hath not yet given you his special grace, yet labour to live sober lives, and improve your natural powers, and all helps you have in order to put a curb upon all inordinate and unruly lusts and passions, and be sure avoid wicked and profane company.

4. Be much in reading of God's word, and in prayer; God will be found of them that seek him. And be also frequently under the ministry of the word, and hear such who preach Christ; Christ being the great Subject they continually insist upon. Faith comes by hearing. But it is Christ then that must be preached. How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?

5. Never rest notwithstanding on bare hearing, nor be satisfied until you find faith, and a changed heart wrought in you.

6. Be obedient to your parents in all things in the Lord. Disobedience to parents is a most abominable evil. O see you have their consent in marriage, when you think to change your condition; but seek the kingdom of God first, and espouse Christ, and then you will strive to choose the better yoke-fellow, I mean, one that is a believer; for it is a sin, or a breach of God's holy precept, to marry with idolators, or with profane persons; for as this was forbid under the law, so it is under the gospel also; nay, this was one of the sins of the old world, for which God brought the flood upon it. Make conscience of serving your parents, and carry it with all due reverence to them, and cherish them when they be old, I mean, relieve them if they are poor, if you ever expect to be blessed.

7. Take heed you do not stifle your consciences about convictions of sin or duty, but keep your consciences always tender, and never go to the uttermost bounds of your liberty, lest you exceed; and beware you do not, above all things, quench the Spirit of God.

8. Observe God's providences well, and improve always the deaths of young people; be sure think often of eternity, and of the shortness and uncertainty of your days on earth, and observe religiously the Lord's day. O sequester that wholly unto him!

9. Labour to take the call of Christ, and go early into his vineyard. Join yourselves in communion with some true church of Jesus Christ; but be sure see that you are hired, and first approved of the Lord Jesus Christ; for some are grafted in the visible church, that never were grafted truly and spiritually into Christ, and such will become withered branches, and "be cut off, and cast into the fire," John xv. 2, 3.

6. "Many are called, but few are chosen." O that you may be helped to receive instruction, and follow these few directions! so may you be happy, and God have glory, to whom be praise, honour, worship, and true obedience for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLII.

Take that which is thine, and go thy way; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? is thine eye evil because mine is good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen.—Matt. xx. 14—16.

THESE words close this parable, and from hence we may note,

Doct. That the Lord gives or bestows the blessings of his grace and divine favours according to his own sovereign pleasure, and rich bounty; and though he doth thus, yet he is just and righteous.

In speaking to this proposition, I shall,

I. Prove the truth of this point of doctrine.

II. Show, that though he doth thus, yet that he is just and righteous.

III. Apply it.

I. That God in his distributing or bestowing his blessings and divine favours, acts according to his own sovereignty,

1. Appears in his decree of eternal election and predestination, which was indeed from

eternity. "For whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. 29; Eph. i. 4; that is, with a knowledge of approbation; or did approve of, or set his heart upon them, or fixed his eye of pity, good will, love, and favour upon them, for otherwise he foreknew all men and things. Election is an act of God's sovereignty, or the good pleasure of his will; for which he passed by the fallen angels, and only sets his heart upon, and chooses some of the lost sons of Adam. Election necessarily pre-supposeth some chosen, and the rest passed by.

Question. Did God pass an eternal decree of reprobation on angels or men, as a simple act of his sovereignty, without any respect had to their sin or disobedience?

Ans. Some are bold to affirm he did, but I am not of that opinion; for though the decree of election was before the world began, yet the execution of it is in time, and the angels that sinned were reprobated. Reprobation was not the cause of their sin; but, as I conceive, sin was the cause of their being reprobated; and so the reprobation, or rather preterition of the greatest part of mankind, refers to their fallen state, or considered as ungodly men. "Turning the grace of God into wantonness, denying the Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," Jude 4. But though reprobation, as an act of God's justice, refers to the creatures of sin and disobedience, or foreseen wickedness, and hence said to be "endured with much long suffering," Rom. ix. 22, yet election to everlasting life is an absolute act of God's sovereign grace, without any respect had to our foreseen faith, holiness, or obedience, because election is the cause of our faith and holiness, and not faith or holiness the cause of election. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Again it is said, "We were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love," Eph. i. 4.

Sin the procuring cause of reprobation.

Faith and holiness no cause of election, but the effects of election.

Object. But doth not the apostle say, the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth? Rom. ix. 11.

Ans. I. I see no absolute cause to carry the sense of the words to refer to reprobation, but only to election, which is said to be not of works, but of him that calleth.

1. Because man's destruction is positively said to be of himself: though if it be as some men affirm, that election and reprobation refers not to mankind in their lapsed state, but as considered in innocent Adam, then it must follow that man's destruction refers not to the fallen state of sinful man; but they that affirm this, will be hard put to it to prove it, though both proceed from the absolute will of God, who might have let all mankind perish under the guilt of original sin. A reverend divine shows, there is difference between election and reprobation in three or four things; he hints this to be one, i. e., that reprobation is an act "to appoint those certain men to whom the justice of God should be made manifest," viz., ungodly men, Jude 4.

Dr. Ames's Marrow of divinity, p. 108.

2. Because it will be for the wickedness of men they shall be judged and condemned at the great day; God will not, as I humbly conceive, say to the ungodly in that day, I made you on purpose to glorify my justice, and to damn you, to make my power and pleasure known; no, but as you have rebelled against your Maker, and justified your father Adam, it is for your breach of my law that you come under my curse and wrath; and for your contemning and slighting my grace, I pass the sentence against you.

This I conclude always ought to be our care, viz., to maintain to the utmost the absolute free and sovereign grace and love of God to his elect in their salvation (it being in every part of it, without anything foreseen in them) and yet that sin is the cause of man's condemnation, otherwise his destruction cannot be said to be of himself. If election was not absolutely of God's free grace, it must be of our works; for it cannot be partly of our works, and partly of God's grace. This the apostle shows plainly, "Even so then at this present time there is a remnant, according to the election of grace." "And if it be of grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work," Rom. xi. 5, 6. There is no mixing grace and works together, for one would destroy the nature of the other.

(2.) And if it was of works, or of foreseen faith, then it would be of the will of man. "But it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," Rom. ix. 16.

(3.) If election and salvation was not alone of God's sovereign grace, it would be uncertain, depending wholly upon the inconsistent and wavering principles of the creature. My brethren, had it stood upon Adam's will and obedience, it had been more firm than to stand

upon our depraved wills, power, and obedience, distinct from Almighty, sovereign, and irresistible grace in Christ, to secure our standing. For Adam had free will to do good in the state of innocency, but O how soon did he fall, though he had no depraved nature, and but a young devil to encounter withal!

3. Election is wholly bottomed upon God's sovereign grace, because whatsoever is supposed (by our opponents) to be the condition of it, lies under God's decree to give unto us, as well as the election of our persons unto eternal life. God decreed to give his Spirit to his elect, to renew them, to sanctify them, and his grace, particularly faith to believe, and strength to persevere. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain," John xv. 16. Is it the fruit repentance? is it faith? is it obedience? or is it holiness? we are ordained to bear all this fruit, and that our fruit shall remain also, and never fail. "They shall not cease bearing fruit," Jer. xvii. 8.

Secondly, that God bestows his blessings and divine favours on whom he will, as an absolute act of his sovereign pleasure, and free grace appears, because he says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion," Rom. ix. 15. He might justly have condemned all, and it is from the arbitrariness of his will and inclinations, he hath mercy on any. Moreover, this of God's having mercy, necessarily refers to man fallen, and so under sin and misery; the elect are not only made vessels of divine goodness, but "vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared to glory," Rom. ix. 23. And hence also God saith, "my word shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it," Isa. lv. 11.

Thirdly, Because Paul says, "by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of your selves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. I have also in opening other parables proved, that repentance is God's free and sovereign gift, Acts v. 31, 2 Tim. ii. 25; and faith is the gift of God, as it is said here, and not of ourselves: also regeneration is wholly of God's own will; "which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13. Likewise saving knowledge is God's sovereign gift. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given," Mark iv. 11. Effectual vocation is wholly of God's sovereign grace. "And hath called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, that was given us in Christ before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. Justification is of God's sovereign grace. We are justified freely. Adoption also is an act of God's sovereign grace, he vouchsafes that high privilege, not in common to all, but only to so many that he pleaseth. So also eternal life is given as an act of God's sovereign grace. "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him," John xvii. 2. To as many, is plainly restrictive, and limits the gift to a certain number. "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us," Tit. iii. 5.

Fourthly, That God doth bestow his special favours and divine grace, as an act of his sovereignty, appears yet further, because no man hath any right or title to God's peculiar love and favour by nature; neither can any purchase, merit, or deserve it of them.

Fifthly, All things indeed whatsoever God doth, he acts and does in a way of sovereignty. He was not obliged to create the world, that was only an act of his sovereign pleasure, and so was his forming so many creatures, and no more, giving some only a mere sensitive life, and to others a rational life. Moreover, all his acts of providence are acts only of his own sovereignty; he distributes only common favours to some, and special favours to others; riches to some, poverty to others; he raises some to high honour, and gives them crowns and kingdoms; and from some to whom he gives crowns and kingdoms, he takes away those crowns and kingdoms at his own pleasure: if he takes away health, and liberty, riches, and honour from men, or nations, who can say unto him, what dost thou? He smites men with spiritual judgments, and temporal death, even as he pleaseth; he destroyed the world, and consumed cities to ashes in a moment, as he saw good; all is at his will and pleasure. Shall God be charged with injustice, in taking away from the Egyptians their ear-rings of gold and silver, and jewels, and in giving them to the Israelites; or in taking away, and dispossessing the seven nations of Canaan of their whole land, and even all they had, and which was perhaps left them by their father as their own proper inheritance, and giving it to his own people? no, certainly, "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

God creating this world, did it as an act of his sovereignty, and so he acts in all the ways of his providences.

See Mr. Cole on God's sovereignty.

May I not do what I will with my own? Will you deny him the power and liberty which every man lays claim to, and would vilify him that should deny it? "The Lord makes poor, and the Lord makes rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up: he setteth some among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory, whilst others sit on the dunghill, or roll in the dust," 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8. The world is not governed by chance, nor is the blind idol fortune, the dispenser of honours, estates, kingdoms, crowns, or want and poverty to men; but every one hath his portion of the Almighty, he sets the bounds of their habitations: things come upon men not from second causes, or by the uncertain rolling about the sphere of human mutability; but by God's ruling and overruling providence, who cast the world into hills and mountains, and made the estates of some

Cole. Ames.
Charnock.

men to differ from others. Shall any censure God's government, as if it was not equal, because some have such vast treasures, and others want bread to eat? God would be just and holy should he bring in an enemy upon the nation, and give its riches unto them, and make us, and all who dwell therein, hewers of wood, and drawers of water, or send fire to consume our cities and houses, or an universal plague, and take away all our lives. "All nations tremble before him, whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive," Dan. iv. 35. "The Most High doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?" Job xxxiii. 13. Is he to be judged at man's bar? He giveth no account of his matters. If he will raise up some men to show his power, and make known his wrath upon them, or to be a plague and scourge to his people and nations, none are to censure him. "I kill, I make alive," Deut. xxxii. 39. "He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardens," Rom. ix. 18.

Sixthly, Moreover, in God's giving forth his choicest blessings in the ways of his providence, did he not always act in a way of sovereignty? as elsewhere in this book I have showed. (1.) In his choosing and calling of Abraham, and making known Jesus Christ unto him, and his entering into covenant with him, and in giving himself to be his God, and in leaving the rest of the world in

All spiritual
blessings
come from
God's sove-
reignty.

his days, in darkness, and gross idolatry. (2.) In choosing the children of Israel, and giving them his laws and ordinances, and letting all other nations remain ignorant of his mind and will, church and true worship, for near 2000 years. (3.) Also in the gospel-day did he not choose a few fishermen (mean and contemptible persons) and make them his disciples and apostles, refusing to call the Scribes and Pharisees, and learned Rabbins amongst the Jews? and what reason doth our Lord give of these things? pray see that notable text, Matt. xi. 25. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes: even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight," Matt. xiii. 10. Also it is said at another time, the disciples came unto him, and said unto him, "Why speakest thou to them in parables? he answered and said, because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." They are not the persons my Father and I set our hearts upon, they are none of God's elect, they are not to know these things. In both these places our blessed Saviour shows, that in these things God only acts in a way of sovereignty, it is his own will and pleasure so to do. "May I not do what I will with my own?"

Seventhly, what reason, but only that of God's own sovereign pleasure, can be given, why in this latter age of the world, he gives the gospel to one nation and not to another, and that so few have the clear light thereof in any kingdom of the earth, as we have it; and why have some cities and towns in England a clearer ministration of the gospel than many others? or why are some wrought upon under the word, where it is truly and powerfully preached (their hearts being opened) and others never feel its power and divine efficacy? Doth not this wholly rise from the sovereign love and grace of God to some, which is not afforded to others? also why are some learned men, men of great natural wisdom, and acquired parts, left so ignorant of Christ, and of the glorious doctrine of the gospel, and of the divine power of grace upon their hearts? whereas many poor, mean, and ignorant persons have great light, wisdom, and knowledge given to them. Moreover, doth not the Apostle ascribe the whole success and increase of his ministry unto God? "I have planted, and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 6. And again he saith, "We have this treasure in earthly vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us. "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" 1 Cor. iv. 7.

That so few
nations have
the gospel,
is an act of
God's sover-
eign will
and pleasure.

Lastly, is it not said, "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth?" Jam. i. 18, not

of our will, but of his own will and sovereign pleasure: see John i. 13. "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

But to proceed to the next thing proposed.

II. I shall show, that though the holy God doth all things according to his own will or sovereign pleasure, yet he is just and righteous.

1. Because he is perfectly just and righteous in his nature, yea justice, truth, and goodness itself; so that it is absolutely repugnant to the rectitude of his pure and spotless nature to do anything that is not just, righteous, and good; no, he could as soon cease to be God, as to do otherwise.

2. It might further be demonstrated from God's own infinite blessedness which he possesseth in himself before the world, or any creature was made: he did not (saith one) make them for any need he had of them, but for his own pleasure they were and are created, &c., and if he need them not, there could be no need or reason why he should make them such, or to such an end as not merely overvalued, and their end attained, without doing wrong to any. The motives of which men are induced, or swayed to do wrong, are chiefly two.

1st. To attain something they have not, (to make them more happy) as Ahab slew Naboth for his vineyard, and Athaliah all the seed royal to get the throne.

1 Kings xxi. 13.

2 Kings xi. 1.

Exod. i. 10.

1 Kings xii. 27, 28.

Or, 2ndly. To secure what they have. Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites, lest growing mighty, they should shake off his yoke, and get themselves out of his service; and as Jeroboam set up calves to keep the people at home, and firm to himself. And the Jews put Christ to death, lest the "Romans should come and take away their place and nation," John xi. 48.

These two things share the parentage of all oppression, and wrong-doing in the world, neither of which are compared with the great and blessed God, for all things are his already, he possesseth heaven and earth, and all the hosts of them, with an absolute power, and right to dispose of them; and what can be added to that which is infinite.

3. Such is his infinite power, privilege, and sovereignty, that all creatures are absolutely under subjection to him, and he hath the same power over them all, as the potter over his clay; "Who maketh one vessel unto honour, and another to dishonour," Rom. xi. 21. "Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" ver. 20. Shall silly mortals arraign the wisdom, holiness, and sovereignty of God at the bar of their depraved reason? shall they dispute with their Maker? they may argue with their fellow creatures about their human affairs, but not with their Creator, who gives no account of his matters. God may choose some of the lump of mankind, and reject others, and give no account of his so doing to us; for such is the absolute power of God over all his creatures, whom he also found marred in his hand, that he may do whatsoever he pleaseth with them. Nay, my brethren, what mere mortal can be blamed for bestowing his own acts of bounty as he seeth good? and to deny that power would make him very uneasy, and render him unhappy, and little to value what he hath. And therefore to deny God this power, and freedom, and perfection, is to rob him of one of the chiefest jewels of his crown (if I may so say) for shall earthly princes, nay, every sorry man, have power to bestow their favours on whom they please; and shall God be denied this liberty, to whom all nations and creatures are more in subjection, than the smallest dust under our feet is to us? "for all nations are to him less than nothing, and vanity." Let the Almighty but withhold his sustaining influences, and they all would fall themselves; though he remains the same, and changes not for ever.

God appeals to men about his righteous actions towards all.

Cole.

4. Consider how our Lord appeals to men everywhere in his word, about his righteousness and justice with which he is clothed; and observe well the constant rule and measure of the dispensations of his providences, all that he does in time is done in judgment, wisdom, and righteousness, being all done according to the counsel of his own will, not without deliberation, or rashly. "He lays judgment to the rule, and righteousness to the plummet," Isa. xxviii. 17. "Who ever perished being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off?" Job iv. 7. Alas, there is none righteous in themselves: to slay the innocent, the Lord ever showed his abhorrence. To justify the wicked, or condemn the righteous, are both an abomination to God; that is, it is hateful to him, or contrary to his holy nature.

5. The justice and righteousness of God is further evidenced by his holy law, it result- ing from the perfect rectitude of his holy nature. The law is holy, and the commandment

holy, just, and good," Rom. vii. 12. The precepts of the moral law are good, therefore commanded; and hence the law is but, as it were, a written transcript of God's holy nature; and how is holiness, and exact justice and righteousness, both commanded and commanded in the law of God?

6. The righteousness of God is also manifested in his punishing all unrighteousness and injustice of men. "It is their own wickedness that corrects them." No man is destroyed but for his own iniquity. Moreover, God doth not, will not spare to correct his own elect when they sin, or do unjustly.

God's law shows he is just and righteous.

7. Because he will "judge the world in the great day, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ," Acts xvii. 31. It will then be evinced to every man's conscience, though God bestows his bounty, and choicest favours, as an act of his sovereignty, and refuses to do that for some which he does for others; yet that there is no injustice, nor unrighteousness in him.

8. I might further argue, from the consideration of that state and condition all men naturally are in, by means of sin, being rebels against God, and walking in the very steps of their father Adam, deserving nothing but wrath, and the displeasure of God. Have any a right or title to the grace and peculiar favours of God, or can they do any thing to oblige him, or lay him under obligation in justice to bestow his favours upon them? Do not all mankind naturally hate the holy God; nay, is there not enmity in their wicked and carnal minds against him? O if so, what an amazing wonder is it, he shows mercy unto any, and more, that he hath compassion on so many! it wholly riseth from his infinite love let according to the divine will, without any desert or motive in us, to stir him up so to do; nor was he under any constraint or necessity arising from his nature, to save any fallen sinner of Adam's race, any more than to show pity upon the fallen angels; neither doth God's sovereign grace displayed to some men, make the case of the rest worse, as I have showed in opening another parable. For all had inevitably perished, if Almighty power, and sovereign love, had not been extended to a few; had not God plucked some out of the fire, all had been burned, all would have thrown away and subjected themselves to sin and the devil, and so have perished for ever. "Friend, I do thee no wrong," &c. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own; is thine eye evil, because mine is good?" Does God do any wrong to those guilty rebels he condemns, because he has mercy on a few that deserved the same punishment.

Every man deserves God's wrath.

It is wonderful favour any are saved

See the parable of the talents, Matt. 25, opened.

APPLICATION.

1. From hence let proud mortals learn wisdom, and strive to humble themselves at the foot of God, what signifies their vain and presumptuous confidence? also let none trust in later, or death-bed repentance. Tears cannot procure grace, neither do you know you shall then have any sense of your misery, who have slighted God's mercy.

2. Let none condemn the doctrine of God's sovereignty, nor go about to arraign his wisdom at their bar, God will make all know one day, that he is just, in having mercy upon some, and not upon all. Shall God be censured if he extends not equal grace and favour to all men alike: O how may this severely reprove such bold and daring persons, whose notions intimate, that God may not do what he will with his own.

3. Let all bow before the Most High God, and acknowledge his sovereignty over them, and cry, "If God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Tim. iii. 25. All men are bound to submit to God their Maker, to bow their knees before him. "He is the Lord, and worship thou him," Psal. xlv. 11. He directs you to fear his name, to forsake your sins, to hear his word, to believe in his Son, and let every one seek to him for help to do these things; and though they are not sure they shall obtain his special favour, yet peradventure they may; but if they go on, and make no improvement of the means he directs them to use, what can they expect but his eternal wrath? "For who ever hardened himself against God, and prospered?" Job ix. 4.

4. Exhort. Be exhorted to come to Christ, to believe in him: hath he not promised such shall find rest to their souls? Christ is tendered to sinners, as sinners, to such who are sick, or are sensible sinners: if thou art righteous in thine own eyes, thou wilt not go to Christ, thou seest no need of him as the Physician of thy soul.

Object. I am (I fear) not humbled enough, I must see myself utterly lost, and be broken more than I am, before I go to Christ.

(1.) Answ. A man may be under legal humiliation and brokenness of heart, and yet never come to Christ, but rather flee from him.

(2.) All humiliation, before faith is wrought in thee, signifies nothing: true sorrow for

sin rises from a sight and sense of the love and pardoning grace of God in Christ. O look to him, believe, and then mourn!

(3.) Thou must not plead thy brokenness of heart, but a broken Jesus: come, acknowledge thyself a sinner and a rebel, but yet put God in mind of what Christ hath done, and plead his free pardon, and full proclamation to all that fly to him for mercy, through a crucified Saviour.

5. What I have said may tend to vindicate the holy and righteous proceedings of God with sinners; though their eyes are evil, yet his are good: "Wisdom is justified of her children." No humble sinner but will acknowledge God is just and righteous, though he is condemned.

6. Let all tremble before the mighty God, and fear to offend him; for he cannot but punish their iniquity, because he is just and righteous; sin shall not go unpunished, and let such know who fly not to Christ, and plead not his atonement, who bore our sins on his own body, upon the tree, they must bear the weight of it themselves for evermore.

7. Moreover this doctrine reproves such that ascribe the power of converting grace to the will of man, as if the will of man determineth the whole success of preaching the gospel, and that it is not determined by the sovereign will of God; or as if the grace of God was at the disposing of the will of sorry and impotent men, and that God must wait upon the creature, to see whether his love, his grace, and favour shall be effectual or not, to the great end he manifesteth it.

8. But to return to the poor sinner; O come and be persuaded to put in for a share of God's sovereign favour! what though but a few are chosen, nay, but twenty in this great city (where perhaps are many thousands) yet how knowest thou but thou mayest be one of the twenty? Our Lord commands us to strive to enter in at the strait gate. The people of Nineveh had not that encouragement to repent as you have. Jonah was not sent to preach repentances, and pardon to them upon repentance; no, he comes with no promises of mercy, but that in forty days they shall be destroyed; and yet God excused not his conditional threatening; for had it been absolute, they had perished as Jonah declared; yet he no doubt knew not this, as appears by the discontent that took hold of him, thinking he should be branded for a false prophet.

Object. If I knew I was elected, I would do as you say.

Ans. 1. Suppose you were sick, would you not go to a physician, unless you knew God's decree, whether you should live or die?

2. You begin at the wrong end of the work; would you be at the top of the ladder before you set your feet on the first round? see that you are effectually called, and so you may know you were elected.

Quest. But why doth God act in a way of sovereignty?

Ans. 1. If God did not show special favour to some, none would be saved at all, as I just now told you.

2. God acts thus, because so ran his eternal love and decrees; according to his love, his purpose before time, or in eternity, so he acts in time.

"For many are called, but few are chosen," ver. 16.

This is given as the grand reason of God's acting after this manner, by our Lord himself. And this the blessed God declares by the prophet, "The Lord appeared to me of old, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. xxxiii. 3. It is, that his purpose according to election might stand.

3. Because a seed is given unto Christ, and then he was sure of before he laid down his life, or else he might have shed his blood in vain; and to the end his death might not be in vain, God singled out some whom he gave to his Son, and for whom Christ in a special manner died, and not for their good only, but in their stead also, so that them, he says, he must bring, and none of them he must lose, John x. 16.

4. It is that God may magnify his love and mercy to some, and his wrath and divine justice upon others; he will have glory in them that perish, as well as in them that are saved. "God made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. Not an innocent person, not man in his perfect state, but lapsed or sinful man, or wicked and ungodly men he made for the day of wrath.

5. It is, that all believers may have strong consolation, and ascribe for ever the glory of their salvation to God's rich and distinguishing grace alone, and that they might admire his love and sovereign pleasure, manifested unto them in Jesus Christ, to all eternity; to whom be glory, honour, and praises, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE
PARABLE
OF THE
MARRIAGE SUPPER OPENED.

BOOK III.

SERMON I.

And Jesus answered, and spake again to them by parables, and said, &c. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, that made a marriage for his Son. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fallings are killed, and all things are ready, come to the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize.—Matt. xxii. 14.

BRETHREN, I shall in speaking unto this parable, take my usual method, viz.,

1. Give the scope of the parable.
2. Open every part of it particularly.
3. Raise several propositions from divers chief things that are contained therein.
4. Make application of each proposition.

1. As to the chief or main design or scope of the parable.
1. Our blessed Saviour hereby strove to convince the Jews of God's great love unto them. And not only of his love to the Jews, but it tends to manifest his infinite love and goodness unto the Gentiles also, and of God's gracious calling of them, upon the Jews rejecting of his Son. Brethren, what an amazing condescension is here showed, that the great King, or Almighty God, the Creator of all things, should send his own Son to become a Surety for, and a Suitor to the lost children of Adam.

The scope of the parable opened.

Here is no marriage offered, nor designed, for the fallen angels; God did not send his Son to espouse angelic nature, "Verily, he took not unto him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," Heb. xi. 16. Look what nature the Son of God took hold of, that nature, or those of that sort, he came to espouse and to marry unto himself for ever; and that was the nature of man.

2. We, by the design and scope of this parable also, may see Jesus Christ discovereth to all the world, the horrible sin and ingratitude of the Jews, who had the first offer of his great love and mercy; he said himself, "He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." That is, not first sent, for he was also sent to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not," John i. 11; they rejected him, and barbarously murdered him, instead of espousing him.

3. This parable seems to show the cause or reason of the ruin, rejection, and utter destruction of the Jewish nation, and the city Jerusalem; or what was the cause why wrath came upon them to the uttermost?

4. It also discovers that many who have the outward ministration of the Gospel shall perish eternally; though many are called, by the external preaching thereof, yet but few are chosen; the gospel comes in word only to the most of those who have it, and in power to none but those who are elected unto eternal life, they are such only that are ordained to everlasting life, that believe.

5. The design and scope of this parable, shows also, it was the gracious purpose of Acts xiii. 48. God, upon the rejection of the Jews, to call the Gentiles.

6. Moreover, it discovers that great unworthiness of poor sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, to have this most gracious offer of Christ made unto them. For,

1. Those Jews, which were called and invited to this marriage, who came, were such that lay in the streets and lanes of the city, which were "the poor, the maimed, the halt, and blind; such who were mere beggars, the baser sort, such that were utterly unworthy to come into the presence of such a king's court, and much more unworthy to have an offer to become the spouse of Jesus Christ, or to be embraced in his arms.

2. And those of the Gentiles, who were effectually called, were such that were found in the high-ways, and under hedges. "And the Lord said unto his servants, go to the high-ways and hedges, and compel them to come in."

7. It shows also that every man and woman, that rejects the offers of grace, (though not such that were elected) shall be left without any excuse at the day of judgment, they shall be all speechless; and it will be manifested unto their own consciences, that it was for their own horrid wickedness, and refusing to accept of Christ, that they shall be cast and condemned at that day; they preferring the things of this life, viz., their sinful profits and pleasures, above Jesus Christ, or eternal life and glory in heaven.

St. Luke hath this parable, chap. xiv., and, in some things, is more large and full than Matthew, which has occasioned some to think, that our Saviour spake the same parable twice, upon different circumstances, or reasons; let that be how it will, I purpose to speak unto this parable, with respect had unto both the evangelist, and not give a distinct exposition. But to proceed,

The parts opened.
What meant by the King.

1. By the kingdom of heaven, here, I understand, is signified, the proceedings and equable, or righteous, dispensation of God in the dispensation of the gospel, with the children of men, in order to their entrance to the kingdom of glory.

2. By the certain King, is, no doubt, meant the great God and King of heaven and earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

What meant by the King's son.

3. By his Son, is intended, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, by an eternal generation, as well as by that wonderful conception of his in the womb of the virgin, and as so considered, he became a more fit and suitable match, and Bridegroom, to espouse and marry sinners, being "flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone."

Eph. v. 30,

4. By the marriage, is, meant, the soul's union with the Lord Christ, or that divine and spiritual marriage with him, according to the nature of the covenant of grace, it being evident, that in divers places of the holy scripture, that our union, with the Lord Jesus Christ, is set forth by a marriage; he is called a bridegroom, and the church his bride, he an husband, and believers his spouse or wife. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin unto Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 2.

What meant by this marriage.

Psal. xlv. 11, 12, 13.

5. "I have prepared my dinner." Luke calls it a supper, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many," Luke xiv. 16. Both signify the same thing this great feast represents.

1. (As some conclude) the marriage itself, because our feeding upon Jesus Christ by faith, or our first receiving him, is our espousing of him. I will not deny, but in a more strict sense, this may be held forth hereby.

2. Yet more comprehensibly, it may signify those rich and heavenly dainties, or all those spiritual varieties God has provided for all those who believe in him, or that come to this marriage; which I purpose hereafter more particularly to open.

Who the persons are that were invited to this dinner.

Some think our Lord may allude "to the marriage supper of the Lamb," Rev. xix. But I can see no reason for that; none certainly, that are invited to that supper, will refuse to come; nor can that refer to the soul's first espousing of Jesus Christ.

Who the servants first sent were.
Who the others next sent were.

6. The persons that were first invited to this marriage feast, to eat of the king's dainties, or espouse Jesus Christ, were the Jews, who refused generally to come.

7. The servants, that were first sent to call persons to the wedding, may, and doubtlessly doth, signify the holy prophets, and John the Baptist, unto whom the Jews, or people of Israel refused to hearken.

8. "Again, he sent forth other servants," ver. 4; which may intend the holy apostles, and other faithful ministers of the gospel, in the primitive times.

9. By the oxen and fatlings being killed, and all things being ready, may refer to the sacrifices that were under the law typically, but to Christ and the gospel feasts chiefly; they were types of Christ, and of his bloody sacrifice, but the Antitype being now come, every thing is more perfectly completed, and so all things made ready; that is, God is ready to receive all that comes to him by Christ, he is ready to give Christ to the souls of sinners.

Jesus Christ is ready to espouse them, and all of them, that come to him by faith. Justification, pardon of sin, and adoption, &c., is ready, Christ being now actually slain, or crucified for us.

10. By their making light of it, ver. 5, is showed the Jews slighting, and contemning the grace, glorious privileges, and blessings of the gospel.

What is meant by their making light of it.

“And went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize.”

This signifies, that it is for the sake and love of the world, that sinners do reject Jesus Christ is more particular; pray see what he saith, “and they all with one consent began to make excuse,” Luke xiv. 18.

The first said unto him, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it, I pray thee have me excused.”

“And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray have me excused.”

“And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” The

Two first seem more modest in their answer, they pray to be excused; the last said peremptorily, I cannot come.

We may perceive what is the cause that men and women refuse to accept Jesus Christ.

1. Wordly cares, incumbrances, secular business, or the concerns of this life, in providing earthly things.

2. The riches or love of wealth, or earthly honour.

3. But it appears that sensual satisfaction, or the inordinate love of pleasures, is that which hath the greatest power over men, and which drowns and swallows up the spirit and soul of mortals; for this sort say, they cannot come.

11. “And the remnant took his servants, and intreated them spitefully, and slew them,” ver. 6.

This refers unto that cruelty which the Jews used towards the holy prophets, the apostles, and ministers of Jesus Christ.

What is meant by slaying the servants.

They slew many of the prophets, and cut off the head of John the Baptist; and also persecuted unto death divers of Christ's own disciples; they stoned holy Stephen, and slew James with the edge of the sword, Acts vii., and xii. 2.

12. “But when the king heard thereof, he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt down their city,” ver. 7

This no doubt containeth a prophesy of the Roman armies, who made such a fearful slaughter of the Jews, which fell out about fifty years after the death of our blessed Lord; and by this city is meant Jerusalem, which was burnt and consumed to ashes, as also was the holy temple. Let men boast if they will, in persecuting the saints, that they do not execute the law upon them, yet it is clear they are murderers; let them do it by law, or without law, as cursed murderers, God will judge them, and many times, for this great evil, he brings temporal punishment and death upon them in this world.

13. “Then he saith to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden, were not worthy,” ver. 8.

These were the Jews; they were first bidden. “He came to his own, and his own received him not.

Luke is here more particular: “The master of the house being angry, said unto his servants, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt and the blind,” Luke xiv. 21. The rich and honourable ones, the Pharisees and lawyers, utterly rejected the offers of grace by Jesus Christ. Therefore God sent his ministers to call the poor, even such who were accounted the base things of the world, even mean, low and contemptible persons, set forth here “by the maimed, halt, and blind.” Which may also denote the sense that those persons have of themselves, who do receive Jesus Christ, even such that are lost and utterly undone in their own eyes. “I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The poor, is said, had the gospel preached unto them, and they received it. The maim, and halt, and blind, therefore signifieth the worst of men, such as the Publicans, harlots, or great sinners; not only low and mean in the world, but such as were lost and undone in their own sight, or

helpless ones; such who could not help themselves, but stood in need of the charity of others, denoting, that those who refused to come unto the wedding, saw no need or want of a Christ, or of his righteousness to clothe them, nor of his eye-salve to give them sight, nor of his flesh and blood to feed them, nor of his wine to cheer them.

14. "As many as you find, bid to the marriage," ver. 9.

Luke saith, "Bring in hither the poor," &c. Not that ministers can bring them by any power of theirs, no, none can bring them but Christ himself. John x. 16, it is he that must bring them in, or bring home the lost sheep, by laying them on his shoulders, or by exerting his own most mighty and irresistible power, by the operations of his own Spirit upon their hearts, Eph. i. 18—20.

But ministers are to do what they can, they are to invite them, press them, entreat and persuade them to come.

15. "So those servants went into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests," ver. 10.

They brought in all they could persuade to adhere unto them, though some were not true converts: the net of the gospel and visible church, take good and bad, some wise and some foolish virgins.

Luke saith, "And the servant said, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room," Luke xiv. 22.

A faithful ministry will do what the Lord commands them to do, "and yet there is room." Let as many as will come unto Christ, yet there is still room for more; in God's heart is room enough for millions of souls; and in God's house there is not only bread enough, and to spare, but room enough also.

Matt. xx. 10. "And the Lord said unto the servants, go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," Luke xiv. 23.

This last commission, no doubt, refers to Christ's sending his servants to invite or call in sinners, of the Gentiles, though the Jews were first to have salvation offered unto them, yet the grace of God is extended further, even to the Gentiles also, that so Christ might be God's salvation to the ends of the earth. The Jews were such that dwelt in the city, i. e., were in covenant with God, according to that covenant of peculiarity made with Abraham, and his fleshly seed, as such. But the Gentiles were said to be afar off, or out of the city or church of the Jews, as strangers and stragglers, or poor outcasts, such that lay in the highways, and under hedges.

"Compel them to come in."

There hath been long contention amongst Christians and learned men, what our Saviour meanth by his compulsion; some would from hence infer that outward force and violence is hereby intended, even to pull them in by head and shoulders, or drive them by whips and cudgels, or by penal laws, or by fire and faggot to frighten them; which certainly is far from the sense of the text, for the will of man admits of no violence or external force, by the civil magistrates; so that outward compulsion, hath no colour of foundation from hence; for neither Christ or his apostles ever used any such way, to make men Christians, or to receive the truth.

Those that refused to come in, or would not embrace the gospel, they were only "to shake off the dust of their feet, as a witness against them."

Therefore this compulsion only denotes the powerful arguments they should use, together with those efficacious influences and operations of the Spirit, which Christ put forth with the preaching of the gospel; it being by the ministration of the word, that he makes the souls of obstinate sinners willing; they are said to compel them, whereas indeed it is Christ by them; they are but instruments in Christ's hand in the doing of it: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," 2 Cor. iv. 7. The gospel hath to do with men as rational creatures, and as such Christ is presented unto them, and arguments are used to persuade them to accept of him, but because all men are naturally blind, and their wills are stubborn, and ob-tinate, "ye will not come to me, that you may have life," John v. 40.

Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, and operations of his Spirit, enlighteneth their understandings, and bows and inclines their wills. And this is that which is only meant by compelling them to come to the wedding. Neither can this seem strange to any that observe divers places of scripture, where the same word is used, it is said Christ "Compelled his disciples to go into a ship;" Matt. xiv. 22; *ἠνάγκασεν*, but it is evident, he

What meant the highways and hedges.

What is meant by compelling them to come in.

No external violence to be used in the conversion of sinners.

used no sword, staves, or whips, or pecuniary mullets to force them. Also, it is said, the two disciples compelled Christ to stay with them, "They constrained him, saying, abide with us, *παραβιάσαντες*," Luke xxiv. 29. Moreover, it is said, Peter compelled the Gentiles to do as the Jews, Gal. ii. 14. Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? yet this doth not signify any act of violence; no, but this was done by his example. Such virtue sometimes example hath on men's spirits; he did not call in the power of magistrates to force the Gentiles. Likewise, it is said, that the whorish woman compelled the young man to commit folly with her, "With much fair speeches she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him," Prov. vii. 21. This was a forcing or compelling to do a wicked deed, but external violence she used not, neither was she able that way to compel him. It is true, all that believe and receive Jesus Christ are compelled; grace hath such power in it, that it doth in some sense constrain the soul, "the love of Christ constraineth us," 2 Cor. v. 15. And as the spouse says, Cant. i. 4, it draws, but how is it? Is it against the consent of the will? Is there any force put upon that noble faculty? No sure, the will acts freely, and is not denied its own proper choice, but it is overruled and persuaded by the workings of the Holy Ghost, cheerfully and freely to choose
Grace in-
lines the
will.

accept of Jesus Christ. "My people shall be willing in the day of my power," Psa. xc. 3. Jesus Christ, as I have formerly told you, will accept of no pressed soldiers, no, no, they must be all volunteers, but naturally the will is corrupt, depraved, and wills only that which is evil, and it is averse to all things that are truly and spiritually good, and so it remains, until grace, or the Holy Spirit, take away that enmity and averseness which is in it, and so makes it willing; and this is done generally by the powerful preaching of the gospel, God being pleased to accompany it with the operations of his own Spirit and divine power; and this is all, no doubt, which is meant by compelling them to come in.

16. As many as they found, both good and bad. This denotes, some of all sorts are called by the preaching of the gospel, good and bad; not that there are any good before grace and effectual vocation; no, no, all are gone out of the way, all are become filthy; there is none that doth good, no, not one, Rom. iii. 12.

1. But yet comparatively, some may be said to be good, that is, not so notoriously wicked as others are, *i. e.*, they may be merciful persons, who are called good, that being a choice moral virtue, but much more precious when it proceeds from the Holy Spirit, as the fruit thereof.

2. But I rather take it with respect had, to what they prove in the end, *viz.*, some appear to be sincere and gracious persons, and others hypocrites, or false professors, and have no wedding garment.

17. "And when the king came to see the guests," v. 11.

This certainly refers to the day of judgment, or second coming of Jesus Christ, when it will appear who are sincere ones, and who are not; or who are wise virgins, and who foolish. Many unholy or unsanctified souls get into the church, which may not be discovered until that day that the king comes to view the guests; Christ then will make a discrimination, then all shall "discern between the righteous and the wicked," Mal. iii. 18.

18. "He saw there a man that had not on a wedding garment."

The custom of the Jews was such (some note) that all that were bid to weddings had a wedding garment, or if not, they were with great shame put out, it is thought that our Lord alludes to that practice: the wedding garment, no doubt, is Jesus Christ, whom we are to put on, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," &c. Rom. xiii. 14.

What was
the custom
of the Jews
at weddings.

Jesus Christ must be put on two manners of ways.

1. For justification, by which the soul is clothed with the righteousness, this is, as I conceive, principally intended here, and is properly the wedding garment, and so generally understood by all sound expositors.

What is
meant by the
wedding gar-
ment.

2. Yet Christ is also at the same time put on by faith for our sanctification, and this is chiefly meant in that place, Rom. xiii. 14.

See the par-
able of the
Prodigal son.

These two, my brother, though they are distinct in some respects, and are not to be confounded, yet the one is never without the other, for where justification is, there is also sanctification; a man is not sanctified that is not justified, nor are any actually justified that are not sanctified; though it is true, "God justified the ungodly, *i. e.*, They are ungodly just at the time when God first justified them, they are not holy and sanctified persons before they are justified, because it is the righteousness of Christ alone that is the matter of our

Luke xv.
No man is
naturally just-
ified, but he
is also sanc-
tified.

justification before God, which no man hath imputed unto him until he believe in Jesus Christ; but though they are all ungodly ones, just at the time when God justified them, i. e., he finds them ungodly, when he comes to pass the act of free justification upon them; yet God doth not leave them unsanctified by the Spirit; "But ye are sanctified, but ye are justified," &c. 1 Cor. vi. 11, 12.

Faith hath a two-fold office Therefore it is evident, that faith (which is God's free gift) hath a two-fold office (as elsewhere I have showed.)

1. By the ordination and appointment of God, in respect had to Christ, whom it apprehended and applies; it is said to justify us, not a divine habit, or act, but only in respect of the object it taketh hold of, and receiveth.

2. Also in respect of its own blessed inward virtue and quality; it also purges the soul, and sanctifieth the whole man, "and puts no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith," Acts xv. 9. But pray note, that faith is an instrument, and that Christ's righteousness is the material cause of our justification.

So that some conceive the wedding garment, may comprehend both our justification and our sanctification also, though more primarily and directly the righteousness of justification; without which there is no acceptance here, nor will there be hereafter.

18. "And he said, friend, how comest thou hither, not having a wedding garment," and he was speechless.

How comest thou into my church, or amongst my people, who are my welcome guests, seeing thou hast no true faith, no robe of righteousness? Thou art naked, O wretched soul, dardest thou appear in my presence, naked, and not be ashamed and confounded? thinkest thou that thy own good works or inherent righteousness, will render the accepted?

"And he was speechless."

He being speechless, signifies, that all such persons that either reject Jesus Christ, and so make no visible profession of him at all, or such who do profess him, yet are unbelievers or hypocrites, they shall be left without any excuse in the great day, they shall have no plea, no pretence whatsoever.

One shall not say, Lord, I was a poor ignorant man, I was not learned, my parents, being low in the world, were not able, to put me to school, to learn me to read thy word, or else they were wicked, and would not do it; pray let me be excused.

Also another shall not say, I was a sober person, I led an honest moral life, I was no notorious sinner, let me be spared, and excused.

A third shall not say, Lord, I was a poor young person, and thought religion did not belong to me, but unto those of riper years; I purposed when I grew older to mind the concerns of my soul, I thought I might do as other young men and women did; let me be excused.

Another shall not say, Lord, I was not elected, as these were, let me be excused. No, this will be no plea or excuse, in the great day? then they will see and know that the cause of their damnation will be just and righteous, it being the only procurement of their own evil doings, and for making light of the gospel and offers of grace.

Moreover, another shall not say, Lord, I was misled by my teachers, they told me I was a Christian, a good churchman, and that I needed not to doubt of my salvation, though I was a swearer, a drunkard, a carnal person, yet by my keeping to the church, and hearing prayers read, and by coming once or twice in the year to receive the sacrament, my condition was good; also I was laid in the grave as a dear brother, or a dear sister in Christ, in a full and certain hope of a blessed resurrection: let me be excused.

The Quakers detected. Another shall not say, Lord, I was deluded by false teachers, and sucked in (as I now perceive) damnable errors and heresies, even denying thee to be the true Saviour, and justification by thy righteousness and merits, and was led to trust to the light within. I was told by deceivers, that that was the true Christ, and only Saviour, and that if I was led by that, it would convince me of all sin, lead me into all truth, cleanse me from sin, and eternally save me. Nay, Lord, they told me that my body would not be raised again at the last day, and I believed them. They were cunning impostors, and by their outward conversations, which seemed so devout, I was blinded, and cast off that holy profession, which I once made, and ordinances, which I once owned. O let them answer for me, and let me be excused.

I say, these shall be speechless also, and shall have nothing to say or plead, why the sentence of eternal death should not pass upon them: may not Christ say, you had my word to direct you, Moses and the prophets, and writings of my apostles; you had also my

faithful ministers, who told you they were enemies to me, and grand deceivers, and if you were led by them, and renounce the true faith, you would certainly perish for ever? but you were proud and conceited, and magnified your own wisdom, above what was written in my word, and above the wisdom of my faithful ministers; therefore your damnation is just upon you.

Again, another shall not, in that day, say, Lord, I was a professor of thy holy name and truth; nay, I had right notions of the great fundamentals of the gospel; I saw that all men were lost in the first Adam, and that they were under wrath and the curse of thy holy law; and I saw no way to be saved, but by thy righteousness, and by the merits of thy blood; and thou didst give a full satisfaction to the justice of God, and that all that believed in thee should not perish, but have eternal life. Lord, I believed these things, I owned thee to be the Son of God, equal with thy Father, and understood wherefore thou didst become man, or assumed our nature. Nay, I believed all the articles of the true Christian faith, and also became a member of a true visible church, and was baptized, and broke bread with them often, and was called a brother, and I also gave to thy poor saints. I say, such a plea of hypocrites will not be heard at that day, but these shall be speechless also.

May not Christ say unto them, were you not told that a man might thus believe, and thus practice, and go further too, and yet be but almost a Christian. Were not you told by my faithful ministers, that "except you were born again, you could not enter into the kingdom of God?" John iii. 3; and that if you allowed yourselves in any one sin, you would certainly be damned? or, "if you loved this world more than me, or son or daughter more than me, you were not worthy of me?" nay, you were told by your own conscience, that you lived in pride, and were guilty of lying, and of the sin of covetousness, your heart was set upon the world, you did not what you did out of a right principle, nor to a right end, it was not my glory which you aimed at, but your own vain-glory or outward profit, therefore your damnation is just and righteous.

Lastly, another shall not say, Lord, I was a preacher of thy gospel, and my words were blessed by thee, to the conversion of many sinners. These also, if not truly gracious, but were unregenerated persons, (though God might bless his own word which they preached) shall have no plea, when they come to stand at God's bar; these also shall be speechless.

Obj. But is it not said, "That many will say in that day, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works?" Matt. vii. 22. How then is it said, all shall be speechless?

Ans. I answer, being speechless, doth not denote that none shall make any answer or not plead to be freed from the dreadful sentence, but these shall soon become speechless also, when Christ shall say, "How camest thou hither, not having on a wedding garment?" That word will silence all, or make them all speechless; this word holds forth, as I said before, that no sinner shall have any plea which shall be heard, or stand them in any stead in the great day; every man's own conscience shall witness against him, and accuse and condemn him in that day, if ungodly: see Rom. ii. 15, 16. "God will be justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth," Psal. xi. 4. So much at this time.

SERMON II.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, who made a marriage for his son.—Matt. xxii. 1—5, &c.

Then said the king to his servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

SOME think our blessed Lord still alludes to that Jewish custom of putting them out of doors, who came to a wedding, that had not on a wedding garment, though it was never so dark and dismal a night.

But, alas! what a small thing or punishment was that to such, to this here mentioned by our blessed Saviour?

2. By the servants, my brethren, I conceive, are meant the holy angels, not the devils, because the devils shall then, no doubt, be prisoners themselves; they shall at that day be arraigned, and be jointly sentenced, with

Sermon ii.*
on this parable., Octob.
11, 1696.

Who are the
servants that
must bind
such that
want the

wedding-garment. all hypocrites and unbelievers to eternal flames of divine wrath and vengeance. All condemned sinners must go to hell at that day, with the devil and his angels; therefore it will not be, "take him devils, and bind him hand and foot," as I think I have read in some good book: I know no reason any man hath to affirm any such thing, but ye my servants, the holy angels, take him away, &c.

20. "Take him away, and bind him hand and foot."

By taking him away, may denote that fearful separation of each ungodly soul from Jesus Christ and his saints for ever, according to that passage, "Depart from me, ye cursed," Matt. xxiii. O how amazing is this word, take him away, he has nothing to say; How have many poor condemned criminals trembled when they heard the Judge say, "Take them away, I will hear no more, let them die!"

By binding him hand and foot, may signify his irrevocable state; he is tied and bound in such chains of darkness, that being once in hell, there will be no getting out.

Their enmity and averseness to God will be eternal; the damned hated God when they lived on earth, and they will hate and blaspheme him for ever, when they are thrown into hell.

But this binding hand and foot, may also signify, that sense they shall have of the eternal decree and purpose of God, touching the endlessness of their torment, together with that sense they will have upon their consciences of their utter impossibility of ever satisfying divine justice; for there they must lie, till they have paid the uttermost farthing.

21. By utter darkness is meant the lake of fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

It is called utter darkness, because there will be no light of God's gracious presence; no glimpse of the least comfort, or hope of ever seeing light; or that it will be ever better with them.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This denotes, that intolerable pain and anguish such shall feel, and endure for ever; they lying in flames of wrath, without the least hopes of ease, or redemption out of that place.

22. "For many are called, but few are chosen," v. 14. God, by the gospel, calls many; multitudes have the word of God preached to them, but none find and feel the power and efficaciousness of it upon their own hearts, but such, who from the beginning were chosen to salvation; yet will the judgment of God be just upon all reprobates; for, had not God, out of love and mercy, elected some, and pulled them as brands out of the fire, all, yea, every soul, would wilfully and obstinately have cast away themselves, and have perished for ever. No doubt God had been just and righteous, if he had executed his wrath upon the whole posterity of Adam, as he did upon the fallen angels; man's destruction is wholly of him-self, as the punishment and demerit of his own sin and transgression.

Brethren, is a prince unjust, because he saves a few vile and wicked traitors and murderers, out of a multitude of them who were alike guilty? Or, manifesteth his mercy to some; as he also manifesteth his righteous and just wrath and vengeance, and passeth sentence upon the rest?

There is a twofold call; the one is common, the other is special; the one ineffectual, the other effectual; yet the first will leave the creature without the least excuse, because they did not so far adhere to that which they were able to do. No man, my brethren, ever did improve that power, and means of light and grace, who is damned, which he might have done: he that had "the one talent, hid his Lord's money;" that one talent is, as I conceive, natural light and knowledge, together with the external call, and outward means afforded by the preaching of the gospel. Therefore, did not God graciously vouchsafe another talent to some, viz., the talent of special grace, all the whole race of mankind had been lost.

Obj. But seeing this man that had not the wedding garment, was one of those beggars, or one of the maimed, blind, and halt, how is it that he is condemned for not having a wedding garment? How should such a wretch get a wedding garment?

Ans. This wedding-garment God doth not require men to get by their own money, or spin it out of their own bowels, by their own good works. No, no, it is given freely; but this man never sought by faith in Christ, but appears in his own righteousness, or rather filthiness, not seeing the necessity of the righteousness of Christ, and of the grace of faith.

I shall now proceed.

DOCTRINE.

That the great God hath out of his infinite love and mercy, sent his own Son to espouse and marry poor sinners, or to take them into union with himself.

1. I shall open what this marriage feast doth import, or comprehend; there being something more implied than is expressed.

2. I shall prove, that it is the great and true interest of sinners, to escape this invitation, i. e., to espouse Christ.

3. I shall open what the marriage feast is, and show you the nature of those dainties which are provided.

First, This marriage doth hold forth or comprehend the good will of God the Father unto man.

The King made the marriage. God the Father is the King (as you heard) he is the first and chief agent in it; the Son doth not first choose for himself, and ask the Father's consent, as is commonly among men; no, no, but it is the Father that made the first motion to the Son, of this great and so glorious a design, and purpose of love and grace to sinners.

This marriage doth comprehend.

1. The contrivance of our salvation is in the scripture ascribed unto God the Father: he is (as one most excellently shows) the prime Author of man's actual reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself," 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. The Father is set forth as the fountain of life, the original of all true good, and first cause of all things; especially of all supreme and glorious acts and works of mercy, and kindness unto man. The Father is the first in all divine operations, as well as the first person in the Trinity; as he is the first in creation, so also in reconciliation and redemption; the Father being offended and injured by man's sin, in his holiness, justice, and bounty, it is necessary that he first approve of, and appoint the way by which he will admit terms of peace, love, and favour, to be offered unto mankind.

1 The wonderful love of God the Father. Charnock, Vol. 2.

The love of God the Father, is spring or rise of our salvation.

Besides, had not the Father been the first and prime Agent and Author in proposing this marriage, it would render the Son more merciful, kind, and loving to lost sinners, than the Father, and so it would have tended to eclipse his glory, and that not only in respect had unto his goodness, but also in respect had unto his sovereignty; for it was at his choice and liberty, whether sinners should be raised to this honour and eternal happiness, by being espoused to his Son, or not. Therefore God the Father's contrivance, and acceptation of this so great and so amazing a design of favour and rich bounty of his Son's espousing of sinners, confers validity upon it, and removes all objections out of the way, which perhaps in some sense, otherwise might have rose.

2. This further appears, because the Son, in his undertaking this work and business, i. e., in coming into the world to espouse sinners to himself, is said to do it in obedience to the Father: "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair," Isa. l. 56. Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things he suffered."

The Son ascribes the glory to his Father.

3. It appears that the Father is the prime Agent and Author of this marriage, and blessed wedding supper, because the persons which the Son was to espouse, were first chosen, or elected by him. This is mentioned in this parable, "Many are called, but few are chosen." And they were the Father's choice, not but that they were the Son's choice, as well as the Father's, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," John xv. 16. The Son liked and approved of all them that his Father chose for him, yet he never hath, doth, nor will espouse one soul, but such which the Father from eternity loved and elected to eternal life.

The Father chose the bride for his Son.

Brethren, it is observable, that election is generally in the holy scripture, attributed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 3, 4. So it is said in another place, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. 29. The apostle Peter witnesseth to the same truth, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," 1 Pet. i. 2. The Father loved them from everlasting, and therefore elected them.

4. The Father is the first and chief Author of this marriage feast, appears, because he sent the Son into the world, on purpose to espouse sinners, or to bring them into a state of marriage union with himself, it was on this errand the Son came; it was to accomplish

this gracious and glorious design and achievement, the Father sent him hither. "Last of all he sent his Son." "I came not of myself, but my Father sent me." It cannot quickly be reckoned up how many times our blessed Lord (in the gospel according to John) saith, the Father sent him; "The same works that I do, bear witness that the Father sent me," John v. 39. Again, he saith, "This is the will of him that sent me," John vi. 40. Again, it is said, "He that sent me is with me." And, as the Father sent him, so likewise, I say it was to this end and purpose, i. e., to espouse sinners, to betroth them unto himself for ever.

5. It further appears to be thus, because the Father also prepared him a body, and this not only that he might be a fit sacrifice to redeem those he loved, but also that he might be a suitable person to espouse mankind, and marry them for ever. "A body hast thou prepared me," Heb. x. 5.

6. Moreover, it was the Father which made the first promise of his Son to our first parents; "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And this promise in due time was made good. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," &c., Gal. iv. 4.

7. God the Father also prepared the marriage supper, it was he that made this feast, it is he that is at the whole charge of it; they are his fatlings that are killed; it is his Lamb, and the best also of all his flock in heaven and in earth; it is his wine that he hath mingled, his milk, and his bread, "Behold I have prepared my dinner, my oxen, and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready."

Possibly (as I hinted) this may allude to those sacrifices which were under the law, which were types of Christ, who is the substance of all the provision of which this feast doth consist.

But more directly, it undoubtedly refers to that provision which God hath made for the marriage of this most noble and high-born Prince, the Lord Jesus Christ. So that oxen and fatlings, serve chiefly for illustration sake, to set forth that great bounty and noble treatment, or entertainment, all shall find that come to this wedding, and espouse Jesus Christ. It is called, "A feast of fat things, full of marrow; wine on the lees, well refined," Isa. xxv. 6.

8. The Father sent his servants to bid or invite the guests, he therefore must needs be the first and chiefest Author and Agent in promoting this marriage, or the spiritual union of Jesus Christ with sinners; it is said, "Again he sent forth other servants," ver. 4.

9. Moreover, it is the Father that gives all those persons unto his Son, which the Son doth espouse. Our Lord saith, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me," John vi. 37. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me," John xvii. 6.

1. Giving unto Christ, may denote election, and also, that designation of the persons to this end. Moreover,

2. It may also signify, the infusing of grace, or the giving them a heart to believe and to receive him. And as the Father gives the sinner to his Son, so also he gives his Son to the sinner. He first gave Jesus Christ for us, and then he gives him unto us, as the effects of his sovereign love and grace. "If thou knewest the gift of God," John iv. 19. What gift is that? Certainly it is Jesus Christ, he is God's gift, and the greatest, and choicest gift that ever was bestowed upon the children of men; for, when God gives Christ, he gives himself, and all things that are truly good; all things are yours, why so? The answer is plain, viz., you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

10. The Father is so much concerned in making of this marriage, that unless he draws the sinner to Jesus Christ, or makes the soul willing to accept and receive Christ, none can come; "No man can come to me except the Father draw him," John vi. 44. Naturally the will is rebellious and obstinate; there is an averseness to Christ, and enmity in the mind against him, therefore the Father must by his Spirit remove that averseness, and take away that enmity. It doth not only denote a rational drawing, by arguments used in the ministry of the gospel; for, if this was that which is here meant, then it would follow, that it is not the Father, but his ministers that draw the sinner. Therefore this drawing signifieth that divine power that is put forth by Almighty God upon the soul. Our Lord explains it himself in verse 65.

"Therefore said I unto you, no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." Except he give power to come, a heart to come, or rather faith whereby the soul must receive him; and "faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8.

The Father prepared the body of Christ.

God the Father is at the charge of this wedding supper.

The Father gives the bride in marriage.

What giving doth denote.

What is meant by the Father's drawing.

11. The Father manifests his great love, and is the great Agent, and Author of this grace, and high privileges, i. e., the soul's union with his Son, appears, in that the servants which he sends on this errand, as spokesmen to persuade sinners, are to offer this favour to them in his name; nay, they are to entreat them, and beseech them in his stead, "We pray you, as if God did beseech you by us," 2 Cor. v. 20.

So much as to the first thing, which this marriage feast doth denote, or comprehend.

Secondly, this feast, or this marriage doth also denote or hold forth, the wonderful love of Jesus Christ to lost sinners, which I purpose to open more largely under another head.

This marriage feast holds forth the wonderful love of Christ

Thirdly, It also signifies and fully holds forth, the strange and marvellous condescension of Jesus Christ, in that he, who is the eternal Son of God, even "God over all, blessed for evermore," Rom. ix. 5, should become man, or take our nature into union with his own Person, and to enter into a near and most intimate union with such vile and base creatures, as all mankind naturally are.

Fourthly, it moreover comprehends, or doth import, what a wonderful opportunity is now in the sinner's hand, who have this offer made to them, whereby they may be made happy for ever. What a match, oh, sinners! is here provided for you, and proposed to you? You may be espoused and married unto the Son of God, if you can be brought to leave and forsake all your former lovers, with which you are in a league of too great friendship.

This marriage feast shows what an opportunity is put in the sinners hand.

Fifthly, from the subsequent effects of the whole, or from what ensues, it holds forth the horrible evil and ingratitude of mankind. Did ever mortals slight and contemn such a favour, such honour, such happiness, as all those do, who refuse to come unto this marriage.

It shows man's horrid ingratitude.

This shall suffice as to the first thing propounded, and it is all I shall say at this time.

SERMON III.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—Matt. x. xii. 14.

DOCTRINE. 1. The great God, hath out of infinite love and mercy, sent his own Son to espouse poor sinners, or to take them into union with himself.

I have showed, what this marriage doth import, or comprehend.

Secondly, I shall now proceed to prove and fully demonstrate, that it is the true and only interest of every sinner, to accept of this most gracious offer and invitation, to come to this marriage feast, and espouse Jesus Christ.

1. It must be their chiefest, and only concernment, and true interest, by considering, how all sinners, or ungodly men and women are blinded, misled, and like to be undone for ever, by means or reason of those lovers which they have already espoused, and are in league withal.

Brethren, those objects, or lovers that they are ensnared by, and are in love with, are principally three:

Sinners are in league with sin.

1. The lusts of the flesh. 2. The lusts of the eyes. 3. The pride of life.

To which I might add, their own righteousness; which although it be comprehended in the pride of life, yet I shall speak unto it as a distinct and different object of man's affections.

1. The lusts of the flesh, denotes the object of all voluptuous persons, and comprehends gluttony, drunkenness, whoredom, or all sensual pleasures.

2. The lusts of the eyes, comprehends the covetous man's darling, or beloved, as riches, gold, silver, &c. Thus he desires, and is never satisfied with; yet this is the grand idol of the world, that object mortals dote upon, and are mad after.

3. The pride of life; this is the darling of all ambitious persons; their hearts and eye are set upon pomp, and external grandeur, they seek vain applause, and the glory of this world, which made our Lord say to this sort, "How can ye believe, that seek honour one of another, and not that honour that comes from God only?" John v. 44.

Under this darling object (though with some difference) comes in the great idol of all Pharisaiical persons, viz., self-righteousness, in which doth consist the pride of life, as much as in any other respect whatsoever. What can more fully show the pride of man, than those cursed conceptions of deserving any thing at God's hands, by our own obedience? notwithstanding

standing, in our best and chiefest duties, or acts of piety, is much sin, which, as it is a breach of God's law, it deserves eternal death and wrath.

My brethren, pray consider, that it is from these, or some of these beloved objects, on which the hearts of men are set, that so few come to this marriage supper; they will not break off the league they have made with the "lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life," to espouse Jesus Christ.

2. Moreover, know assuredly, that no person can have any true love to God, or unto Jesus Christ, whose hearts are set upon any of these things. "Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world," John xv. 16.

1. That is, to love things that are sinful in themselves, or sinful in their own nature.

2. Or such who love lawful things and objects to excess, or inordinately, setting their choicest and chiefest affections upon them.

The danger of loving sin, or any lawful pleasure inordinately.

The first comprehends all direct acts of sin, as lying, swearing, whoring, drunkenness, stealing, pride, covetousness, revenge, envy, malice, deceit, superstition, and idolatry, or any other thing that is a breach of the law of God.

It is one thing, my brethren, to be overcome by temptation, to commit this or that sin, and another to love, like, and approve of it. Sin, in the affections, is far worse than sin in the conversation; the former shows such are in the gall of bitterness, and not renewed by divine grace. The other only serves to demonstrate a man is not perfect in grace, or not without sin, as in himself. David, Job, Peter, and many others committed many acts of sin; they had sin in their conversations, but they were not in love with sin; they had it not in their affections, "Ye love the Lord, hate evil," that is, all evil, sin as it is sin, and the worst of all plagues in the world. To have sin in the affections, is a clear sign of unregeneracy. But then,

2. To love lawful things and objects inordinately. God allows people to love their wives, their husbands, their children, their parents, or any of their relations, and friends; but, if we love any of these to excess, or inordinately, or more than Christ, or God himself, we can be no disciples of his, nor is the love of God in such persons. Also God allows us to love our food, our meat and drink, our clothes, our trades, riches, houses, lands, or any thing we have, or do possess, as it is a blessing given to us of God, and sanctified to our good, we answering God's gracious end and design in bestowing these things upon us. But if we set our hearts upon any of these things, and love them more than God, and Jesus Christ, "The love of God is not in us." Men may make an idol of their backs, of their bellies, of their trade, of their lands, of their houses, lawful pleasures, silver and gold; and it is this which renders their condition to be wretched and deplorable.

3. Pray consider, that it is by means of sin, and by an inordinate love to the creature, that all men and women naturally are blinded; these are their gods, their idols, and these things are the objects by which they are in danger eternally to be undone and ruined.

4. Moreover, it is the great end and design of God, by his making this marriage feast, or by proposing to the soul, a union with Jesus Christ, to break, and utterly to dissolve that league, and friendship, sinners have entered into with any of those things, of which we have mentioned.

Union with Christ is held forth by this marriage feast.

Sinners great interest to cast off, &c., break the league with sin.

And now that is the sinner's great concern, or true and only interest, to cast off, and break their former league with sin, or what they have placed their hearts, their love, and affection upon, I shall prove and demonstrate by several considerations.

1. Consider, that sin is an enemy to the soul, and this world also, as it is the object of lusts; and not only enemies, but very cruel and bloody enemies.

2. Sin, in its original, was but a brat of Satan; it is the spawn of the devil, and, like father like child. Sin hath made a breach between God and man, God and man were once in a state of true friendship, until sin set them one against another. Nay, sin hath caused an irreconcilable enmity between God and all mankind; for, all men, by nature, are in this condition, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" and, "God is angry with the wicked every day," Rom. viii. 7. Such is his holiness and pure nature, that he cannot but hate him that loves sin, hence it is said, "The face of the Lord is set against them that do evil, to cut their remembrance from off the earth." Again, it is said, "The Lord trieth the righteous, but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth," Psal. xi. 5.

3. Sin hath defaced the image of God in man, and hath brought him under God's curse,

What evil sin hath done to man.

and hath laid him obnoxious to eternal wrath. Now if this be duly considered, is it not the true interest of sinners, or their chiefest concernment, to break that league they have made with such an object?

Is not the loss of God's love and favour, a fearful thing; is it not dreadful to be filled with enmity against God, and hate him; saith the Lord, "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me," Zech. xi. 8.

Is it not an amazing thing, and a dismal loss, that instead of God's holy image, man should bear the image and likeness of the devil?

Is it not a lamentable thing, to be under God's vindictive wrath, and to be laid obnoxious unto eternal burnings? Can any think of this, and not tremble? Would any (unless they are utterly deprived of their understanding) hug such a pretended friend, that is, such an enemy to God, and to the person that is in love with it.

Secondly, furthermore, pray consider, that by this cursed object of sinners, they are become traitors, and rebels unto God, and abide so, as long as they keep this friendship, and refuse to break the league they are in with hell and death.

Man an enemy to God by sin.

It was (beloved) hereby, that we cast off our blessed and rightful sovereign, and set up the devil in the place, and throne of God.

Thirdly, this marriage with Jesus Christ, must needs be the sinner's true and chiefest interest, considering yet a little further, what traitorous lovers these cursed objects are unto sinners. Oh! what barbarity have they exercised upon precious souls of mankind.

1. Sin hath put out the eyes of all men, their understanding naturally being utterly darkened, and hence they see not, nor can they discern what a cruel monster sin is, which they hug and embrace in their bosoms; they are in the night of darkness, and think they have got Rachel into their bed, when, alas! it is one far more deformed than blear-eyed Leah; nay, one worse than the devil; for so is sin in many respects, as hath formerly been opened unto you.

The eyes sinners put out by sin.

Also by this means they cannot see, nor discern the beauty and loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ. I say, they are blind, and in darkness, their spiritual eyes being put out by sin, which they love, and will not forego, leave, nor forsake.

See blind leaders of the blind.

2. Moreover, sin hath poisoned and corrupted, not only one faculty of the soul, but also every faculty thereof.

3. These enemies, that are the darlings of sinners, have wounded them from the crown of their head, to the soles of their feet; so that they have nothing "but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores," Isa. i. 5.

See the parable of the man that fell among thieves.

4. Sin hath covered the soul all over with a leprosy; no doubt but the plague of the leprosy, is a figure and representation of sin; we read, such was the nature of it, that it spread itself all over the body. So hath sin spread itself all over every part, and faculty of the soul; and every member of the body of sinners, are corrupted by it also. "Their eyes are full of idolatry, their hands wift to shed blood, the throat is a filthy sepulchre, under their lips, is the poison of asps," Rom. iii. 13. The leprosy was a most loathsome, filthy, and stinking disease; sin renders the soul hateful and abominable in the sight of God, and in every man's own sight, whose eyes are enlightened. No disease was more contagious or infectious; it infected the house, walls, vessels, and garments, where the leper dwelt. So all things are infected by the sin of an ungodly person, even his very prayers are sin. What mortal would embrace such an object, that hath given him such a foul and filthy disease? certainly it must needs be the wisdom of every soul, to cast off such a lover with the utmost hatred and abhorrence.

5. Sin hath laid all mankind naturally in chains, and cruel fetters; they are bound in bonds of iniquity, yea, in such bonds that bind them unto a filthy dead body, a rotten, stinking body. Natural depravity or original corruption, is so compared by the apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death," Rom. vii. 24. Or, this dead body. Moreover, these bonds bind all that guilt that is in sinners, upon their souls and consciences: and not only so, but it also binds them unto the devil, to be his slaves and vassels.

Sin binds sinners in bonds, and also to a dead body.

And, in the last place, these bonds bind the soul of every sinner that is in love with it, over to eternal wrath and vengeance, yea, unto everlasting burning.

6. Sin hath also stabbed the souls of all that are in a league of love and friendship with it, it has given the soul its mortal wound. Oh, what is the blindness and folly of such sinners! they sport and play with sin, and embrace it, as a

Sin hath stabbed sin-

ners at their hearts. man embraces a lovely object, and think nothing more sweet and pleasant, and yet every kiss they gave sin, I mean every act of sin, is a stab at the heart, as if a spear was thrust into the very bowels of a person.

Sin, and this world, with which wicked men and women are in love, is set forth by an adulterous woman, by wise Solomon, Prov. vii. 10, 17, 22, 23. Who lies in wait for a foolish young man; "And behold, there met him a woman, with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart;" And thus she said unto him, I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon, come, let us take our fill of love until morning. He goeth after her straitway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not it is for his life."

Though this is true in the letter, i. e., this is the folly and danger of every one that commits adultery with a woman; yet no doubt, it is as true of every other sin. All that love this world, or are in love with any sin, thus they are wounded; every sin is a dart that pierces the soul.

The way sin leads the soul in, and the dismal end it will bring all sinners unto, may sufficiently serve to convince every one who is in love with it, that it is the greatest concern to break that league they are in with it, and to espouse Jesus Christ. As sin lays every sinner under God's wrath here, so it will bring them to hell in the end. The wages, reward, or demerit of sin, is death, eternal death. This will be the end of all those who continue in sin, or that live in the love and liking of it: "her house is the way to hell, leading down to the chambers of death," Prov. vii. 27.

Now, the design of God (I told you) in making this marriage feast, is to bring sinners to be willing to break that contract, which they have made with objects, which certainly, all must needs conclude, is their wisdom to do, considering what hath been said.

Neither is there any other way to escape the misery, and fearful danger they are in hereby, but by their accepting this gracious invitation, viz., to espouse Jesus Christ, which is by eating this supper, or by feeding on Christ by faith; for to believe, to receive Christ, or to feed on him, signifies the very same thing.

This, my brethren, is the first demonstration, to prove, that it is the true interest, and highest concernment of sinners thus to do.

U S E.

1. We infer from hence, that greater love and mercy to sinners, could not be showed unto them, than God hath manifested in making this blessed marriage supper.

God saw what a fearful condition mankind was in, by the love of sin, and by the inordinate love of the creature, they having not ever tasted of any thing which is truly good, he has provided such a feast, which if they come and eat thereof, they will soon perceive how they have been deceived, and blinded by the enemies of their souls.

Exhortation. Let me therefore now exhort you that are yet in your sins, or live in love with them.

1. To consider what your woful state and condition is. This indeed may be lamented. Though these things are so, and it is day by day opened, and made clearly to appear to be so; yet sinners will not believe it, or at leastwise lay it to heart. They cannot be persuaded, that this is their condition, which is a full confirmation of the truth you have now heard, that all ungodly men and women are blind. If these things do not affect your souls, if you believe not, this is your condition, certainly you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

2. Let me exhort you to cast off sin, and the love of this world. Had you rather die, than live? Is sin so sweet to you, that you are contented to be damned for your love to it? Do you think it hath more good and sweetness in it, than is to be found in God, and in Jesus Christ? Will you show yourselves to be some of them that make light of this marriage feast, and, one go his farm, and another to his merchandise? O, if it be so, hear what God says, none of these shall taste of my dinner. No, not so much as one taste of God's love. No Christ then, shall you have when you come to die. No pardon of sin; no peace of conscience, but unto everlasting flames you must be cast.

So much at this time.

SERMON IV.

*The kingdom of heaven, is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,
&c. Matt. xxii. 1, &c.*

THE doctrine I am upon, is this, viz., "that the great God hath sent his own Son, to espouse and marry poor sinners."

1. You have heard, what this marriage doth import.

2. I am upon the second general head proposed, viz., that it is the true and only interest of sinners, to accept of this gracious offer.

I told you, I should endeavour to make this to appear by divers demonstrations.

1. The first was taken from the consideration of that woful condition all men are in by means of that affinity they have made with, other objects and things.

That I have done with, and I shall now proceed.

Secondly, it is the sinner's true and only interest to espouse Jesus Christ, considering the great worth and dignity of his person and offices.

2. From the great unworthiness, or indignity of those persons, which he offers to espouse unto himself.

1. From the dignity, worth, and glorious excellency of Christ's person and offices.

1. He is a King, yea, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," Jer. x. 7. This respecteth his office. But further, he is God, the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. He only hath the keys of hell and death. He hath all power in heaven and earth. His glory excelleth the highest heavens: nay, in comparison of him, the sun that is so glorious, is but a lump of darkness, or without light. It is he whose power is such, that he measureth the heavens with a span. And all the regions of the earth, are as the small dust of the balance in comparison of him.

The excellency of Christ's person.

Brethren, if we consider him in his personal excellencies, or in the glory of his offices, there is none like unto him in heaven, nor earth; there is not such another; he hath the pre-eminence over all creatures, angels and men, yea, over all the whole creation. All must worship him, do him homage, or give divine adoration to him. The Father when he brought him unto the world, said, "and let all the angels of heaven worship him," Heb. i. 6.

The glory of Christ's majesty cannot be conceived, much less expressed by any in heaven and earth.

And, is it not (think you) the chief interest, the only concernment of sinners, to espouse him, who is exalted in heaven at the Father's right hand, having taken the full possession of his kingdom above, and will quickly take unto him the actual possession of his kingdom below? "His dominions shall be from sea to sea, and from the rivers, to the ends of the earth," Psal. lxxii. 8. All nations shall serve him, and kings shall lick the dust of his feet, and bow before him. His sceptre is a right sceptre; he doth what he pleaseth, and none can say unto him, what dost thou?

2. He is glorious in his retinue, having "Ten thousand times ten thousand of glorious angels to minister unto him." What are the attendants of the greatest monarch on earth to those mighty ones that attend upon Jesus Christ? The least of them far excel in power and glory, the chiefest king, or potentate on earth.

There are three or four things that further tend to demonstrate his favour, in vouchsafing such a high privilege, and great honour in his espousing poor sinners.

1. Let us consider, his all-sufficiency: he hath all things in the compass of his own being, whereby he is infinitely happy and glorious in himself. Moreover, his glory and happiness had been nothing less than it is, if mankind had never been created, (he being God over all, blessed for ever) nor would his glory be less, (as so considered) if all men should be consumed, and come to nothing.

Christ's all-sufficiency.

He stands in no more need of us, (as one observes) to add unto his essential glory, than the heavens stand in need of a moth to move it, or the earth a grasshopper to uphold it; or the sun a glow-worm, to add to its light and lustre.

Charnock.

Brethren, If the Lord Jesus Christ could not have been happy without his espousing and marrying sinners, it would not have been so great a wonder. But since he can gain nothing by us, and stands in no need of us, in his proposing this so great, so sweet, and gracious an offer, this tends to show his admirable and amazing condescension, and that it must needs

be the chief interest of sinners to accept him, it being our good only, which he hereby seeks, and labours to effect.

Secondly, Considering his independency. Christ is, brethren, so free, and absolute in his being, and actings, that nothing can necessitate him to regard us; none could lay any engagement upon him, to set his heart against mankind. If any person could oblige him, or if we could deserve any such thing at his hands, or could present any motive which might effectually persuade him, then it might not be so much admired; but, alas! there is no desert, no merit, no motive in any sinner, either from within, or from without, to stir him up to love, and espouse any man or woman of Adam's offspring. Alas! can boils and blotches allure, or loathsome filth and ugliness entice admirable beauty, to love and delight?

Christ's independency.

Christ's sovereignty.

3. Consider the nature of Christ's sovereignty, in respect had to his choice.

1. He might, without the least prejudice to himself, have annihilated mankind, as soon as he had created them. Before they had sinned, might he not have done what he would with his own, (as Reverend Charnock notes) much more might he have done this. After man had sinned, and cast him off, might he not have executed the fearful sentence of eternal death and wrath immediately, and so have caused the glory of man to fly away as a bird from the birth, from the womb, or conception, and so have crushed the cockatrice in the egg? And this he might done unto the glory of his justice.

2. Or, might he not have displayed the glory of his absolute, sovereign grace and favour (saith he) to the fallen angels, and not to fallen mankind? Or, have made us devils; or, at least, have put us into the like state they are in?

Brethren, The angels were his creatures, and more glorious too in their first estate, than man; and were, as to their beings and nature, more like unto him, they being spirits, and so of a more pure and sublime matter than man, and so might seem a more fit and proper match for him than man, who was made of dust, or red clay. What obligation, I say, lay either upon the Father or Son, to spare man, and not the angels that sinned?

3. Or, why might he not have decreed (saith he) from everlasting (foreseeing man's fall, and horrid rebellion) to have cast off all Adam's posterity, and thrown them into hell, and have raised up a new creation of mankind, from a better head, and have caused them to stand, and have made them more desirable objects of his love and affections?

Obj. But some may say, "How then could the attribute of his mercy and goodness been known?"

Ans. Certainly (as he observes) infinite wisdom could some other way have displayed the glory of that, and all other attributes, if he had pleased; and in such a way, that he might have spared his own precious Son from pouring forth his blood. No doubt but the whole contrivance of the mystery of our redemption, results from God's sovereign pleasure.

4. Or why (saith he) might not the plea of divine justice, have rather prevailed, than the plea of mercy? Was it not more reasonable, that justice should be glorified in man's final ruin, than that mercy should be heard for us, considering that nothing could satisfy divine justice, for man's offence, as it seems to us, but the letting out of the precious blood of his own Son; or that he must die, if we are spared? To which I may add,

5. Or why doth our Lord Jesus commend his love to sinners in England, and not to sinners in India? I mean to the Pagan world: they are wholly left under darkness, and never heard of Christ. They know nothing of his death, nor of the gospel; they have not this offer of his love, as yet, made unto them; they are not bid to this marriage feast.

6. Or, why doth he so graciously vouchsafe this infinite favour to us in and about this city, and some other places in this nation, and lets many cities, towns, and corners of England, remain in great darkness, they having not such clear gospel-light afforded to them? Rev. iii. 20. Christ doth not come and stand at their doors, and knock, as he doth at your doors, and hath for a long time.

Or, why doth he open some of our hearts, causing us to attend upon the word, and by the powerful operations of his Spirit, bow and subject our rebellious wills to embrace him?

Whereas, many are let alone in the blindness of their minds, and hardness of their hearts, who sit under the same means of the external preaching of the gospel. Surely, no other reason can be given of this, but his own sovereignty. What greater demonstrations of sovereign love and grace, can Jesus Christ show unto us?

Thirdly, It greatly concerns sinners to accept of this offer, or it must needs be their chief and only interest so to do, considering, that great indignity and unworthiness of the persons to whom he commendeth his love.

The sinner's great unworthiness.

Quest. Who are they?

Ans. I answer, They are men and women, children of the lost Adam; not angels, but mankind.

And, oh! what a low, base, and contemptible creature is man! "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" Job vii. 17, 18.

Man, a worm, a base and vile creature, a mere carrion worm, bred out of corruption, not worth the least regard! Do we value a worm? Oh, why should Christ, the Prince of the kings of the earth, set his heart upon, and court such a creature!

And shall not such creatures think it doth not greatly concern them, to accept him? Is it not their chief interest to bid him welcome, and open the door to him, and readily come to this marriage supper?

Sirs! If men were now poor, yet if they were of an high birth, or sons of nobles, there might seem to be some motive why Christ should make this wonderful suit and offer to them. But, alas! alas! all were base born, born children of wrath. Our Father left us beggars. But, this is not all, he left us sinners. Man is a sinner, a rebel, a cursed traitor to this blessed prince. Shall the king, that we have conspired against, and contemned in our hearts, and consulted with the devil to dethrone, to murder, and tread under foot, come to us to woo us. Hath he fallen in love with us? Or, doth the offended Sovereign stoop to offending criminals? Stand, and wonder, O ye heavens! Doth the Majesty of heaven, in this manner, condescend to espouse a slave of sin, and Satan? Shall such that hate him, be beloved by him? Shall condemned rebels be not only entreated to accept of a pardon, but also to marry the prince himself, and they not think it their only interest to accept it? Oh, what an inequality is here!

1. He a King, yea, the "King of kings," and they rebels and traitors to him?

He the mighty Monarch of heaven and earth, and they beggars!

He from heaven, heavenly; they from earth, earthly!

He the highest Sovereign, and we the lowest peasants!

He the Darling of heaven, and we the vassals of hell!

He, in his nature, pure, holy, and undefiled, and we, in our nature, impure, filthy, and polluted!

Fourthly, It must needs be their true interest, considering what strange and amazing achievements he hath undertook, in order to bring about, and obtain his gracious design and purpose. Christ's wonderful achievements.

1. Consider what a glorious place, and a rich palace he left above, and to what a doleful land of darkness, he came unto, to seek the lost soul he designed to espouse. He came out of his Father's bosom, to be exposed to the wrath and malice of devils, and wicked men.

2. He laid aside his glorious robes to be clothed (as I may say) with rags, that so he might accomplish his gracious purpose.

3. Consider what a long and vast journey he undertook, to come to us, to offer his love. Is it not a long way from heaven to earth? Christ loved and decreed to espouse sinners from all eternity.

4. Consider, that he from eternity decreed to espouse all those persons which his Father gave him; and whatsoever he doth in time, was but in pursuit of his unchangeable purpose from before all time.

5. Consider, that he hath espoused us virtually before he offers his love unto us: he espoused us, when he espoused our nature; he virtually was married to sinners, when he took the nature of man into union with his own divine person. Calvin understood this chiefly to be meant by this marriage in my text. Indeed, had not the Father first married his Son to the nature of man, he could not have married the person of any man to him. Christ must be flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. God being a Spirit, he could not be a proper spouse for us. Could an angel be a fit, and proper help-meet for Adam? We could not see him, could have no affecting idea of him; we could not come near him: his glory is so great, considered as he is God, it would have overwhelmed us, or have dazzled our eyes; therefore he veiled his glory in our nature, and became like unto us, that we might behold him as an object every way suitable, and agreeing to us, whom he came to betroth to himself for ever.

"We beheld his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. How was this! Even as he was made flesh, and dwelt among us. In this the wisdom and goodness of God was manifested. We could not so well conceive him, nor worship him, because we could not tell how to frame any true or right idea of him in our minds, except he brought forth the express image of his person.

Therefore, it is by him we come to God, believe in the Father, espouse the Father, love, honour, and worship the Father.

The Son of God (saith a learned man) was made flesh, that he might be a true, and fit Bridegroom for his church.

The great abasement of Christ. 6. Consider what he hath suffered and undergone, that he might have his gracious design of love accomplished.

What indignities did he meet withal, in the days of humiliation, from men! His birth was mean, being born of a poor virgin; the Popish church calls her a lady, and paints her in very rich robes; but, alas! as to her outward state in the world, she was no lady, but a mean virgin; which appears,

(1.) By the meanness of that man whom she was espoused unto: Joseph was no lord, no earl, no duke, but a poor carpenter.

(1.) By that poor entertainment she had in the inn. Had she been of some noble, or high descent, no doubt but the innkeeper would have made better provision for her, she being big with child, and near her time. We may conclude, though the inn might be full of guests, yet some might have soon removed their quarters, to have given place to a person of such quality, as these people imagine: however, they would not have turned her into the stable, to be delivered of the holy child Jesus, among the brute beasts.

2. No sooner was he born, but he was laid in a manger, and when the news of his birth came to the ears of Herod, he sought all manner of ways and means to take away his life.

Moreover, the whole time of his life was attended with sorrow and affliction. He was hated, and persecuted from place to place: he spent his days in grief and sighing. He is said to be "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," Isa. liii. 7. How was he reproached and despised of men, called a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners: nay, that he had a devil and was mad; and that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Oh, what mortal can read these things, and his soul not mourn, and his heart pour forth!

Christ's bloody agony. Moreover, how basely was he betrayed by one of his own disciples? And, what sorrow did he meet with in his soul in the garden, in his bloody agony, when the weight of our sins, and that wrath that was due to sinners, lay so heavy upon him? and besides all this, what a sore, ignominious, and painful death did he die?

The end of Christ's death. He died in the stead, or room of all those the Father gave unto him. He could not obtain his desire, viz., the espousing and marrying of our souls, unless he died for us: in his holy life he wrought out a wedding garment for us, and for all that espouse him: and, by his death, he bore our sins, and curse of the law, or all that vindictive wrath that was due to us, and so saved us from hell, and eternal vengeance, whose doing and suffering, is our righteousness, to our justification, before God.

And, shall any after this, refuse to come to this wedding, or to accept of his love, and be betrothed to so dear a Saviour.

Oh, ponder these things well in your minds, and lay your hands upon your hearts, and delay no longer, but close with Jesus Christ this day.

Fifthly, but if all these arguments and demonstrations do not it, will not prevail with you, to consider the nature of his precious love.

The great love of Christ opened. I. Jesus Christ had an early love to poor sinners. He loved us long before we were born, or had a being: "The Lord appeared unto me of old, saying, yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love," Jer. xxxi. 3.

It was, my brethren, a love of choice, he chose us, and set his heart upon us from all eternity. It was a love of purpose, of good will; he designed to redeem us, and visit us, and to espouse us, to come and knock at our doors, and to change our hearts, and to marry us to himself for ever.

Oh! what good-will was here to sinners? What a purpose of love, of kindness, of favour, and grace? Did Christ choose sinners so long ago, even from everlasting, and, shall not sinners now choose him, love him, espouse him? "We love him, because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. Our love to Christ, is not the cause of his love to us, but it is the effect of his love. His love is the fountain, our love is a small rivulet, flowing from that fountain.

What is it, my brethren, which draws out the love of a person to an earthly object, or cause such a one to look upon it their concern, and interest to return love for love, more than the thoughts of the length of that time he loved her, perhaps from a child; but, Oh!

how much longer did Jesus Christ love us! It was not only from the womb, but from eternity. But pray do not mistake me, I do not say, the cases run parallel; it is not the bare reflection on Christ's early love, that is sufficient to cause us to love him: no, no, but his love to us, hath a physical cause in it; it is like love powder, it operates on us, as the sun by its near approach in the spring, causes the grass to grow, and flowers to put forth. Christ's love to us, hath the same effect upon us, as the sun hath, by shining on the moon, i. e., the sun shines on the moon, and the moon reflects great light on the earth.

II. Christ's love is a free love; it arose from himself. Pray consider the objects he doth so dearly love.

Brethren, the Lord Christ did not let out his redeeming love to us, as we stood in the first Adam, in the state of innocency, but as we were fallen, and lay polluted in our filth and blood. Perfect man stood in no need of redeeming love, mercy, and compassion: God considered as Creator, was our Husband, and we wanted our Saviour to espouse us; I may say, it was in our widowhood that Christ loved us, God having cast us off, and given us a bill of divorce. "Now, when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live, &c. I looked upon thee, and behold, thy time was the time of love, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine," Ezek. xvi. 6, 8.

Oh, what was the motive of Christ's love! It is beyond our reach to find it out. It is a free love, an undeserved love. There was nothing he could behold in us, to cause him to love us: nay, it is evident, he might see cause to loathe and hate us, but see no cause arising from us, to move him to love us. He loved us when sinners, and enemies, and when we lay under the curse, and condemned criminals. "I will love them freely," Hos. xiv. 4.

III. Christ's love is infinite, or unmeasurable; it passeth all understanding. "That you may know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge," Eph.

Christ's love is infinite.

iii. 19. It is beyond the knowledge of men or angels. Christ's love hath all dimensions in it; there is a height, breadth, length, and depth in it. We may as soon find out God to perfection, as find out the love of Christ to perfection: "It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? Longer than the earth, broader than the sea," Job xi. 8, 9. So it may be said of the love of Jesus Christ; the inmost recesses, or secrets of his heart cannot be known.

IV. The love of Jesus Christ is wonderful. As his name is Wonderful, so is his nature, and the greatness of his love. Doubtless, his love unto sinners, makes the holy angels behold him with admiration. His love is wonderful, if we consider,

Christ's love wonderful.

1. The rise, original, and the spring of it is wonderful, it being without beginning, from everlasting.

2. If we consider the motive of it, it is wonderful. Who ever loved thus? Love such, with such a love, that hated him, and so odious and ugly in themselves!

3. His love is wonderful, if we consider the effects of it;

1. In respect had to himself, what did his love put him to do, and to undergo for those he loved? What strange effects had it upon his holy person? How did it seem to disrobe him? How poor did it make him, that was so rich? How contemptible and despised, that was so great, high, and honourable? How low did it bring him, that was so exalted? How miserable to all human sight did he become, that was so blessed and happy? He that was blessedness itself, was, by his love, made a curse for us. In a word, his love made him who was God, to become man; he that was the glory of heaven, to bear the pangs of hell: that was the light of the world, to come under the greatest darkness: that was the life of all creatures, to come under the power of death.

2. Christ's love is wonderful, in respect had to the effects of his love on sinners.

1. It causeth them that hated him, to love him above father and mother, husband or wife, son or daughter, house, land, or a man's own life.

The effects of Christ's love on sinners.

2. It causeth poor sinners to love him, after this manner, whom they never saw: is not this wonderful? O what amazing effects has it upon the souls of sinners: "Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8.

3. Christ's love hath a like wonderful effect upon the soul of sinners, that Elijah's garment had, which he cast upon Elisha: "So he departed thence, and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth,

and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him : and he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee ; and he said unto him, go back, what have I done unto thee ?" I Kings xix. 19, 20. No sooner doth Christ cast the mantle of his love on poor sinners, but immediately the soul leaves all, and follows him : no man that hath had the least saving sight of Christ, and hath tasted of his love, but runs after him.

Christ's love is wonderful. 4. Such are the wonderful effects of Christ's love, on the souls of sinners, that it makes a strange and marvellous change upon them : it transforms their souls into his own image. Do but behold Christ, though it be but in a glass, and this will be the effects of it ; " But we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Christ's love is ravishing. V. Christ's love is of a sweet, and soul-ravishing nature ; it is compared to wine ; nay, better than wine ; " Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine," Cant. i. 2. There is no believer but finds by experience, that the love of Christ is sweeter than all things in this world, when he gives them fresh tastes of it ; this made the spouse to cry out, " Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love," Cant. ii. 5. O how sweet is such a sickness ; happy they that are love-sick to Jesus Christ !

VI. The love of Christ is a conjugal love ; nothing will satisfy him but the nearest relation ; it is the espousing the soul unto himself that he designs and aims at, that he may manifest his dearest embracements, the sweetest intimacy ; " I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercy : I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord," Hosea ii. 19.

Brethren, if Jesus Christ showed such love to his enemies, nay, unto his murderers, as to pray for them, " Father, forgive them, they know not what they do ; O, then, what is his love unto his spouse ! unto all those that he takes into union with himself ?

Christ's love attracting. VII. The love of Jesus Christ is of an attracting nature ; it is an attracting, a drawing love ; it constrains all that taste of it to love, delight in, and follow him ; " The love of Christ," saith the apostle, " constraineth us," 2 Cor. vi. 14 ; it constrains the soul that feels its effects, to leave all sin ; to loathe and hate sin as the greatest evil ; it constrains the soul to hate that which once it loved, and to love that which once it hated ; " Ye that love the Lord hate evil." It draws the soul out of darkness, into marvellous light ; it draws powerfully ; let who will strive to obstruct or hinder the soul from closing with Christ, it will be in vain, if it be but in the cords and bands of his love, the husband, the wife, the parents, the children, may do what they can to persuade them to leave off following, and cleaving to Christ, yet a believer is constrained to cleave to him : his love is stronger than death ; it draws the soul to holiness, to new obedience, to suffer shame for Christ's sake ; nay, to die for him, rather than it will forsake him.

VIII. Christ's love is a love of complacency ; he delights in that soul that he has drawn to him, and that believeth in him : " As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," Isa. lxii. 5. This further appears, by what he says unto his spouse, " Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with the chain of thy neck," Cant. iv. 9.

Oh, how is Christ delighted with the eye of faith, by which the soul came to behold him, and which caused it to love him, and delight in him, it being that uniting grace, through the operations of the Holy Spirit ; faith on our part is the bond of this union, though Christ apprehends us first by his Spirit, before we can apprehend him by faith.

And from hence it is, that a believer takes up such complacency and delight in Christ, such as is the cause, will be the effect, Christ being the joy and delight of the soul.

Christ has a commiserating love. IX. The love of Jesus Christ is of a commiserating nature. It is a love of sympathy. He hath such precious love to all believers, or to all that espouse him, that he has a fellow feeling of all their sorrows, troubles, and afflictions ; " In all their afflictions he was afflicted ; and in his love and pity he redeemed them, and carried them all the days of old," Isa. lxiii. 9. This notes (saith our late Annotator) the sympathy of Jesus Christ, he having the same Spirit in him that the church hath ; it being Christ who appeared to Moses in the bush ; he was that angel of God's presence, that led Israel through the wilderness.

Brethren, our Lord Christ hath the same love of sympathy now, as he had in the days

of old. "We have not an high-priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," Heb. iv. 15.

Oh! who would not, but readily espouse such a person, marry such a prince, that will sit up with them all the night of their sickness, and sorrows? He will bear them company, his left hand (of power) shall be under their heads, and his right hand (of love and mercy) shall embrace them; he will bear them in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and give them sweet cordials, to revive, and cheer their drooping and fainting spirits, so that they shall never be without help and support, let their wants be what they will: "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmities," Heb. v. 2. Though Christ had no sin of his own, yet he was afflicted, and was compassed with our infirmities; he made our infirmities his own, and bore our sicknesses. O what a kind of love is in our Lord Jesus Christ!

X. Christ's love is an abiding love, it is not hot and cold, as it is among Christ's love abides. men. O what a heat of love will some men show to those they espouse, and marry at first! as if they were all love, full of burning love and affections; but, alas! it doth not abide, it continues but a short time, they soon cool in their affections; and indeed, so doth our love to Jesus Christ, which may be for ever lamented. We are too subject with the church of Ephesus, to leave our first love, Rev. ii. 4. Christ may say unto us, as he speaks unto his people of old; "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown," Jer. ii. 2.

We too often decay in our love to Christ, as to the degree of it. Our love to him, and to his people, doth not always abide alike strong and fervent, but Christ's love to us, doth never decay; "Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end," John xiii. 1.

He loves us not with a mutable, with a changeable, but with an abiding love; "Much water cannot quench [his] love, nor can the floods drown it," Cant. viii. 7.

XI. Christ's love is an inseparable love. No enemy, no infirmity, no mis- Christ's love inseparable. carriage in his people, can separate his love from them: ill persons sometimes cause some men to withdraw their love from their wives; a small thing may separate their love from their dearest friends, but nothing can separate Christ's love from believers. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature can separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ, our Lord," Rom. viii. 38, 39.

If such is the effect of Christ's love to us, what is the nature of his love in itself? the cause is more noble than the effects. The height of honour, and worldly advancement; nor the depth of disgrace, or worldly abasement, shall separate our love from him, nor his love from us, such is his love to all those that are united to him.

Obj. Some perhaps may say; but sin may separate us from his love.

Ans. I answer, no; that cannot be, because he hath promised to blot out all the sins of his people, and will remember them no more.

By angels, no doubt, are meant the fallen angels; and if the devils can by none of their subtle temptations, entice the saints to sin, so as to separate them from Christ's love, or the love of God in him, then be sure sin can never do it. That which sin may do, the devil may do. But the devil cannot separate us from the love of Christ: therefore sin cannot do it.

Besides, "nor any other creature," or thing: this includes all things; and leaves nothing out; no, not sin itself.

XII. Christ's love is an eternal love, it is like himself, as he is eternal, so is his love; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and so is his love to his chosen ones: "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee," Isa. liv. 10.

If Christ doth espouse or betroth them, then he doth betroth for ever; if he be an eternal Husband, then his love will be eternal; but those he doth espouse or betroth unto himself, he doth betroth for ever, to be an eternal Husband. Ergo, his love will be for ever.

APPLICATION.

What do you say? Is not the consideration of Christ's love, a motive sufficient to woo your souls, or to prevail with you to come to this marriage supper, to be the bride of such a

Bridegroom as Christ is? Ask believers, and they will tell you what the nature of his love is; one taste of it fills the soul with joy; and it sometimes causes the soul to say, as Christ does to his spouse, "Turn away thine eyes, they have overcome me."

Christ's love makes every bitter thing sweet, and all hard things easy, it turns the valley of tears into a mount of joy, nay, it brings heaven into the soul. Will you not love this lovely Object, this precious Person? Will you pour contempt upon the Lord of life and glory, and value him not so much as the trash of this world, no, not above your sensual pleasures, and brutish lusts?

Oh, then how just will your damnation be? Sirs, I am here this day, to tell you, there is one in love with you, what think you, young men and women? Is not this matter worthy your most serious consideration? Is there no way that can be used to court your souls into Christ's embraces?

Shall not the Father's Beloved, the Darling of heaven, be your Beloved?

Shall not the object of the glorified saints affections, be the object of your affections?

Oh! do not cast away your souls, you will repent your refusal of this offer one day.

But so much at this time.

SERMON V.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—
Matt. xxii. 1—5.

DOCT. That the great God hath sent his own Son, to espouse poor sinners.

The third demonstration to prove it, was taken from the great and wonderful love of Jesus Christ. To proceed.

Fourthly, consider the great riches of Jesus Christ. Sirs! if there be a proposal made to a person of a match, presently the question is, what has he? or has she? what portion pray, or what is he worth? Is he rich? Now, brethren, though it be a base and sordid thing, for any person to marry chiefly for riches, or to prefer the portion above the person, which many, alas! now-a-days do; yet (here especially) it may be a motive worthy enough; considering though the first and chief motive should be, the excellency of Christ's glorious person, and the nature and greatness of his love and affections. But, however, know, O sinner, that Jesus Christ is very rich; thou needst not fear thou shalt ever know want, or know poverty, if thou dost espouse him; hear what he says, riches and honours are with me, yea "durable riches and righteousness," Prov. viii 18. I purpose to do three things.

1. Shew, wherein Christ is rich, or in what his riches lie.
2. Prove, that he is very rich.
3. Shew you the nature, or excellent quality of his riches.

1. Christ is rich in goodness, or "despised thou the riches of his goodness;" the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Brethren, greatness and goodness meet in Jesus Christ; it is rare to find them to meet in men; but what is the goodness that is in men, to that goodness which is in the Lord Christ: the sea is not fuller of water, than he is of goodness. It is not long since you heard several sermons upon the goodness of the Lord. O how great is thy goodness. There is no goodness in any creature or person, but originally it proceeded from Jesus Christ; (considered as he is God) all external, internal, and eternal goodness comes from him, as water from a fountain; also divine goodness is part of his riches.

The goodness in men is soon gone, it often proves like the early cloud, and morning dew; "But the goodness of the Lord endures for ever," Psal. lii. 1.

Whatsoever is good, or may be called goodness, which transcends, it is in Jesus Christ in great abundance: all the excellent qualities of goodness is in him; no man is full of goodness, of all sorts of divine and spiritual goodness, but the Lord Christ is.

He is of a sympathizing, a gentle, a loving, a forbearing, a commiserating, and long-suffering nature; and also ever so, he is never otherwise; he is never out of this sweet frame and temper: he is not good by fits, like some men, who often fail in goodness; all their goodness seems soon darkened and eclipsed, by a disordered frame of heart, through the power of corruption; but the goodness of Christ remains.

2. Jesus Christ is rich in wisdom : he is not only wise, but hath great abundance of wisdom in him : " In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col ii. 3. He communicates of his wisdom, to make others wise ; no person that receives him, but he imparts his wisdom unto.

Christ rich
in wisdom.

3. Jesus Christ is rich in grace. " My God shall supply all your need, according to the riches of his grace, Phil. iv. 19, in glory, by Jesus Christ." All grace is in him, " we beheld his glory, and the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14, 16. His grace, love, and favour is infinite ; " and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

Christ rich
in grace.

Take grace for divine favour, or for gracious habits or acts, Jesus Christ is full of both ; and he must needs be so, who is the Fountain and Original of all grace, and gracious habits.

4. The Lord Christ is rich in mercy ; all kind of mercy is in him ; goodness may be showed to all sorts of persons, but mercy refers to, or is let out to the miserable ; had man never fallen, God's goodness had been manifested to him, but his mercy only respects man in his fallen state, which is alone seen and made known in Jesus Christ, to undone sinners, in mercy he pitied us, in mercy he redeemed us, and in his abundant mercy he renewed us, sanctified and pardoned us ; he is rich in mercy, full of mercy, infinite in mercy, pity, and compassion, to all that receive him.

Christ is rich
in mercy.

5. Jesus Christ is rich in glory, " that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance," Eph. i. 18. There are riches of glory attending his grace, let out to the church militant ; but what the riches of his glory is, which is let out and manifested unto the church triumphant, we cannot conceive of.

Christ is rich
in glory.

Secondly, I shall prove and demonstrate, that Jesus Christ is rich, very rich, admirably rich,

1. The Lord Jesus must needs be very rich, because he is the Father's heir, nay, heir of all things : all that the Father hath the Son hath, all is his, originally, essentially his, considered as he is God. Moreover, all things are given unto him as he is Mediator, whether things in heaven, or things on earth ; he is the Father's first-born, and he also whom the Father hath appointed heir of all things ; Heb. i. 2 ; therefore the inheritance must needs be his. " Jesus knowing that the Father hath given all things into his hands," Job. xiii. 3.

Christ is
rich, because
he is the
Father's heir

We that preach the gospel, are sent on such a message to sinners (though far more weighty and great) which Abraham's servant was sent about to Laban's house, viz., to recommend Isaac's love to Rebecca. And he said, " I am Abram's servant, and the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great, and hath given him flocks and herds, and silver, and gold, men-servants, maid-servants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old, and unto him he hath given all that he hath," Gen. xxiv. 24. 34. 37.

Even so say we unto you ; the great God who sent us, is a mighty King, the world is his, and the fulness thereof ; all things in heaven and earth ; the cattle upon a thousand hills are his, and he has but one eternal Son, and to him hath given all he hath ; and this Son of his is fallen in love with you : oh, is it thus, and do you think to espouse him or not ? what answer shall I return to him that sent me ?

2. But to evince, and further prove Christ is very rich, pray consider, that he hath all kingdoms of the earth given unto him, to dispose of as he sees good. The Father hath given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Psal. ii. 8.

Quest. Hath Jesus Christ taken into his actual possession, his kingdom, or not ?

Ans. He hath the possession of his more spiritual kingdom already, when he ascended on high, he took possession of that, and he rules now, and has long over all in heaven, earth, and hell : angels, men and devils, are put into subjection to him ; they are all his servants, and at his command. Moreover,

Christ has
taken possession
of his
spiritual
kingdom.

2. He will now, very quickly, take possession of all the kingdoms of this world ; and will in a very short time make the haughty and proud monarchs of the earth know, that he is the only rightful King of nations, as well as of saints, and the only potentate ; and before whom they shall bow, " And confess that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Christ, beloved, is not only the King of saints, but King of nations.

Christ's more
visible king-
dom very
near.

True, for a long time he has suffered such that are his enemies to reign, and he sets up sometimes the vilest of men, for reasons best known to himself, but their time is now but

very short, "God will overturn, overturn, overturn, until he comes, whose right it is, and he will give it unto him."

Brethren! The seventh trumpet will be suddenly sounded, and the voice heard, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ," Rev. xi. 15. It shall be known in due time, that our Lord Jesus is the true and rightful heir of all the nations and kingdoms of the earth. "The kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all nations shall serve and obey him," Dan. vii. 27.

3. Jesus Christ must needs be very rich, considering the greatness of his family, which he provides for, both to feed and clothe. It is, my brethren, our Lord Jesus, who feedeth every living creature; the whole world is his family, and oh! how well doth he provide for them all! This be sure he could not do, was he not very rich; "The silver and the gold is his, as well as the wool and the flax," Hos. ii. 5. Could we but take a view of all the men, women, and children, that are but in and about this city, no doubt but we should stand and wonder at the multitude of them, and also how they all should be fed and clothed as they are; but what are the people of this one city, to all in this small isle? And what a small handful of people are in this isle, unto all the people throughout the whole world? O what a household, what a vast family hath our blessed Lord? You would think that man was wonderful rich, who at his own proper charge, did maintain every day, (and so continually) ten thousand persons, and to many of them too, doth give vast incomes, it may be a thousand pounds a week. But, alas! what would that be, to the riches of Christ, who hath millions, to provide for at his own charge every day, and that too perpetually; and to some of them he gives crowns and whole kingdoms, clothing multitudes in cloth of gold and silver; doth not this tend to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is very rich?

Moreover, our Lord Jesus is rich, doth appear, not only because all the riches of the whole earth is his; but also because all the riches of heaven are his. O what a rich crown hath he above, and what a rich throne doth he sit upon there! This is above our apprehension; we cannot conceive what the nature of heavenly riches are; all earthly riches are but shadows of the riches of heaven. What is earthly gold to the gold that paves the streets of New Jerusalem. "The streets of the city is pure gold; also the foundations of the city is laid with all manner of precious stones," Rev. xxii. 2. He is so rich, that if he please, he can build many such cities.

It is Jesus Christ that communicates all the riches of grace unto his saints; "We beheld his glory as the glory of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 14, 16.

What a multitude of souls hath the Lord Jesus made spiritually and eternally rich? Nay, he has enriched, not only particular persons, but also many churches.

Moreover, the riches of Christ are so great, that he will in a short time, fill the whole earth with the riches of his grace and glory; "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the water covers the sea," Isa. xi. 9.

Certainly, every sinner may have encouragement from hence, to come to this wedding, and espouse this rich Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. All that Christ espouseth, he enriches, and what a multitude hath he married? There is not one of them, but he doth most nobly provide for.

Sirs! Christ puts upon every particular soul he espouseth, a most rich and glorious robe, far excelling the gold of Ophir; and decks them with pearl, and rich diamonds, and jewels. Nay, he sets a crown, excelling gold, upon the heads of every one of them, and puts a chain of gold about their necks.

Grace is a crown, and thus all believers are crowned here in this world. But this is not all the crown they shall have: for he hath provided a crown of glory for every one of them also: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10. 'This was that Paul knew he should have, when he had finished his course; "Henceforth there is laid up for me, a crown of life, which God, the righteous Judge, will give unto me at that day. And not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearance," 2 Tim. iv. 8, 9.

My brethren, what encouragement is here for sinners to espouse the Lord Jesus! O what riches has he! No doubt, but that there shall be many millions of men and women saved; for, although comparatively, there will be but a few, to the vast multitude that shall be damned, yet heaven is a mighty kingdom; we see the airy sky, or outside of hea-

See Brook's
Riches of
Christ.

All the
riches of hea-
ven are
Christ's
riches.

ven (if I may so say) but we cannot look into it, unless it be by faith. We may perceive that the earth is but a small spot to heaven, and no doubt but heaven, like a great house, shall be well filled with inhabitants. Do you think any part or corner shall be empty, or want inhabitants. It is not to be conceived what a numberless number shall be saved.

And now, pray observe and mind it well, every particular saint shall have a crown of glory set upon his head: Christ will, I say, "crown every soul that does espouse him," though they are so vast a multitude. Therefore certainly this doth fully tend to demonstrate, that he is very rich. So much as to the second thing.

Thirdly, I shall show you, the nature, or excellent quality of the riches of Jesus Christ.

1. The chiefest of Christ's riches are spiritual, not only such that enrich the body, but they enrich the soul also. His riches are soul riches, spiritual riches. The men of this world have part of Christ's external riches; he gives these to such that hate him, to such that have their portion in this life; but their souls are clothed with rags; they, in respect of their inward man, or their better part, are "miserable, naked, poor, wretched, and blind," Rev. iii. 16. It is to be feared most of those, who have the most of worldly riches, (who are richly clothed, and adorned in the outward man) are, as to their souls, most wretchedly poor and miserable. Certainly, those who are most beautiful, and pride it in themselves, and are so haughty and proud, that they know not well how to set their feet upon the ground, have most loathsome and filthy souls. Did they but see their inward parts, or, how it is with them, in a spiritual sense, they would be ashamed, and abhor themselves.

Christ enriches both the soul and body.

2. The riches of Christ are incorruptible riches. Earthly riches are of a low, base, and corruptible nature: "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal," Matt. vi. 19. The apostle James bids those wicked rich men he wrote to, to "weep and bow, for the misery that will come upon them: your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of it shall be a witness against you; you have heaped up treasure against the last day," Jam. v. 3.

Christ's riches are incorruptible.

But Christ's spiritual riches are of a better nature; they will never canker, nor corrupt. What is that treasure worth, that rusteth and is corrupted in a short time, or may be cankered or eat up, and spoiled by moths?

3. The riches of Jesus Christ are incomparable; there is no earthly treasure can be compared with it. It may be said of Christ's riches which Solomon speaks of; wisdom, (which doubtless refers to Christ himself, the wisdom of God,) "The merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all things thou earnest desire, are not to be compared unto it," Prov. iii. 14.

Christ's riches are incomparable.

Certainly that must be of an excellent nature, that nothing can compare with it. Christ's riches as far excel all earthly riches, as the heavens excel the earth, or light darkness.

4. The riches of Christ are inexhaustible, they cannot be spent; his treasury can never be drawn dry. It is like a well, that hath a mighty spring in the bottom of it. Thus it is not with any earthly treasure. Let a man have the greatest heap, or mine of gold or silver, that ever any had, yet it may be wasted, and at the last, by continual drawing out, be all spent. Suppose you could get a vessel which might hold ten thousand hogsheads of wine, yet draw out of it every day, it would soon be all gone.

Christ's riches are inexhaustible.

But it is otherwise here. Some wells are always full, though thousands draw water plentifully, every day, because a spring feeds it. So is this, a multitude have been enriched with the riches of Christ, since the first opening of his storehouse, upon the fall of our first parents, in that gracious promise of the seed of the woman; but yet he hath still the same measure, or quantity of riches he ever had. He is not one farthing poorer than he was, the first day he gave forth of his riches, or divine treasures unto sinners.

5. Christ's riches are soul-satisfying riches. "He that coveteth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver," &c. Eccl. v. 10. If a man get ten thousand pounds, he may be no more satisfied, than when he had not more than a thousand shillings. Earthly riches and honours are unsatisfying. As Alexander the Great, who conquered all the eastern world, was as much unsatisfied after all his victories, as he was before; so it is in respect of the riches of this world, they satisfy not, this is that curse and plague, which attends the rich men of the earth, the more they have the more they covet: but the riches of Christ are of a satisfying nature; "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall thirst no more. But the water that I shall

Christ's riches are soul-satisfying.

give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life," John. iv. 14. Thirsting not again, denotes that full satisfaction, and soul content, such find in the riches of grace; they never found any solid peace and satisfaction before, but still their souls were in a craving, and unsatisfied condition, by reason they sought for satisfaction in those things, were it was not to be had. Solomon saith, that a good man shall be satisfied from himself: not from any self-sufficiency he finds in him, but from that true peace, riches, and content he has received from Jesus Christ. One penny of Christ's heavenly treasure, doth afford far more satisfaction, than millions of gold can administer to a carnal heart: in the fulness of his sufficiency, his soul is in straits.

Christ's riches are unsearchable. 6. The riches of Jesus Christ, are unsearchable riches. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph. iii. 8.

There is, my brethren, no bottom of Christ's treasure. As no man can by searching find Christ out to perfection, so no man, nor angel, can find out the riches of Christ to perfection; neither as to the quality or quantity of them. You may as soon find the bottom of the deepest sea, as find out the bottom of Christ's rich treasure of grace, wisdom, knowledge, glory, &c. No man knows, or can know, how rich Jesus Christ is; nor how rich that soul is, who hath an interest in him, or is united to him.

Christ's riches, or his money, passes for current coin in heaven, and is of such a nature, that it will satisfy divine justice. They do not only satisfy the soul of man, but the justice of God also. Brethren, no money, no silver, nor gold can pay our debts, nor save us out of the eternal prison of hell. No, no; it must be Christ's gold, his treasure, his riches, his righteousness, alone. If a man had a thousand millions of gold, he could not pay the smallest debt he oweth to the law, and justice of God. O how excellent are the riches of Christ! For, he hath paid such a sum, that has made a full satisfaction for all the debts of God's elect; and yet one of them owed not less than "Ten thousand talents," Matt. xviii. 24. Oh, what a vast sum hath Christ paid! Every sin is more (comparatively) than ten thousand pounds; for ten thousand millions could not satisfy for the smallest sin; and yet none of us, but may say with David, "Our sins are more than the hairs of our heads," Psal. xl. 12. Now, doth not this tend to demonstrate, that Jesus Christ is mighty rich, and that his riches are of a most excellent nature; that his riches are unsearchable; they save the soul from hell; "Other riches avail not in the day of wrath," Psal. xlix. 7—8. But Christ's riches will; his righteousness delivers from death, i. e., from eternal death, he that obtains but the least drachm of Christ's riches, of Christ's gold, tried in the fire, his soul is saved from hell. What are the riches of Christ, but his righteousness, and the grace of his Spirit.

Christ's riches are harmless riches. 7. The riches of Jesus Christ are harmless riches. They will not ensnare nor hurt any soul that obtains them: earthly riches poison, and destroy oftentimes the possessor of them. Many one day will lament that they had such store of worldly riches, so much gold and silver, because it captivated and ensnared their souls.

Sirs! Riches in the hand doth no man hurt, but it too often gets into the heart; they set their hearts upon it, and love it more than Jesus Christ, and all his divine riches. What was it which made the young man reject Jesus Christ, and go away sorrowful? Was it not his inordinate love to his external riches? the text saith, "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions," Matt. xix. 22. It was not his great possessions, but that undue love he had to them, that undid him. Therefore our Saviour said, that "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven:" nay, that a camel may as easily go through the eye of a needle, as a rich man enter into the kingdom of God.

Was it not love to the riches of this world, that caused Demas to turn away from Christ, or apostatize from the truth.

This also made Paul to give that counsel to Timothy; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God," 1 Tim. vi. 17. And in the same chapter, he saith, "but they that will be rich, fall into temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi. 9.

If men have riches, and no heart to do good with them, they are certainly hurtful to them: nay, they are of a damning nature to such.

But no man was ever hurt by having Christ's spiritual riches. You need not fear any snare here, for the more you have of Christ's riches, of grace, the more secure you are, from snares and temptations.

If any are hurt or ensnared, it is for want of those divine riches, because they have no grace, no faith, or but a small measure thereof.

8. The riches of Christ are certain riches; other riches are uncertain, they take themselves wings, and fly away. A man may with Job be rich to-day, and poor to-morrow; but what says our Saviour? "Durable riches, and righteousness are with me," Prov. viii. 18. No man can carry any of the riches of this world out of it with him, "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out," 1 Tim. vi. 7. But if we have the riches of Christ, or are enriched with his spiritual riches, we shall carry them out of the world with us. We shall carry a Christ, pardon of sin, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, out of the world with us; and although we shall then come to the end of our faith; faith will be turned into vision, and hope into fruition, yet love, that blessed grace, will abide with us for ever; we shall carry that into another world: no, sirs, at death we shall partake of greater riches, than we had whilst we were here. We shall then be possessed with the riches of glory, which far exceeds the riches of grace.

Men, nor devils, can rob us of those riches; fire cannot consume them, nor moths nor rust corrupt them: they lie in a safe hand, Christ is our trustee, in him all our spiritual riches are laid up, he is Lord treasurer. Could the devil pluck Christ out of heaven, we might lose our riches; but alas! that you will all say, is impossible, and as impossible it is, for the devil to deprive us of our soul-riches; for, as "our life is hid with Christ in God, so also are our riches," Col. iii. 2. God intrusted the first Adam with all his riches in his own hand, and he soon run out all; therefore he hath made a better covenant with the second Adam, and in him, with all his elect, Christ is our Surety; he hath engaged to the Father, for all that are givento him, and he therefore keeps all our riches in his own hand, and gives us out of his fulness, according to our present wants, and this secures all our riches. Can the wife want anything, whilst all fulness, all inconceivable riches are in her Husband's possession for ever?

9. Lastly, the riches of Christ are eternal; they are everlasting riches. Christ's riches are eternal crown, it is a crown that fadeth not away. Also, it is called, an incorruptible crown, and a crown of life, eternal life. The saints riches shall continue to the days of eternity; they shall last as long as God and Christ lasteth. God is their portion, Christ is their riches, and therefore their riches are eternal.

U S E.

From hence I infer, that it must needs be the true, and only interest of poor sinners, to espouse Jesus Christ: What mortal but would accept of such an offer, considering how rich he is? Poverty hinders many a match, the person is liked, but the portion is not sufficient; but here is no room upon this respect, for any to object against the espousing of Jesus Christ.

Sinners, if you marry him, all is yours, all his riches are yours, and yours for ever. Christ requires nothing with you, no, though you are far in debt, though you owe ten thousand talents, he hath enough to pay all. Nay, that very moment you believe in him, close with him, you shall have a discharge of all your debts, and be enriched with vast and inconceivable riches.

What say you now, will you come to this wedding, and eat of the King's Supper? Will you accept of Christ? He only does but ask, and desire your free assent and consent, will you embrace him, accept him for your all? Shall he become the object of your affections? What do you say? What answer must I return to the great King, which sent me to you?

SERMON XI.

*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—
Matt. xxii.*

DOCTRINE. That the great God hath sent his own Son, to espouse poor sinners.

The head of discourse I am upon, is this, viz., That it is the greatest concernment, wisdom, and true interest of sinners, to accept of, receive, and espouse Jesus Christ.

This I have laboured to prove by several demonstrations. The last time I was upon this subject, I spoke of the riches of Christ. We will proceed to another argument to win your affections to Jesus Christ, if it may be done, and it shall be taken from the consideration of Christ's admirable and astonishing beauty.

Christ's
great, and
admirable
beauty.

First, though beauty, nor the portion should be the chief motives for any to marry, but the consideration of the virtue, and excellent qualities of the person, yet admirable beauty doth wonderfully take with some, though among men it is great vanity and folly; for as Solomon says, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain," Prov. xxxi. 30. It often proves a great snare and temptation to mortals, and ruins many a man and woman. Besides, how soon may the fairest face, or the greatest earthly beauty be marred? a disease incident to mortals, quickly turns human beauty into deformity; but so it is not here, Christ's beauty ensnares no person.

How fond youths, whose foolish breasts do beat
With pleasing raptures, and love's generous heat;
And virgins kind, from whose unguarded eyes,
Passion oft steals their hearts by fond surprise,
Feed their strange wand'ring fancies by the eye,
"Till treacherous beauty spoils them utterly?
Covered with wit, black venom in they take,
And midst gay flowers, hug a vip'rous snake.
Here's no such danger, but all pure and chaste,
And love by angels fit to be embrac'd!
A love, above that of woman, beauty such,
That none can be enamoured on to much.
Reader, then read, and learn to love by this,
Until thy soul can sing raptured in bliss,
My well-beloved's mine, and I am his.

None ever
saw Christ,
his beauty,
but fell in
love with
him.

But that I may proceed, consider, that never any ever saw the beauty of Jesus Christ, but presently fell in love with him. I do not mean, any that saw his person in the days of his humiliation, but all those that ever had a true sight of him by faith, (though I am not of his opinion, who very lately affirmed) that the Lord Jesus was not in his person beautiful, but rather deformed, thereby sadly abusing that text, "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him," Isa. liii. 2. This no doubt refers to that low, mean, and sorrowful state he was in, in the days of his flesh, under his sufferings and humiliation; not that he was a deformed person, I am persuaded, by what I have read, and for some other reasons, that our blessed Saviour was a most lovely and amiable person; yet many that so saw him, fell not in love with him, but contrariwise, "Hated both him and the Father." But I speak of a true, spiritual sight of Christ, and of his personal excellencies by an eye of faith.

Secondly, Jesus Christ, my brethren, is the original and Fountain of all beauty.

I. He is the original and fountain of all natural beauty.

Christ is the
Fountain
and original
of all natural
beauty.

1. Of that wonderful and amazing beauty that is in the sun, moon, and stars. How glorious is the created sun in the firmament of heaven? What eyes can behold him, and not be dazzled? Why, sirs, Jesus Christ is the original and fountain of his glorious beauty; for, considered as he is God, he made the sun, moon, and stars, they proceed from him.

2. Christ Jesus is the Original and Fountain of that glorious beauty that is in the blessed angels of light. No doubt but their beauty is too great for us mortals to behold; I mean, as they are in their own native glory. True, we read that some of the saints saw angels, but they certainly did appear in some other form, and not in their own angelical form; they commonly appeared in the likeness of men, and so they veiled their glory, and native spiritual beauty; can fleshly eyes see spirits?

3. Jesus Christ is the Original and Fountain of that beauty that is in men and women. We read in sacred history of persons that were exceeding fair and beautiful; as Moses, and David, who was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance; and of Absalom, of whom it is written, "In all Israel there was none to be so praised as Absalom, for his beauty, from the sole of the foot, even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him," 2 Sam. xiv. 25.

Moreover, Josephus reports of one, that all that saw him, were amazed and enamoured with his beauty. Also, in other histories we read of some women, that were so beautiful, that they seemed more like angels, than mortal creatures.

Of all the parts of human creatures, the face hath the greatest glory and beauty in it. Now, whatsoever beauty was, or is in any man or woman, Jesus Christ was, and is the fountain of it, all human beauty is from him; he made the most beautiful face, that ever eye beheld: and, if such be the work, what is the beauty of the workman? we judge of the glory of the Creator, by the beauty and glory of the creatures which he hath made.

4. That beauty which is in the rarest flower, is also from Christ. Though man, by art, may approve nature, yet certainly there are such natural flowers, that far exceed the art of man. Our Lord saith of some lilies, "that Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of them."

5. Is there any beauty and glory in heaven? Oh, who can imagine what beauty shines forth there! we see the firmament of heaven, that is but the outside of heaven: we cannot look within, heaven is the throne of God, Oh, what beauty and glory is in the celestial paradise! Sirs, this all proceeded from Jesus Christ.

6. All created beauty is, my brethren, but a dark shadow of the beauty of Jesus Christ, or an emblem of his glory, for, as the riches of this world, are but a shadow of his riches; and, as the pleasures of this world, are but a shadow of those pleasures that are at God's right-hand, so all created beauty is but a shadow of Christ's beauty.

All created beauty is but a shadow of Christ's beauty.

II. All internal, or spiritual beauty, is from Jesus Christ, he is the Original and Fountain of it, beloved, as heaven excels earth, so grace excels nature. Sirs, the new creature excels for beauty; what is the new creature, but the image of Christ stamped upon the soul of man? We are said to be "Changed into the same image, from glory to glory," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

All internal beauty is from Christ.

Could virtue be painted to the life, (as one observes) or be drawn out by the pencil of a cunning artist, all that saw it would fall in love with it, and be enamoured, nay, ravished to behold it; as on the other hand, could vice or ungodliness be painted to the life, it would appear the most odious and fulsome sight, that ever mortals beheld; it would be loathed, despised, and contemned by all that saw it; they would turn their eyes away, as from such filth and rottenness they never beheld before: and yet this is the deceived sinners most beloved darling. But to return, little do men think what the internal beauty of a soul is, in whom the image of Jesus Christ is formed, but as the image of a person, though drawn exactly to the life, is not to be compared to the person, whose image it is; so the beauty and glory of the new creature, is but a dark representation of the glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. All eternal beauty, likewise, is from Jesus Christ; he is the Original and Fountain of it; who is able to conceive of the glory of the spirits of just men made perfect? Or, what the beauty and glory of the saints' bodies will be, at the resurrection-day; when these vile bodies of ours, "shall be changed, and made like unto Christ's glorious body!" Phil. iii. 21.

All eternal beauty is from Christ.

We read of the beauty and glory of new Jerusalem, which I take to be an emblem of the saints future glory; it is said, "To have the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal. And the foundations of the city, were garnished with all manner of precious stones," Rev. xxi. 11, 18, 19. Moreover, it is said, the city was pure gold, built and paved with pure gold; now, all that eternal beauty, either of the saints, or of that place where they shall be, proceeds from Jesus Christ. O, my brethren, what then think you is Christ's most glorious beauty!

Thirdly, the beauty of the Lord Jesus is inconceivable, nay, infinite, far beyond and above the comprehension of men or angels: as his love is inconceivable, so his glory and admirable beauty: no heart can conceive it, nor tongue express it, how do the holy angels; stand amazed to see such glory, such beauty in a man! he was seen by angels. How? seen by them? Why, he was seen with their highest wonderment; that a man, possessed with our nature, who was made a little lower than they, should shine forth in such beauty and glory, above them.

Christ's beauty is inconceivable.

Fourthly, the beauty and glory of the whole Godhead, shines forth in our Lord Jesus Christ, as far as the beauty of the glorious Creator excels the beauty of the creature, so far the beauty of Christ excels the beauty of any created thing; "We beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. Is the Father glorious, is there infinite beauty in him? brethren, Jesus Christ is alike glorious; "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," &c., Heb. i. 3. He is exactly like the Father, or his express image; and the beauty or brightness of the Father, shines forth in him, that is, in the man Christ Jesus; "For it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19.

Christ's glory and beauty is the glory of the whole Godhead.

O fair sun, (saith one) fair moon, fair stars, fair flowers, fair lilies, but, O! ten thousand times ten thousand, fair Lord Jesus! I have wronged him (saith he) in making this comparison; black sun, black moon, black stars, but, O! fair Lord Jesus! O! black flowers, black lilies, but, O! fair Lord Jesus Christ!

Fifthly, Christ's beauty never decayeth, it never fadeth; the beauty of the face is soon gone, old age quickly causeth that to pass away; nay, diseases and inordinate grief, soon spoil that beauty; also, the beauty of flowers are gone in a moment; yea, and the glory and beauty of the sun, moon, and stars, shall pass away, but Christ's beauty shall continue to all eternity.

Christ's beauty never decays.

Sixthly. The beauty of Jesus Christ is communicative. He can, and doth transmit his beauty to all that love him, or rather, to all that he loves, and doth espouse; no mortal creature can do thus, they cannot communicate, or transmit their beauty to others; but there is no beauty, no glory, no comeliness in a believer, but what they derive from the Lord Jesus Christ. "And thy renown went forth among the Heathen; for it was perfect through my comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord," Ezek. xvi. 14.

Jesus Christ, beloved, doth communicate a two-fold beauty to believers.

1. The one he puts upon the soul, the other he puts, or works in the soul, so that Christ makes believers all beautiful both without and within; he puts upon the soul his own glorious robe; that very garment which he wrought out for us in our nature, in the days of his flesh, which is all bespangled with precious stones and pearls, and glitters far beyond the richest cloth of gold; this is the wedding-garment that is put upon all that come to this marriage-feast, and espouse Jesus Christ. This is a glorious robe, and in this righteousness every believer stands perfectly justified before the righteous and holy God; so that, in this respect they are all fair, and there is not one spot in them. And, my brethren, that very eye which apprehends the Lord Jesus, to the putting on of this garment, is said to ravish the Lord Jesus Christ. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with the chain of thy neck," Cant. iv. 9.

2. He also infuseth into the soul, glorious beauty, which is the beauty of sanctification. "The king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is wrought gold," Psal. xlv. 11, 13. This makes the King to desire her beauty; but none of this beauty is of, and from herself; it is no natural, nor artificial beauty, but all conveyed, transmitted, or communicated to her from Jesus Christ, in an extraordinary manner, by the operations of the Spirit. All the saints of God that ever lived, were as deformed, filthy, and odious, as any other sinner, until Jesus Christ made them beautiful and comely, with his own comeliness. He is made of God unto us, not only righteousness, but sanctification, &c.

Seventhly. The beauty of the Lord Jesus is not only a soul-transforming

Christ's beauty is a soul-delighting beauty.

beauty, but also a soul-ravishing, a soul-delighting, and a soul-satisfying beauty.

"He is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand," Cant. v. 10. Making all that behold him, sick of love to him. "He is fairer than the children of men," Psal. xlv. 2, or the sons of Adam. Christ is not only beautiful in one part, but he is altogether lovely. Some roses excel for redness, and some lilies for whiteness. The moon is fair, and the sun clear and bright; but the rose, the lily, the sun and the moon, and the glorious heavens, are all black when compared to the Lord Jesus. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness," Psal. xvii. 15. When I arrive to that perfect and complete beauty and glory, that is in thee, and I shall never be satisfied (as if David should say) until then. The spiritual beauty of Jesus Christ is of a satisfying nature. Natural, or created beauty cannot satisfy the soul of man; that cannot fill its desires, but the beauty of Christ doth this.

Brethren, in a perfect conformity to Christ's beauty and glory, lies all the happiness of true believers, to which let me add,

Eighthly. The glorious God and Father of heaven and earth, takes delight in the beauty of Jesus Christ, considered as God-man in one person. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. xlii. 1. Certainly that person, whose beauty is the delight of the ever-blessed God, must needs be a glorious beauty. God takes no delight in the legs nor face of a man; but he takes delight in the beauty of his Son. The personal beauty and perfections of Jesus Christ, is also the delight of the holy angels, they love to behold him, and to look upon him.

My brethren, if heaven and earth can make a glorious and complete beauty, then it is in Jesus Christ; for the perfections both of the divine and human nature meet in him. There can be no addition to his beauty, because it is perfect to the highest degree.

And now, you sinners, what do you think? Is it not your wisdom, your highest concernment, to come to this marriage-feast, to espouse the Lord Jesus, to feed by faith upon him, to believe in him, and to be united to him, in bonds of love for ever; to have Christ

No addition can be made to Christ's beauty.

to be your Husband, and to lie in his arms, and to be filled and ravished with his beauty to all eternity? But if the consideration of his beauty will not move you, or prevail with you to fall in love with him, I will try what another argument will do.

Eighthly. Christ is long-lived. Would you espouse and marry a person that is long-lived, so that you may be sure you shall not quickly be a widow, then Christ is the person. Oh! see that you choose him, espouse him, marry him. Methinks I hear one say, that is deeply in love with one that she values as her own life, nay, above her own life. Oh! I would not marry him, if I was sure he was short-lived, or would die soon after we come together, for his death would be as a thousand deaths to me. Love whosoever you will, and that too with never so strong and great affections, none can ensure his life for one day; the wedding-week may be his burying-week, so far as you, or any body else knows, so uncertain is the life of man. But, if you do espouse and marry the Lord Jesus, he is long-lived, you shall never know widowhood. Long-lived did I say? Oh! know he lives for ever, and cannot die. Jesus Christ is an immortal Husband. "I am he that was dead, (that was well for us, we had perished else,) and am alive, and behold I live for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death," Rev. i. 18.

Christ is a living, and an eternal Husband.

Obj. 1. But perhaps some may say, though Jesus Christ lives for ever, and he cannot die, yet such that espouse him may quickly die; we see believers die, as well as others.

Ans. I answer, if you will espouse the Lord Jesus, you shall also live for ever. If you come and eat of this wedding-supper, you shall never die. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat, and not die," John vi. 50. Our Lord doth not mean a temporal death; no, God forbid. Who would live always in this miserable world? Death is one of the greatest blessings to believers, as some of you lately heard. You that are believers, cannot go to your Husband, you cannot go to Jesus Christ, until death open the door, and let you in unto him. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 6. This Job well knew, and therefore he said, "I would not live always." But know assuredly, that your souls shall never die the second death; you shall not die eternally. "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, shall have eternal life," John vi. 54.

Nay, Sirs, temporal death shall not, cannot, separate these lovers. Death cannot separate Jesus Christ, and that soul which espouseth and marieth him. Death cannot dissolve this blessed marriage union, both the body and soul of a believer is united to Jesus Christ; they, when they die, die in the Lord, that is, in union with Jesus Christ.

Believers, cheer up, your Husband hath the keys of hell and death; he hath power over death and hell. "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19.

Christ is a living Husband, a Husband that never dies. What comfort is here for you poor widows, that have espoused and married Jesus Christ? What though your earthly husbands are dead, and left you to the wide world, exposed to a thousand sorrows, yet it matters not, your heavenly Husband lives for ever, he dies not.

And now to return to you sinners. Will you not accept of this happy match? Will you not espouse such a King, he that is "the only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords?" A prince of such honour, of such riches, of such love, of such beauty, and one that is immortal, who lives for ever, and that will make you immortal, even save you from death. Also, those that he betrotheth unto himself, he doth betroth for ever. Certainly, this must be your chiefest concernment, your highest wisdom, and only interest. Therefore do not delay, but come to this marriage-feast, and accept of Jesus Christ.

Ninthly. Consider, besides all that I have said unto you hitherto, what a sweet temper, and excellent disposition Christ is of.

This is a thing, which all that marry should well mind. Some who are wise, prefer the good temper of the person they are about to marry, above all things. Nay, one said in my hearing lately, that a good and sweet natural temper, was to be esteemed in the case of marriage, above a small measure of grace in a crooked and peevish nature and disposition. The truth is, a little grace is not sufficient in some persons, to render them lovely and acceptable, in the relation of husband and wife. Some women perhaps, who meet with yoke-fellows, that are naturally of a sweet, mild, and gentle disposition, though not truly gracious, live better, and more comfortable lives with them, than some others do, that are in the main, gracious persons; though to their shame it may be spoken, that they strive no more to mortify their unruly and unsanctified passions and affections.

But what is any man's natural, sweet, and good temper, to the spirit and temper of the Lord Jesus Christ? I shall only hint of his excellent temper in four or five respects.

1. Jesus Christ is of a compassionate temper, of a sympathizing disposition. If thy hus-

band be never so rich, or great in the world, and though never so comely, yet if he be not of a compassionate and sympathizing disposition, thou mayest have no great content, nor happiness in that relation. Certainly, those men that cannot sympathize, or have a fellow-feeling of their wives' afflictions and sorrows, have but little love to them. Now, the blessed Jesus is full of compassion towards all his people. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old," Isa. xliii. 9. Oh, this shows great sympathy that is in Jesus Christ; what a compassionate disposition is he of? "For, we have not an High-priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin," Heb. iv. 15.

The Greek word denotes (as one well observes) such a sympathy, or fellow-feeling, as makes him like affected, as if he were in the same case with them.

It is said, "His soul was grieved for Israel." Ah, what a sympathizing disposition is Christ of; he mourns, and grieves over his poor afflicted ones; he pities them, nay, he is afflicted with them.

II. He is of a forgiving temper. He is ready to forgive his enemies, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. But much more is he ready to pardon and forgive the sins of his beloved ones, who are married to him; he covers all the infirmities of his spouse; he will not see any sin in her, "Behold thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee," Cant. iv. 7. He casteth his own mantle over all our weaknesses, and infirmities, he is not like some who pretend to be his disciples, yet reproach and vilify their faithful friends and brethren unjustly; they never learned of the Lord Jesus to cover all those weaknesses which may be in such they backbite and reproach. But this is because they see not the beam that is their own eye. These sort are like cursed Ham, and they would do well to read the 15th Psalm. But, O what a tender, charitable, and forgiving temper is the blessed Jesus, even like unto his blessed Father, who passed by all the great enormities of David and said, he was a man after his own heart, save only in the case of Uriah, he took no notice of his other infirmities, which were great. "Woman, be of good cheer, said our Lord, thy sins are forgiven thee." And thus he speaks unto all his people.

III. Christ is of a generous, noble, and bountiful temper, or disposition. He is kind, charitable, and liberal to all, but much more unto his spouse. He gives liberally and upbraideth not; "Eat, O friends, drink, abundantly, O beloved," Cant. v. 1.

1. His bounty and generosity would appear, should we consider what it is he hath given, and doth give to all those he loveth.

2. If we consider the manner of his giving.

1. As to what he gives, or parteth with to them, he gives them all he is, or hath. He gave himself for them, to be a sacrifice, to die, and bear the wrath of God in their stead. "Husbands love you wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word," Eph. v. 25, 26.

Did ever any give thus? give himself to die, from that love and rich bounty he bare to such a one that he loved. "Christ hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5.

2. He gives them his flesh to eat, and his own blood to drink. Indeed, this is the principle matter of which this feast doth consist.

3. He gives them his word, his Spirit, his grace.

4. He gives them his own blessed robe to clothe them; his eye-salve to open their eyes, his gold tried in the fire, to enrich them.

5. He gives them his own retinue, the holy angels, to guard, preserve, and protect them, and to minister unto them, even to all them that he esponseth, who are heirs of salvation. Moreover, he hath promised to them a kingdom, and a crown of glory, and that they shall sit with him on his throne, and judge the world with him.

2ndly, as to the manner of his giving.

1. He gives freely, all out of his own rich bounty, and that to such that deserved nothing at his hands, and who are not able to make him the least recompence, for the smallest favour.

If he gives anything upon exchange, see the manner of it. "To appoint to them that mourn in Sion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning; the garment of praise, for the spirit of heaviness," Isa. lxi. 3.

2. His rich bounty is such, that he gives seasonably, in the very time of need; he will

What Christ gives to his people.

not miss that very season when we stand in the greatest want of mercy and grace, and also whatsoever we do need, to the full supplying of all our wants. "God shall help thee, and that right early," Psal. xli. 5. He knows the best time, the very nick of time, when to give unto us those things we need. He will not give it to us before, nor will he stay a moment after that time; for, "The Lord shall judge his people, and repent Phil. iv. 19. him for his servants, when he seeth their power is gone, and there is none shut up, nor left," Deut. xxxii. 36. He is such a noble and beautiful Spirit, that "he gives grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

IV. Jesus Christ is of a humble, meek, and lowly temper; or of a wonderful condescending disposition. He sticks at nothing too hard for him to do, which is for our good, that he may bring us to God, and into union with himself; "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 6, 7.

Some will not bow nor yield to their dearest friend, to do that which may expose them to the least pain, shame, and sorrow, but Christ was contented to do anything, though it was never so much to his humiliation and abasement, distress and sorrow, that he might obtain his desire, and work about the intended marriage between himself, and his own elect. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 28, 29.

V. He is of a considerate temper of heart. He considereth and "remembereth that we are but dust," Psal. ciii. 14. And that our strength is not the strength of brass; he will not therefore "suffer us to be tempted, above what we are able," 1 Cor. x. 13. He doth not expect more from his people, than he knows they are able to do, nor lay upon them such burdens, which he knows they are not able to bear.

Tenthly, Jesus Christ is wise. Some choose wisdom, or a man that is wise and of great understanding, before riches, honour, or beauty. I heard some time since, of a rich man that had a daughter to dispose of in marriage, who, when asked, whether he would marry her to a wise man, that was poor and low in the world, or to a very rich man that was a fool. He replied, he would sooner marry her to a wise man, though he was poor, &c. And certainly he showed much wisdom in so answering.

The wisdom of Christ is infinite.

Now, my brethren, Jesus Christ is the very wisdom of God; he is wisdom itself, all true wisdom is from him. He is infinite in wisdom, "In him are hid all Col. ii. 3. the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. He maketh others wise, he doth and can communicate of his wisdom, to all such that he espouses; nay, he maketh such that are foolish, and without understanding, wonderful wise. Christ knoweth all things, he knows all the Father's counsels and decrees, which have been of old, even from everlasting; he shows us the Father, and openeth the deep things of God unto us. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," Matt. xi. 27.

No man knoweth the essence of the Father, the decrees, counsels, and designs of the Father, or hath a perfect knowledge of the Father, but the Son only. All saving knowledge of God is in and through Jesus Christ; and he that hath a perfect knowledge of God, (as he is in himself) must needs have a perfect knowledge of all men and devils. He knows our state, our spirits, our frames, our thoughts, our ends, our aims, our ways, our wants, our temptations, our fears, our dangers, and "all our desires are before him," Psal. xxxviii. 9.

1. Christ knoweth the matter of our desires, or what it is we desire, chiefly desire.

2. He knows the design and end of our desires.

3. He knows the spring of our desires, or from whence they flow; whether from a principle of grace, or from self-love, pride, and ambition.

The Nature of men's desires opened.

4. He knows the degrees or extent of our desires; whether weak or strong, faint or vigorous.

5. He also knows the cause of our desires; whether they are caused through a true sight of sin, in its own evil nature, and from a spiritual and gracious sight of Christ's personal excellencies, that we desire him, or only are occasioned from the sight of the damning nature of sin, and a simple desire of happiness.

6. He knows the constancy of our desires; whether they abide or no, or are only temporary, flitting, and continue no longer than we abide under God's hand, or under the rod of afflictions.

7. He knows our desires so as to observe them, judge of them, weigh them, or ponder them.

Also, so as to answer all our good and holy desires, and to punish us for all our unjust and inordinate desires.

9. He knows whether our desires after himself are accompanied with suitable endeavours, or not.

If none of these things will move you to love him and accept of that gracious offer you have of him, and to look upon it to be your chiefest interest to espouse him. Then,

Christ always is the same. Eleventhly, consider, that he is always the same, he never changeth. He is ever, or at all times of the same temper, always alike kind, loving, compassionate, forgiving and forgetting wrongs and injuries; he is not in and out, like changeable men, that are in a good temper one day, and in an ill one, and out of frame at another. Oh, saith a man, was my wife always but in this good, gentle, and sweet temper, as she is now in, how happy would my life be! And so on the other hand, saith the wife, was my husband always alike kind, alike meek, gentle, loving, filled with bowels, and pity to me, being never angry, morose, froward, or peevish, no woman would live a better life. But alas! thus it is but a few, such is the corruptions of the heart, the passions, temptations, provocations, mankind are exposed unto, that they are often disordered in their spirits, and out of frame; they are not always of an even and sweet disposition. But now Jesus Christ, if once you do espouse him, you shall find him always one and the same, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," He changeth not. He is always the same in power, in love, in mercy, and goodness, in faithfulness, in sympathy, in beauty and riches. Some men may be rich when they marry, but soon may wax poor, by losses, or badness of the times, or by carelessness and ill husbandry, may waste their treasure, and become poor; but the Lord Christ is ever in all things, as touching what he is in himself, and what he hath, the same; he is never sick, no disease, no temptation is he liable unto.

USE.

Oh, what are your thoughts poor sinners, now? will you come to this marriage? will you let all your old lovers go, and get a bill of divorcement, and become dead to sin, to this world, and to the law, and to all your own righteousness, that you may be married to Jesus Christ? say, sinners, you have a good match offered to you this day.

What do you say, young men and women, cannot you find in your hearts to love Jesus Christ? He is willing, if you are willing: oh, cry to him to make you willing! he can draw you to love him, you will never love him, till "he sheds abroad his love in your hearts," Rom. v. 5, by the Holy Ghost. Say, oh Lord, circumsise my heart, that I may love thee.

This is the time, now, in the days of your youth, this age he has chose. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me," Prov. viii. 17. Sure you may seek him, is not this in your power? But, if you seek the world, seek your pleasures, your earthly profits, and delights above him, how can you be said to seek him?

What do you say, that are aged? Is it not time, more than time for you, to seek Jesus Christ? He doth espouse some old sinners; he calls some at the eleventh hour. I am come to call you this day to this marriage feast; will none of you accept of this high-born Prince, the blessed Lord of life and glory? Can you be so foolish, and void of understanding, to tell him, you cannot love him, or do not like him? If so, then take what will follow.

Consolation.

But, oh, happy, happy believers, what joy and comfort may this administer unto you? O see what a blessed choice you have made, and what a Friend, what a Husband you have got.

But so much at this time.

SERMON VII.

DOCT. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—Matt. xxii. 2. &c.*

That the great God hath sent his own Son, to espouse poor sinners.

1. What this marriage doth import, we have shewed.

2. That it is the great concernment, wisdom, and true interest of sinners, to accept of Jesus Christ; or, to come to this marriage, and eat of this feast, i. e., believe, or feed by faith on Christ. This we have endeavoured to make appear, and to demonstrate by many arguments.

The last was taken from the consideration, that he is always the same, and changeth not; neither in respect of his glory, power, wisdom, love, beauty, or excellent temper.

I shall now proceed to the next demonstration proposed.

Twelfthly, it is the greatest concernment of sinners to come and eat at this marriage dinner, or espouse Jesus Christ, from the consideration of those many glorious and blessed effects, that attend or accompany the soul's marriage union with Christ.

I. Hereby he gives himself unto the sinner. They through this union have an absolute interest in Jesus Christ; he is the soul's, and the soul is his; he is that sinners' Friend, his Beloved, his Saviour, Portion, Husband, &c. "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Such an one may say, with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." I do not say, that every one that hath obtained this union with Christ, hath the faith of assurance, or fully know, and are confident, Christ is theirs; no, a true believer, through the weakness of his faith, or by reason of Satan's temptations, may have some doubts and fears about it, yet, nevertheless, that soul hath Christ, or a true and saving interest in him, whether he knows it, or not.

Christ gives the soul an absolute interest in him.

II. This union is a full union. As it is the nearest and sweetest union, so it is a most full and complete union. A whole Christ is united to the sinner, and the whole of a sinner, both body and soul is united to him; so that they become both one, in the nearest relation, in a most wonderful and mystical manner.

Union with Christ is a full, a sweet, and near union.

1. The whole Person of Christ is united to a believer; not only united to his human nature, but also to his divine nature. This word (Christ) doth not refer to his human nature, only, nor to his divine nature only, but to both natures in his person; neither of those natures, distinct from each other, is Christ, though sometimes the human is called Christ; as when it is said, "Christ died for our sins," 1 Cor. xv. 3. Yet, in another place, it is explained, [he] i. e., "Christ was put to death in the flesh," 1 Pet. iii. 11. His Godhead could not die.

Moreover, sometimes by Christ is meant his divine nature. But now, I say, a believer is united unto a whole Christ, even unto the divine, as well as to the human nature. And hence it is, by virtue of his union, the dead sinner is quickened: the flesh of Christ can quicken no person without his Spirit. "The flesh profiteth not," John vi. 63. That is, the human nature, without the divine; "It is the Spirit which quickeneth." The human nature profits not of itself alone, without being united to the divine; yet the human nature, being hypostatically united to the divine nature, so it doth profit us; for, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," John vi. 53. That is, except we feed upon the virtue of his body broken, and his blood poured forth, by believing, we can have no life in us.

Yet, it was impossible, that the blood of Christ could avail or profit us, had it not been united to the divine nature, because it was from the worth, dignity, and virtue of his Godhead, that the sacrifices he offered, became satisfactory to God's justice. Yet, on the other hand, I may say, that without the flesh of Christ, his Spirit, or Godhead could not profit us, because the justice of God required, that the same nature of man should perfectly keep the law of God for us, and suffer and die, or sustain that penalty, or punishment, which our breach of it had exposed us unto. And since a whole Christ is united to a believer, it follows from hence, that all that good, that is in the Godhead, is, and shall be conveyed to us, so far as it is communicable; and, as the humanity could not communicate grace and spiritual blessings to us, so without that blessed union of the Godhead with the manhood, the divinity is incommunicable to us.

Therefore, saith a worthy writer, although all life, all salvation floweth from the fullness of the Deity, yet it is not communicated to us, but by the flesh of Christ. For, as the Deity is as a fountain, whence all good things flow, (as) life and salvation, yet the flesh, or humanity, is as the channel, by which all these good things, all gifts, and grace are derived unto us. Therefore, unless a man apprehended this channel, and be united to it, he cannot possibly be a partaker of these waters, which do flow from this fountain.

2. Moreover, the whole of the person of a sinner, a believing sinner, both soul and body, is united to the Lord Jesus Christ; the body, as well as the soul is in union with him. That which the second Person in the Trinity, took into union with himself, was not only

our human flesh, but our human soul also, to assure us, that both our bodies and souls he would take into union with himself.

Again, That which Christ died for, bought, and redeemed by his blood, that he doth take into union with himself. But Christ died both for the bodies and souls of his elect; therefore he taketh both body and soul into union with himself. "Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God, and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

3dly, This union is a strong union intensively, so that Christ and a believer become one spirit, "but he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit," 1 Cor. vi. 17.

Charnock. Not essentially, but mystically one spirit. One Spirit (saith a reverend writer) as if they were but one soul in two bodies. What the Spirit doth in Christ, it doth also in a believer, according to the capacity of his soul, the same Spirit, which was the immediate conveyer of grace, to the human nature of Christ, is so to us. Christ had an essential holiness, in respect of his Godhead, but a derivated holiness, as man. And this derivated holiness proceeded from the Spirit in him, without measure, which we have in our measure. And by virtue of this union, by the same Spirit, whereby we become one Spirit with Christ; not only that grace which is in us, and in our great Mediator, Christ Jesus, are of the same nature and original, as the light of the sun, and the light of the stars, are the same, though they differ in degrees, not essentially:—It is the same Spirit, in respect of person, which makes Christ near of kin to us. Thus a believer is said to dwell in Christ, and Christ in him.

4. Moreover, it is an union that is indissolvable; sin, hell, devils, nor death, can break it; believers sleep in Jesus, they die in the Lord; that is, in union with him.

III. Another effect of this union, is communion with Christ; union cannot be without Charnock. communion; "For (saith one) while the members are united to a living sound head, there will be an influx of animal spirits, whereby they shall partake of life and motion; the Spirit from our mystical Head, will be working in us, providing for us, and standing by us." Yet it is not always to the same degree; our communion with Christ, though it be constant, yet it is not always so full and sweet. Now part of this communion appears in these things following:

1. Christ and a believer walk together; "Enoch walked with God three hundred years," Gen. v., so long he had communion with God on earth. O, what a believers walk together. high privilege is this! to walk hand in hand with Jesus Christ! to take sweet turns with him in his garden; "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates bud, and there will I give thee my loves," Cant. vii. 11, 12.

2. They lodge together; "Let us lodge in the villages;" my beloved shall "lie all Christ and a believer lodge together. night between my breasts," or in my heart, Cant. vii. 11, Cant. i. 13; there Christ lies, there he rests all night, or so long as the night of mortality doth last; he doth not abide with the soul for a short season, like a traveller, but he is a constant dweller; and does also manifest to the soul, his choicest love and favour.

They sit together. 3. They sit together; the King sits at the table with his beloved consort, and dearest spouse; "Whilst the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof," Cant. i. 12.

Believers lie in Christ's arms. 4. They lie in each others arms; "His left-hand is under my head, and his right-hand doth embrace me."

5. They often visit each other; believers visit Christ in ways of duty, and Christ visits them in ways of mercy.

6. They sup together; "If any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20.

Christ and believers one and the same interest to carry on. 7. They have one and the same interest and design, to carry on and manage in the world; they have one and the same name; we are called by his name, as a woman bears her husband's name; I say, Christ and Christians are of the same name: he is called the fairest amongst men, and she, that is his spouse, the fairest amongst women; nay, the church is called Christ, so is Christ; that is Christ mystical, i. e., the church.

There is a communication of all Christ hath to the soul, through this union. *Tanquam heres ex affe*, saith one; there is a sweet communication of all Christ's beauty, goods, and goodness, to the wife of his bosom: is it not a most sweet and blessed thing to

Psal. xlv. 2.
Cant. viii.
1 Cor. xii. 12.

dwell in the same house, in the same place with Jesus Christ, to be possessed with the same spirit, partake of his joys, and made wealthy with his riches? All is yours.

IV. Another effect of this union, or which doth accompany it, is mutual delight and complacency, in each other: never did any husband take so much delight in the wife of his youth, as Christ takes in that soul he espouses: "Let thy fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth: let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished with her love," Prov. v. 18, 19. It is to be feared, it is not thus with all husbands; but thus, and more abundantly, it is with Christ: "As a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," Isa. lxii. 5. Christ's most dear and intimate love and affections, are placed upon, and run out to all true believers, to such a degree, that he breaks forth to this purpose; "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with the chain of thy neck," Cant. iv. 9. Saints are called the spouse of Christ; *propter amoris magnitudinem*: because of that great and unparalleled love that is between them.

Mutual delight of Christ, and complacency the effect of union.

The joy of the bridegroom is the highest and sweetest that is found among the sons of men; hence Christ is pleased to express his love by that of a bridegroom: thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in thee: they are the joy and delight of his soul: "How fair and pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!" Isa. lxii. 41. How may such expressions revive our spirits? But read again, "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me," Cant. vii. 6. But if this is not enough to affect your souls, in the thoughts of the gracious nature and effects of this union, see what he says further: "The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, he is mighty, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing," Zeph. iii. 17.

V. Another effect of this union is a full discharge of all the sinner's debts: let a woman be never so much in debt, no sooner is she married, but all her debts become her husband's; none of them can be recovered of her, demanded in law of her, he must pay, and satisfy for all she owes: she is in no danger of an arrest, nor need she fear a prison.

Brethren! until a sinner believes, and hath actual union with Christ, he stands charged with a vast debt; no sinner owes less than ten thousand talents.

Though we deny not, but that all God's elect are decretively justified and pardoned from all eternity; that is, God did decree to pronounce every elect person in every age, when they personally did exist, and had (or should obtain through the Spirit, a vital union with Jesus Christ) actually and personally acquitted, pardoned, and pronounced righteous ones, and for ever freed from all vindictive wrath and condemnation; but until such a vital union be obtained, they, as well as the rest of mankind, lie dead in sin, and are children of wrath by nature as well as others. And this appears,

See my medium betwixt two extremes.

None of the elect are actually pardoned, justified, before a vital union with Christ proved. Rom. viii. 1. Eph. ii. 2, 3.

(1.) Because all the elect fell in the first Adam, and by virtue of the fall, were brought under the same condemnation that their public head fell under.

(2.) Because all are born in sin, all come into the world with the same stain, and guilt of sin: "Behold I was shapened in iniquity," &c., Psal. li. 5.

(3.) Because it is positively said, "That the whole world became guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19; not only in their consciences, but *fore Dei*, before God, and in his sight; and in this respect Paul shows there was no difference, the sentence of the law being charged upon the elect by God himself, until they are in Jesus Christ.

(4.) And this further appears, because it is said, that "he that believeth not is condemned already," John iii. 18: let him be who he will. "He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son of God hath not life," 1 John v. 12. Hath the Son, that is, union with the Son, or is married to the Son, hath life; that is, both the life of justification and the life of sanctification, and also eternal life in the seed of it, and also hath a vital principle in him that hath the Son, and that he that hath not the Son hath not life, in either of these respects.

(5.) Because the Holy Ghost frequently ascribes our actual justification only to believers, or to faith, though not to faith either as a habit or an act, or that faith is any of the matter, or the material cause of our justification; but only objectively, or in respect to Christ, whom faith apprehends; "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," &c., Rom. v. 1. "Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith," &c., Rom. iii. 28. "Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ," &c., Gal. ii. 16. Again, "In him all that believe are justified,"

Acts xiii. 39. And where is said (in any place of scripture) he is justified that believes not, (though not in his own conscience) yet he is in the sight of God; (say they) and must not such then, who affirm that elect unbelievers are actually justified, be looked upon as fomentors of an error, and such which cannot tend any ways to the glory of God.

(6.) None of the elect are actually pardoned nor justified, before they obtain this union with Christ; because justification of our persons make a relative change, though not a real change: it makes a change of the state of the person, though not a change of his heart; no, that is done by regeneration, which always accompanies justification; no man is actually justified that is not renewed; he that was a child of wrath, is made a child of God; "This thy brother was dead, and is alive again:" he was dead in sin, and dead in a law of sense also; a condemned man is a dead man, and every one in that sense is dead, until justified and acquitted of the law sentence.

I would know whether they own the elect were ever in this sense dead, or condemned: if not, 1. I see not then how they can properly be said to be justified at all, because justification of sinners is a discharging them from the wrath, guilt, and condemnation they lay under, before they were so justified. 2. Let such who deny what I say, show when, and at what time the law sentence was taken off of the elect, if it was before they obtained a vital union with Jesus Christ.

The elect were once condemned.

(7.) The sins of the elect are not actually pardoned, or they pronounced, acquitted, before this union with Christ appears yet further; because ministers are commanded to preach the gospel to sinners, undone sinners, and tell every unbelieving sinner he is in a miserable state, even naked and without Christ, until he has union with Christ, being both children of wrath, and under condemnation: but if some men do not thus believe, how, with a good conscience, can they preach after this manner? No, they must say, "Sinners, if you are elected, you are actually justified, whether you believe or not; and all your sins are actually pardoned, though you do not know it, or have not the evidence of it in your own consciences." But would not this be strange doctrine, and such that would expose religion to shame and reproach, or leastwise such preachers? Or can that be a truth that is not fit to be preached? or if it be thought fit to be preached, can it tend to the conversion of sinners?

Lastly, The Holy Ghost convinceth all persons, whom he convinceth effectually of sin, that before they are united to Christ, they were in a sad and deplorable state and condition, ask any convinced sinner this question.

Quest. Pray, what was your state and condition, before you were helped to believe, or to receive Jesus Christ, by nature?

Ans. O (says he) Sir, a sad and miserable state and condition, for I was condemned and under God's wrath, &c.

Now, doth not the Holy Ghost convince them, that this was their state; and that they were naked, &c., without Christ's righteousness: sure, he that has Christ's righteousness imputed to him, cannot be said to be naked. And be sure, the Holy Spirit is a true and faithful Witness, and being God cannot lie. Not that I deny a federal union of the elect; from eternity, the Son of God was our Surety: he then received a grant for us, and we received it in him, according to 2 Tim. i. 7, and Tit. i. 2.

But no sooner is the soul espoused, and married to Jesus Christ, or hath union with him by faith, through the infusion of the Holy Spirit, but it is actually discharged. Christ says to the justice of God, concerning such a person, as Paul, concerning Onesimus, to Philemon, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee anything, put that upon my account," Phil. 18. If justice should demand payment, (which is impossible) of such, saith Jesus Christ, I have paid it; I am responsible for all this soul oweth; I died for this person. I (saith the soul) plead my interest in Christ, my union with Christ; for that satisfaction which he made to thee, O Justice, for all my debts, and horrid crimes, is my legal discharge at God's bar, in the court of heaven. Is not this, my brethren, a blessed effect of the soul's marriage-union with Christ? What perplexity are some in, that are far in debt, and have nothing to pay? They cannot sleep, nor take their natural rest, for fear of an arrest, and of going to prison. Oh! (saith the poor creature) what shall I do? I am fallen into the hands of a just man, one that will not forgive me a farthing of what I owe him; I am run out of all I had to trade with, by my own extravagant and profuse living, and he is incensed against me, and, alas! I have not one penny to pay, nor no friend, nor brother to help me, oh, I must go to prison, and there lie as long as I live!

Just thus it is, with a poor sinner, one that is an unbeliever; he is run out of all that God lent him, by his horrid wickedness; and owes to God a vast sum, and there is none can help him; no friend hath he to satisfy the justice of God; yet, without there be a full

satisfaction, to prison he must go, even to the worst of prisons, to hell itself. Ah, what is it to go to an earthly prison, to this, viz., to be cast into utter darkness, to lie in a furnace of fire to all eternity!

But now, if this poor guilty wretch will but espouse and marry Jesus Christ, he is immediately discharged of all the danger he was in before. Such is the happy estate of all that have actual union with Jesus Christ.

VII. From it follows another blessed effect of this happy union, namely, free justification. The soul of a believing sinner is accepted in Christ, as perfectly righteous. Justification
an effect
of union.

Brethren, I know some do not distinguish between pardon of sin, and free justification, but make it all one act of God; but, as I conceive, there is a great difference, though it is granted, no person that is pardoned, but he is also justified. Yet, evident it is, a man that is a criminal, and brought to the bar to plead, and is found guilty, may, as an act of the king's grace, be pardoned, as to that obligation he lies under to punishment; but he may not, cannot be said to be acquitted, justified, or declared righteous, and an innocent person. But every believing sinner, or every person that espenseth the Lord Jesus, through the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness, is justified, acquitted, and declared innocent, and without spot, at the bar of God's justice. Christ's righteousness is put upon that soul, and accounted his, as if it was his very own, and wrought out by himself; so that in this respect, he "is all fair, and hath no spot in him," (as Christ speaks of his spouse). When God pardons a sinner, he deals with him in a way of mercy, but when he justifies him, he deals with him in a way of righteousness; "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me in garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels," Isa. lxi. 10. So that a believer may not only say, in the Lord I have pardon, and remission of sins, but also, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 24. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Rom. viii. 33, 34. That is, to their charge that are actually in Christ, or united to him. For before an elect sinner believes, the law hath power, and doth charge him, and divine justice chargeth him, but when he believes none can charge him; "for it is God that justifieth." "Who shall condemn, it is Christ that died." It is Christ the Son of God, he that is equal with God, that is, God as well as man.

Hence he hath made a sufficient satisfaction, and an atonement to divine justice, or rather, that is risen again; which shows our full discharge from sin in him; we were all virtually justified, when he was raised from the dead, and we are actually justified, when we apply, or receive the atonement; "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," Rom. v. 11, 1 John i. 9. Not only merciful and gracious, but faithful and just; he will not exact from us satisfaction, who plead that atonement his Son hath made for our sins. Christ having paid our debts, God cannot be unjust as not to forgive us, through his blood.

Oh, what a blessing is this! How happy are they that obtain union with Christ! They are justified, and always justified completely, and for ever justified, and justified from all things, Acts xiii. 39.

VIII. Another effect of this union is regeneration. No sooner doth Christ apprehend us by his Spirit and enable us to believe in him, so that we are spiritually united unto him, but immediately we are renewed, or changed into his image; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. Jesus Christ can take no delight in a black and filthy creature, no more than a man can delight in a filthy swine. "A contrary nature," (saith a worthy writer) "cannot unite. Can fire and water be united? a good angel, and an impure devil?" Now this union is made by the infusion of the Holy Spirit, which immediately works new habits in the soul. By nature we are in the first Adam, and bear his vile image, but by grace we are in the second Adam, and so partake of his holy and heavenly image; "He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit," 1 Cor. vi. 17. It is not an union simply in love and affections, (as some would have it) without a change of disposition; the Holy Spirit dwells and operates in that soul, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, the same is not his," Rom. viii. 9. The head and the members are all of one and the same nature. Can a loathsome carcase be united to the holy Jesus? Or a sinner be joined to him, and remain still filthy? No, no, regeneration immediately follows, as the effect of this union. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness," Rom. viii. 10. Regeneration
an effect
of union.

Regenera-
tion an effect
of union.

Freedom from bondage, and the curse of the law, an effect of union with Christ.

IX. It follows from hence, that as the effect of this union with Jesus Christ, the soul is also set free from bondage. Now, "the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. The Lord Christ, though he be a man, yet not a mere man; he is called, "A quickening Spirit." The first man, "Adam, was made a living soul;" the last man, "Adam, was made a quickening Spirit," 1 Cor. xv. 45. And, where he is, or dwells in any soul, there is liberty. Such that are united to him, are discharged from the spirit of bondage; they are set at liberty from the bondage of the law, and the curse thereof. "If the Son therefore make you free, then are you free indeed," John viii. 36. Made free, or set at liberty from the servitude and slavery of sin, of the law, of death and hell. They that are of the law, or not dead to the law, and so not married to Christ, but are in bondage, under the killing power of it, being possessed with a base, servile, slavish spirit, being servants of lusts and corruption; but believers, through this divine union, are delivered from this woful state; "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Rom. viii. 15.

That soul that is in the first Adam, may be said to be married to the law, is evident, which is a cruel husband, the letter killeth; as many as are under the law, are under the curse. Mount Sinai covenant gendereth to bondage; for this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is in bondage with her children," Gal. iv. 24, 25.

He therefore that seeks for justification by the law, or by his own righteousness, or according to the terms of the first covenant, is in a woful condition; the law being not dead to him, nor he dead to that; "Know ye not, brethren, for I speak to them that know the law, how the law hath dominion over a man, as long as he liveth," Rom. vii. 1, 2, 3. By the law, he means the law of wedlock, and all that are under the first covenant, are married to the law, as to an husband. See the fourth verse; "Wherefore brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead," &c.

Therefore, believers are freed from the malediction, and from the rigid exaction, and the irritation of the law; but "now we are delivered from the law, that being dead, wherein we were held," Rom. vii. 6. The law as a covenant of works is the strength of sin, and the effects of both is dead, so long as a man is under the power or dominion of them; but believers, through their union with Christ, are freed from both.

All Christ hath, is a believer's, as an effect of his union with him.

X. Another glorious effect of this marriage-union with Christ, is an undoubted right to, and interest in, all that Christ hath. He endows the soul with all his spiritual goods, as the husband endows the wife he marries, with all his worldly goods. This all know is the effect of a marriage union. Though a prince should espouse and marry a poor virgin, even take her off the dunghill, (as it were) yet no sooner is she married to him, but she is a queen, and is also interested in all he hath. She hath a rich dowry according to his dignity and grandeur. So it is here, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours," 1 Cor. iii. 22. They have a right and title to all things that are Christ's. But how comes this to pass? See the next words, "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The word is theirs, the ministers of Christ are theirs; the ordinances and the promises are theirs, even all the promises are theirs; all that grace that is in Christ, that wisdom that is in Christ, is theirs, that have a real union with him, "My peace I give unto you." That grace that is in Christ, and that peace that flows from Christ, is theirs, that have union with him.

All a believer's wants shall therefore be supplied, and that richly too. Jesus Christ is not an unkind husband, (as you have heard,) but of a loving, generous, and bountiful spirit.

He is an unkind husband, that denies his dear wife anything which she needs, or hath the want of, to make her life comfortable unto her. "Woman (saith Christ.) be it to thee as thou wilt," Matt. xv. 28. Take what thou wilt. If David could say, "because the Lord was his Shepherd, he should not want," Psal. xxiii. 1, how much more may a saint say, the Lord is my husband, therefore I shall not want, because this relation is stronger, and more intimate, nearer and obliging. "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. v. 29, 30.

He that communicates to us his own flesh to eat, and his blood to drink, be sure will withhold no good thing from us, which he knows will do us good. "My God shall supply all

your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus," Phil. iv. 19, or by virtue of that union you have with him. Believers have manifold wants; they may say with David, the best of them, "I am poor and needy," Psal. xl. 17.

A sincere Christian knows he is poor; he sees his wants. "I (saith Christ,) know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty," Rev. ii. 9. But contrariwise, a formal Christian, like the church of Laodicea, thinks himself rich, and increased in goods, and has need of nothing. But let the wants of believers be what they will, the Lord Jesus will see them all supplied. "They that fear the Lord, shall want no good thing," Psal. xxxiv. 10.

1. Do they want counsel? "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory," Psal. lxxxiii. 24.

2. Do they want wisdom? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," James i. 5.

3. Do they want comfort? "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you," John xiv. 18.

4. Do they want grace, more grace? "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. He giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

5. Do they want strength? "They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength." "I will strengthen thee, I will uphold thee, by the right hand of my righteousness," Isa. xl. 31.

6. Do they want healing? Christ is their Physician, as well as their Bridegroom, he hath the balm of Gilead. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases," Psal. ciii. 3.

Sinner, sinner, thou hast many running sores, and dangerous wounds in thy soul; thy wounds stink, and are corrupt. "From the crown of thy head, to the sole of thy foot, there is nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores," Isa. i. 5, 6. But no sooner dost thou espouse Jesus Christ, but he will heal them all, and make thee whole; the lost soul he came to seek and to save, and the sick and wounded he came to heal; but if thou dost not believe in him, espouse him, thou wilt certainly perish eternally of thy wounds, and soul sickness; for nothing but an application of Christ's blood by faith, can heal thee.

7. Dost thou want rest? Art thou weary and heavy laden? Oh, then believe in Christ, come to Christ; though thy sins are never so heavy upon thee, though never Luke x. 42. so great a burden to thee, yet he will ease thee. "Come to me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he shall sustain thee," Matt. xi. 28.

Nay, brethren, believers themselves have their burdens. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened," 2 Cor. v. 4. But Jesus hath already "borne all our grief, and carried our sorrows," Isa. liii. 4.

1. Christ hath borne the burden of our sins; the guilt of all our sins were laid upon him. "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

2. He hath borne the burden of our duties and obedience. That obedience God required of us, was a perfect conformity to the requirements of the holy law, which we were not able to do, that yoke we were not able to bear, but the Lord Jesus in our nature, and in our stead, hath borne it for us.

3. He hath also borne that sore and amazing burden of God's wrath, which was due to us for our breach of the law, and that on purpose to free us, to deliver us, and all that do truly believe in him, from it for ever.

4. Nay, my brethren, Christ bears part of another burden of ours; I mean the burden of our afflictions and sorrows.

1. By way of sympathy, "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities," Heb. iv. 15.

2. He bears now our sorrows and burden of afflictions and infirmities, by succouring and supporting us. "Underneath are the everlasting arms," Deut. xxxiii. 27.

3. "By sweetening all our afflictions with his own gracious presence. "When thou passest through the water, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," Isa. xliii. 3.

4. By teaching us by all our afflictions. We have not the rod of correction, without his gracious instruction.

5. By sanctifying all our afflictions to us, making them of great use and profit to our souls. "All things shall work together for good, to them that love God."

6. By purging us thereby from all our filth and pollutions. Affliction is the furnace of Christ, in and by which, he refines his gold, and makes it more pure.

U S E.

Now, is it not (think you) a blessed thing to be in a state of union with Christ! Oh, that these things might move some of you, that are yet in your sins, to come to this wedding, and receive Jesus Christ! But I can go no further at this time.

SERMON VIII.

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—
Matt. xxii. 2.

Doct. That the great God hath sent his own Son to espouse poor sinners.

The argument I am upon to persuade sinners to espouse Jesus Christ, was taken from the happy and blessed effects that attend, or accompany the soul's marriage union with Christ. To proceed.

XI. Another effect of this union, is the blessing, and great privilege of adoption.

Marry the King's Son, and his Father will become your Father.

Brethren, that spirit which unites the soul to the Lord Jesus, is the spirit of adoption.

There are three ways, by which, (as I conceive,) adoption comes in.

1. By a marriage with Christ.
2. By a grant, or free-gift.
3. By the Holy Spirit, which is the bond of this union.

The Holy Ghost, that unites us to Christ, (as I said,) is a Spirit of adoption. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Rom. viii. 15. Compare this with that in Gal. iv. 6, "Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

"Because you are sons." They were sons by virtue of their union with Christ, and thereby partook of his holy nature, by regenerating grace. But yet this privilege of adoption is further confirmed and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, by the indwelling of the Spirit. The habits of grace gives us this privilege; yet it is the act, and exercise of grace, influencing the soul, that makes us cry, Abba, Father, or to plead this privilege.

Brethren, every believer hath the Spirit of adoption in him; but every believer cannot to the same degree of boldness, cry, Abba, Father. The reasons may be,

1. Because grace in some may be weak. A child new born, cannot cry, father, father, though c'er a short time; when grown up, it can do it: so it may be here.

2. In some others also, the Spirit may be grieved, and so may withdraw its testimony for a time, from such Christians, and they thereby may be left under many fears and doubts. Oh, how dangerous is it to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit of God, Eph. iv. 30.

3. Or it may be, because a child of God may be under great and grievous temptations; Satan may get much advantage against him, and weaken his hope and confidence in God, touching his union with Christ, and his adoption. Nay, many have not only been tempted and too far overcome, by Satan, but also been deserted by the Lord, as Heman, Job, and others. Job cried out, his hope was perished; and if you read the 88th Psalm, you may see the distresses upon this account of Heman.

4. The Holy Ghost is a free Agent, and therefore he may testify unto the soul its adoption, when he pleaseth, and sees occasion. And,

(1.) The Holy Spirit may suspend its testimony, to humble the soul; sometimes a saint may be lifted up, and then to bring him to the foot of Christ, the Holy Ghost may suspend its witnessing influences for a time. (2.) Or, the Holy Spirit may do it, to put a believer the more upon the use and exercise of grace. (3.) Or to cause the soul, the more to prize his testimony, as touching this high and sacred privilege.

5. A believer may have the Spirit of adoption, and cry Abba, Father, and yet want comfort; though the testimony may be strong, yet the troubles of the soul may be great. David calls upon his soul, and says, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him: who is the health of my countenance, and my God," Psal. xlii. 11. He pleads his relation to God, though his comfort was gone. So in Isa. i. 10.

2. The privilege of adoption, is by way of grant, or free gift; "to them gave he power or privilege, to become the sons of God," John i. 12. But it is not given to any but to

them only, that do receive and espouse Jesus Christ. "But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

One sign, or evidence of our adoption, is our regeneration, as the very next words show, "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," ver. 13.

Adoption and regeneration always go together; no soul is adopted, but he is also regenerated. Oh! this is a great and glorious privilege of ours: For,

1. To be children, is to lie near the Father's heart, God loves his own children, which he hath adopted to himself, and hath begotten by his own word and Spirit. No father hath such a great love to his children, as the Lord hath unto his, "And hast loved them, as he hath loved me," John xvii. 23. Considered as he is Mediator, with an inconceivable, unchangeable, tender, and an everlasting love.

What it is to be an adopted child of God.

2. To be cared for, and pitied as a father cares for, and pities his children, when they are afflicted, and in misery, "As a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him," Psal. ciii. 13.

3. To be fed at his own table; this privilege belongs to children, and to dwell in their Father's house, they are allowed to dwell with God, and God dwelleth with them, "As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," 2 Cor. vi. 16.

4. To be taught and instructed by the Lord, as a father teacheth and instructeth his children. How careful was Abraham in doing this, with David and many others.

5. To be clothed by the Father. A father clothes all his children at his own cost. So the holy God puts a glorious robe upon all his children, even the perfect righteousness of his own Son Jesus Christ. Our Elder Brother hath a garment wrought out for them all, that are his Father's children, which the Holy Ghost puts upon them, and in which the Father always beholds them.

See the parable of the prodigal son, the best robe.

6. To be preserved and protected as children. What father will suffer his children to be devoured, and torn to pieces, if he can defend them?

Rom. viii. 7.

7. Heirship. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. (It is not thus with all the children of an earthly prince, viz., they are not all co-heirs with the elder brother, (see Gal. iv. 7). Hence they serve God with filial fear and love.

XIV. Another effect of this union with Jesus Christ, is sanctification. "He that sanctifieth; and they that are sanctified, are all of one," Heb. ii. 11.

Brethren, there is a necessity of union of nature between the sanctifying Saviour, and the sanctified sinner. Our union with Christ and sanctification, is the effects of the hypostatical union of the two natures in the person of Christ. Every believer is justified by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. These are attributed to his taking our nature into union with his divine Person.

Sanctification an effect of union.

All the elect were then virtually taken into union with himself, in him, as their common Head and Representative. And, as the union of the divine nature, sanctified the human nature, in the Person of Christ, in the womb of the virgin, even so, when sinners (though unclean in themselves) are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, they are actually sanctified, and made holy. The Spirit, which is the bond of our union, on Christ's part, is a spirit of holiness, or of sanctification. And, like as it is impossible for the branch to bear like fruit with the vine, until it is grafted into the vine, so it is impossible for sinners to be holy, or to bring forth the fruits of holiness and sanctification, until they are grafted into him, by the Spirit, and faith.

By this also, we may know, whether we have attained to the blessing of union. "Such were some of you, but ye are washed and sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. xvi. 11.

Though a person may be never so filthy, and unclean before his union with Christ, yet this union doth not leave him filthy, and polluted; for as he hath the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, to his justification, and remission of sin, so he hath also received the Holy Spirit, creating in his soul new habits, and gracious dispositions, by which he is enabled, and influenced, to die unto sin, and so to live unto God.

XII. Another blessed effect of union with Christ, is free access unto the throne of grace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 1. Not justified before, or without faith; nor being justified, and by faith have peace in our conscience (as some would have the text be read, (falsely placing the point at justified) but, being justified by faith, &c.,

Free access to God an effect of union.

respecting the object, faith apprehendeth, or applies; we have peace with God, through the obedience, or righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The effect of this is here opened by the apostle. (1.) Peace with God. (2.) Access unto God, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. (3.) And, rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

A person may be reconciled to his prince, and yet not be admitted into his presence: he may not at any time have free access to him.

Or, if he should have such access, yet he may not have his petition heard, and all his wants and necessities answered, but believers have this free access to God, through Jesus Christ. They may "come with boldness to the throne of grace," Heb. iv. 16; and also, always speed when they come, "In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by faith and love," Eph. iii. 12, in whom, or being united to him.

1. May boldly, or freely come; come to God, as unto a Father.

2. May have free liberty of speech, even such words, as becomes a child that approaches the presence of such a dread majesty.

3. With an assurance of having his ear opened, to our just and righteous requests and petitions.

4. Have also a ready answer, if they ask in Christ's name, such things that are according to the will of God, provided they ask in faith, believingly, and in love to the honour of God.

And this not only for themselves, but for others also. God would hear his servant Job, for his three friends, when he would not hear them for themselves, "My servant Job shall pray for you, and him will I accept," &c., Job xlii. 8.

Some are greater favourites in the court of heaven than others, or are more accepted, or better beloved, than other saints may be, or in a better frame than others are; or they may have more faith.

How ready was king Ahasuerus to hear Esther; "What wilt thou, queen Esther? what is thy request? It shall be given thee, to the half of the kingdom," Esther v. 3. Believers being the spouse of Christ, have a wonderful interest and acceptance in the court of heaven.

(1.) Because the way, by which they come by it, is that new and living way, God hath consecrated through the veil, that is to say, Christ's flesh; he procured this free access for us, by his own blood. (2.) Because Jesus Christ hath also purchased all things they want for them, at such a dear rate. (3.) Because they are so near and dear to Christ, and to the Father, through him. (4.) Because the Holy Spirit frames all their desires and helps, and influenceth them in all the good and just petitions. "We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26. (5.) Because God hath laid himself under gracious promises to hear them, and to give them all things they need.

(6.) Because they are invited to come with boldness; they are required to come, and draw near to God. (7.) Because Jesus Christ himself, is always at the Father's right-hand, to take their requests, and offer them up to God, with the most sweet odours of his own intercession, Rev. v. 8.

Victory over all enemies an effect of union with Christ. XIV. Another effect of the soul's union with Christ, is a victory over all our enemies, whether within or without. Jesus Christ hath overcome them all, not only for himself, but for all that are his; "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," John xvi. 33.

1. Christ's victory was ours; he overcame as the Captain of our salvation. He overcame sin and we in him. He overcame temptations, yea, all its allurements, when Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world; and we then overcame the world in him. He overcame death as our Head and Husband, and we also overcame death in him.

2. Moreover, we actually are made conquerors, through our union with him. Faith is, my brethren, a victorious grace, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith," 1 John v. 4.

By partaking of his Spirit, we are partakers of his strength. Hence we are said to be "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power," Col. i. 11. Faith makes us victorious, as it did the worthies of old, over all worldly desires, fears, hopes, and joys, which are the great hindrance of our obedience to God, i. e., the instrument, the weapon, by which we overcome, and virtually includes in it this victory, as the effect includes the cause, is our faith, which in our union is planted in our hearts; and thus we "are in Christ, more than conquerors," Rom. viii. 11.

His victory gave all the elect a full assurance of overcoming, and hence a believer may triumph over death and the grave, "Oh, death! where is thy sting? Oh, grave! where is thy victory?" 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

XV. Another effect of our union with Christ is, a clear and full manifestation, or a saving knowledge of the Lord, "I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." This is the great promise of the new covenant, by which we become the Lord's. "They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord," Jer. xxxi. 34.

Saving
knowledge
an effect of
union.

In this covenant we are married to Jesus Christ, and this is the effect of our conjugal union. Christ will hide nothing from his spouse, that is for her good, and his own glory. All things "that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you," John xv. 15.

Some have only the light of nature afforded them; they know no more of God, than the visible things of the creation teacheth them, by the help of their natural reason.

Others have the light of common gifts and grace; they have the written word, and great light by those gifts of knowledge Christ hath endowed them with.

But believers have the saving light and knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, which is life eternal.

XVI. Another effect of this blessed union, is fruitfulness in grace, and in all the fruits of righteousness. No man can bring forth fruits or product of grace, before the habits of grace are implanted in their souls; nor are those habits implanted in any soul, but in those only that are united to Christ: "Wherefore brethren, we also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye should bring forth fruit to God," Rom. vii. 4.

Fruitfulness
in grace is
the effect of
union with
Christ.

It appears evident, that one special end, as well as an effect of this marriage union, is fruitfulness, as it is among men: first marriage, and then fruit, as the effect of it, in a natural way: as grafting into the stock must precede the partaking of the sap, John xv. 1, 5. so as to bring forth fruit, so we must be united to Christ in a spiritual way, before we can bear spiritual fruit. Nature may bring forth the fruits of morality, (as it did in some of the old heathens) but the fruits of the Spirit is the product of supernatural grace. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, faith, temperance:" Gal. v. 22. A little to open each of these.

Love. That is, the effects of union, love to God, and Jesus Christ; love to the church of God, and to the interest of God, and to the truth of God. Moreover, love to all men.

Joy. This denotes that full and sweet satisfaction the soul of a believer hath, in this his happy union, or marriage with Christ, he or she, being unspeakably delighted in it, esteeming it their chiefest and greatest good and happiness: "Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8.

Peace. Or, quietude of mind and conscience; they had, and all believers have peace with God. Moreover, peace here, denotes a peaceable temper to all the saints, or in peace they possess their souls.

Long-suffering. This is opposed to seeking revenge, or retaining prejudice in our hearts to any brother; bearing and forbearing with each other; suffering wrong, rather than seeking to right ourselves in an undue way or manner.

Gentleness and goodness. viz., Sweetness, and kindness of temper, by which we avoid all hard-heartedness, and uncharitableness to each other; mutually endeavouring to accommodate ourselves so one to another, that we may be helpful to each other on all occasions.

Faith. I take this to refer to faithfulness, in keeping our covenant with God, and his church; and our word and promise in all our commerce and dealings one with another, and with all men.

Meekness. This denotes humbleness of mind; "learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart," Matt. xi. 29. This grace is opposed to pride, haughtiness of mind, and self-conceitedness; as also to wrath and undue anger and passion.

Temperance. viz., A sober use of the creature, and all creature enjoyments; not having our hearts set upon them in an inordinate manner. "But I say unto you, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as if they had none, ver. 29, And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy, as though they possessed not. And they that use this world, as not abusing it, because the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29.

Oh! Christians, see to it; these blessed fruits of grace are the effects which all those who have a real union with Christ, experience.

Final perseverance an effect of union.

have an imperfect

See the parable of the sower.

XVII. Final perseverance is also an effect of union with Christ.

1. This happy union tends to make Christ, and all believers, but one mystical body, or one mystical Christ; and should he lose one member, he would have an imperfect body; "we are all members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. v. 30. Will a man suffer the members of his body to be torn to pieces, and lost for ever, if he hath power or wisdom to preserve them? Or, hath Christ less love to the members of his mystical body, than a man hath of the members of his natural body?

2. This union must preserve every believer from final apostacy, or else the prayer of our blessed Lord was not heard and answered. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

3. If the union betwixt the Father and Jesus Christ, be indissoluble, then the union betwixt Christ, and all true believers, is indissoluble; but the former is true, therefore the latter is true also: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one," John xvii. 23.

4. If the seed remains in all that are in a state of union with Christ, then not one of them can fall finally away, but the seed remains; therefore they cannot finally fall; "the seed remains, they cannot sin because they are born of God," 1 John iii. 9.

5. Christ's love to, and care of his spouse, is such, that they cannot finally perish. His love is unchangeable, and abiding; besides, he betroths all which he betroths for ever.

The resurrection an effect of union with Christ.

Rom. viii. II.

XVIII. The resurrection to eternal life, at the last day, is likewise an effect of this glorious union. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you," Rom. viii. II. Both body and soul of a believer is in union with Christ, and as all the elect by virtue of Christ's resurrection, are, and shall be raised in their spirits, to a taste of spiritual life, so also all their bodies shall be raised at the last day, or else a whole Christ shall not be raised; "for as in Adam all die; so even in Christ shall all be made alive," 1 Cor. xv. 22.

Prethren, as all the first Adam's seed, or all that stood in union with him die, so all the second Adam's seed, or all that stand in a state of union with him, shall be raised to eternal life, at the last day, by virtue of that union. True, all the ungodly shall also be raised, but not by virtue of union with Christ, because they never were in him; but they shall be raised by virtue of the mighty power of Christ, not in mercy, but in wrath.

Glorification an effect of union.

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XIX. Glorification also is an effect of our union with Christ. He, as our

Fore-runner, is already glorified in heaven, and we in him, as our head; and we shall actually be glorified with him also, at the resurrection day, both body and soul: "And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one," John xvii. 22. That glory the Father hath given unto Christ, he gives by promise to all his, and will actually bestow upon them: for whom he "justified, them also he glorified."

XX. As an effect of union with Jesus Christ, believers shall be in the same place with Christ. This is that which they long for, and it shall be granted unto them. Shall not the husband, and his dear wife, and beloved spouse dwell together? "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," John xvii. 24. And again he saith, "where I am, there shall my servant be."

APPLICATION.

1. From hence we may infer, that by virtue of this union with Christ, believers are delivered from all things that are evil, whether here or hereafter; and are, and shall be possessed with all things that are truly and eternally good; i. e., grace here and glory hereafter.

2. And then, is it not, oh ye sinners, your true and only interest, and highest concernment, to espouse the Lord Jesus?

3. Moreover, it tends further to aggravate the sin and folly of all those who make light of this marriage supper.

4. Also from hence, may all believers receive no small comfort and consolation. What tongue can express their happiness? nay, what heart can conceive of it? lift up your heads ye saints that are dejected; why do you mourn, ye princely ones? what glory are you heirs of! oh, be not troubled, though your state, at present, is mean and low, Christ hath espoused you, "and when he appeareth, ye shall also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 3.

But so much at this time.

SERMON IX.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—
Matt. xxii. 2.

DOCTRINE.

That the great God hath sent his own Son, to espouse poor sinners.

THAT it is (you have heard) the sinner's highest concernment to accept of Christ, and believe in Christ, or to espouse the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jan. 31, 1637.

Secondly, I shall show you how, or by what ways and means, the soul's marriage union with Jesus Christ, is accomplished, or brought about.

How union with Christ is effected.

1st. Note this by the way, that it is effected, or brought about by all the three persons of the blessed Trinity.

First, the spring, or original cause of it, is the love of God the Father; the Father from everlasting loved all those that are espoused by Christ.

This marriage union doth not depend on the will, and good pleasure of man, not on the creature. No, for shall the corrupt will of man, be the rule of God's will? Some tell you, if the creature will receive Christ, then God will move in a way of grace and favour towards him. After this notion Jesus Christ might have no spouse at all, nay, his death might prove to be in vain.

Union with Christ depends on the will of God.

2. This union is wrought by the free gift, or donation of God the Father. The Father gives all those to the Son, which he espouseth. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me," John vi. 37.

Secondly, this marriage relation is wrought out, or effected, by the Son of God, who doth espouse poor sinners.

1. By Christ's recommending his infinite, and inconceivable love to the sons and daughters of men; his early love, even from everlasting.

Brethren, Jesus Christ readily accepted of his Father's choice; nay, his love was as early set upon lost sinners, as the Father's. "His delight was with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31. The sinner doth not first fall in love with Jesus Christ, and so their love draws forth his love to them. No, that cannot be, for when Christ loved us, we hated him; our hearts naturally were filled full of enmity against God, and Jesus. "Now, when I passed by I looked upon thee, and thy time was the time of love. And I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine," Ezek. xvi. 8.

This was the time of Christ's love, he first looked upon us, and had pity on us, and cast his skirt over us, which was his own robe of righteousness. His look on us begets faith in our souls, by which we apprehend, and take hold of him. "Then I washed thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and anointed thee with oil," ver. 9.

2. Christ brings it about by his death. All were under the curse of the law, to which every soul of man was married, in a covenant of works; which covenant could not be dissolved, and the sinner be delivered from this their first husband, but by the death of Jesus Christ. "But now being delivered from the law, that being dead, wherein we were held," Rom. vii. 6. And to this end (as he showeth) "That we might be married to another, even to him that God raised from the dead," &c., ver. 4. Nay, my brethren, the law is not only dead by the death of Christ, (as it was a covenant of works) but by his death, i. e., by the effects thereof, we are become dead to the law also, "Ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ."

Union with Christ by means of his death, or by which the law becomes dead to us, and we to that.

We now see, that there is no relief, no help, no justification, nor eternal life, by the works of the law, "Sin revived," Rom. vii. 9. And thus is this glorious union wrought and accomplished by Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus Christ worketh about this union, by his own free offer, or tender of himself, and his infinite love to sinners in the gospel. He makes a free offer of himself, with all his benefits, to every one that will, or hath a heart to receive and embrace him. "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink," John vii. 37. "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. "He that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out,"

Christ offers himself freely to sinners as sinners.

John vi. 36. The Lord Jesus stands with his arms spread open, to receive all that come to him. He says, "Behold me, behold me, look to me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth."

Thirdly, this union with Christ, is more immediately effected by the Spirit, or by the Third Person of the Trinity. It is, my brethren, the more immediate work and office of the Holy Ghost, to unite sinners to the blessed Jesus; as the Father gave the Son for us, and as the Son died and shed his blood for us, so the Holy Spirit makes his blood to become effectual and efficacious to us.

I. It is the work and office of the Spirit, to enlighten the eyes of poor blind sinners, to behold their woful condition by nature, and to convince them of the evil of sin. As also to behold a transcendent beauty and excellency in Jesus Christ.

2. The Holy Spirit doth it, by infusing new and gracious habits in their souls.

3. By breaking them off from that obligation to their former husband, the law, under which they lay; destroying all hope and expectation of justification by the law, or any righteousness of their own.

4. By causing the poor convinced sinner to die to sin, and so to divorce them from all their old lovers, i. e., "The lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life."

5. The Holy Spirit doth not only enlighten their understandings, and convince their consciences, but also he bows and bends their stubborn and rebellious wills, which would not yield to accept of Christ, nor subject unto him, but by the working of his Almighty power.

6. The Holy Spirit doth it by working faith in their souls. No man can believe in Christ, receive Christ, or espouse him; But as the Spirit helps them so to do. "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8.

Brethren, it is given to us to believe; nay, the Holy Spirit works faith in us, after the same manner that God wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead; "It is according to the working of his mighty power." Eph. i. 18, 19.

7. By his shedding abroad the love of Christ "in our hearts," Eph. v. 5. Love to Christ is not the product of nature; believers do not love him with a mere human love, but with a divine love. Love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, or it is a supernatural grace, (we have heard of love-powder, and I know not what you may be sure the seed of the Spirit in the heart of a sinner, is like unto spiritual love-powder; I mean, this grace works in us physically, causing the soul as soon as it sees Jesus Christ by an eye of faith, to fall in love with him; they cannot but love him, it is a happy effect of a blessed cause.

8. By causing the sinner to choose Christ as the best good, in heaven and earth; and not to take him only as his Saviour, but also as his Head, Husband, and only Sovereign, and blessed Prophet, to be taught and led by him in all things.

9. By discovering to the soul the necessity of Christ, and that there is no salvation but in Christ, and so to build on him alone; and not only to close with him in the first act of faith, but helps the soul to commit itself to Jesus Christ, and wholly to trust and depend upon him for all supplies, continually in all things, as the wife depends upon her husband. To believe in Christ, is to live upon him, to rest on him, and to cleave to him, as the only Beloved of our affections.

1. Faith is set forth by the actings of our senses, viz., seeing him, hearing him, tasting him. "Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good." By feeling him in his powerful influences, and love-drawing operations; by smelling the sweet odour of his divine grace; his very name by the Spirit, is as an ointment poured out.

2. Faith is also set forth by the actings of our mind, or by the actings of the internal powers of the soul, viz., by desiring Christ, by longing for, by resolving not to cease until we find and enjoy him, by knowing him; to believe in him, and knowing him, the very same thing is meant; and also by putting our trust in him.

10. The Holy Spirit is so great an Agent, in bringing about this union, that he helps the soul wholly to make a resignation of itself to Christ, so as no longer to be its own, but the Lord's.

APPLICATION.

1. Exhort. To love Christ, and cleave to him, and there are mighty motives to persuade sinners to do this.

1. Consider what pangs of divine wrath his precious soul endured! Christ comes to

Our union
with Christ
is by the
Holy Spirit.

The work
and office
of the
Spirit.

How faith
is set forth
in the word
of God.

woo sinners in his bloody garments. Behold his hands, his feet, and his bleeding side, he comes to woo you, to entreat you, to open to him, to receive him, and to espouse him, through a sea of blood, yea, of his own blood.

2. Consider his long-suffering, his coming, standing, knocking, and calling upon you at your doors. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Rev. iii.

20. Wonder, O ye heavens! See the King at the poor beggar's door! The Creator is come to court and woo the sorry creature, and yet is not regarded! There the Lord stands, cries, calls, knocks, and yet the sinner will not open the door, nor cry out, "Oh! who is at my door?" Cant. v. 6.

Motives to
espouse Jesus
Christ.

3. Ponder how importunate Christ is. His long standing, even till his head is wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. His love in calling, intreating, beseeching sinners to embrace him, surely should move you. No lover, certainly, useth more sweet solicitations and persuasions, to obtain the love of a virgin, than Jesus Christ doth use to obtain your affections: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters," Isa. lv. 1, 2.

4. Consider and ponder, his complaining and weeping, when he sees sinners refuse him; "He was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts," Mark iii. 5. Again, how doth he complain? "My people will not hearken unto me; Israel will have none of me," Psal. lxxxi. 11. "I have stretched out my hand all the day long, to a stiff-necked and rebellious people, which walked in a way that was not good," Isa. lxv. 2.

6. Consider these his mournful expostulations, when he is ready to be gone, shows how importunate he is, to embrace sinners in the arms of his love and mercy. "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned in me, and my repentings are kindled together."

7. His most earnest and most importunate desire to be received by sinners, appears also by these promises of grace, and pardon, he hath made to all that believe in him. "Behold thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest, only acknowledge thine iniquity," Jer. iii. 5. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 7, 8. "All manner of sins and blasphemy against the Father and the Son, shall be forgiven unto men," Mark iii. 28, 29.

8. Consider those threatenings he denounceth against such that do condemn him, and proceed on in their wicked ways.

Brethren, it is cursed rebellion not to receive and embrace this your sovereign, or to refuse to come to his feast: "They shall not taste of my supper." That is, such shall have no pardon, no peace, no Saviour, no mercy. "He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." 1 John v. 12. And again he saith, "But those nine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them forth, and slay them before me," Luke xix. 27.

9. Consider that Christ's love is a matchless love. Oh, see his infinite goodness and condescension, how is he set upon the espousing of lost and undone sinners! Know, O soul, though thou art never so low, base and vile, yet Jesus Christ will accept of thee; they are the halt, the lame, the blind, and the maimed, that are received into his embraces. Though thou art one of the poor of this world, and art clothed with rags, or attended with never so great outward poverty, or art inwardly deformed and filthy, even as black as sin and hell can make thee, yet if thou come to him, he will receive thee as freely and as readily as if thou wast the highest monarch in the world.

It is not the greatness of thine iniquity, nor the multitude of them, nor thy former refusals of him, that can obstruct this thy happy union with him, if thou comest now to this wedding-supper. It is not thy former revolting, or backsliding from him, that can hinder it; may be thou art one that hast some time since strong convictions, and thou hast lost them, or hast made a profession of the gospel, but art backslidden, yet fear not, see what he says; go, and proclaim these words, "And say, return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquities," Jer. iii. 12, 13.

Christ's love
to backslid-
ing sinners.

II. From hence I also infer, that it is no easy thing for a poor sinner to fall in love with Jesus Christ. It is not in the power of man's will, to tie this conjugal knot, or unite his heart to the Lord Jesus, but it must be by the agency of the mighty God, or by the power of the Holy Spirit; all moral persuasions, though never so strong and powerful, cannot do it any good, no,

It is no easy
thing for a
sinner to be
brought to
espouse
Jesus Christ.

we must be drawn to Christ by the Father, and by the effectual influences of the Holy Ghost, if ever we are united to Jesus Christ, the Spirit is the bond of this union.

2. Exhort.] Sinners, labour to come to this marriage feast. Attend upon the means, cry to God to send the Spirit to incline your hearts, bow your wills, change your affections.

1. Consider thy refusal of Christ, is a great sin, yea the greatest sin.
 1. It is a sin against the highest and most sublime, and amazing wisdom of God the Father, who found out this way to make fallen men happy for ever.

2. It is a sin against the highest goodness of God, that was ever manifested: in this was the love of God manifest, "that he sent his own Son into the world, that we might live through him." 1 John iv. 9.

3. It is a sin against the only remedy God hath provided.

5. It is the highest act of disobedience against God, who commands thee to believe on his Son.

6. This refusal of Christ, doth cast the highest contempt upon the Lord Jesus, and tends to stain his glory. What, wilt thou prefer thy lusts, above the Lord Jesus Christ?

7. It is the soul-damning sin; "He that believeth not is condemned already," John iii. 18.

DIRECTIONS.

It may not be amiss, if I give you a few directions, about your closing with Christ, or espousing of him.

1. See it is the person of Christ you fall in love with, it must be for what Christ is, not for what he hath; many eye more the portion, than the person, but how shameful a thing is that, in the sight of all men!

2. You must espouse a whole Christ, not Jesus only, a Saviour, but Christ the Lord; not simply accept of him, or receive him, as a priest to die for you, but as a king to rule in you, and to reign over you; and as he is a Prophet to teach, guide and lead you. It is thus he is offered in the gospel.

3. Join nothing with Christ. You must espouse a single Christ, Christ alone; not Christ and Moses, not Christ and your own righteousness; no, you must not trust in Christ, and in inherent grace; not join, in point of justification, the graces of the Spirit, with the righteousness of Christ. Faith itself is no part of the matter of our justification before God, if your faith be trusted in, and relied upon as any part or procuring cause of your acceptance, and justification at God's bar, you will appear no better than an adulteress; Christ will not endure any to be a co-rival, or competitor with him. As he takes us in our rags, without any previous qualifications, or as bare, and simple sinners, so we must take him as a bare and simple Saviour, joining nothing of our own, or anything that is ours, with him.

4. You must receive a whole Christ with a whole heart, as a whole Christ comprehend all his offices, so a whole heart comprehended all our faculties: "My son, give me thy heart," not a part of it, but all of it; "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength;" their heart is divided, now they shall be found faulty.

5. You must espouse the Lord Jesus immediately, not delay, but forsake your other lovers, before they leave you; some would have Christ when they can sin no longer; the present time is the season Christ hath chosen, and he loves young people, your youthful days; "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me," Prov. viii. 17. The fat is the Lord's, that is, the best of the sacrifice, the best of your days, of your love, and of your strength.

6. You must come up to Christ's terms, though they may seem never so hard to the flesh, thou must pull out a right eye, and cut off a right-hand; thou must deny thyself; and take up thy cross and follow him, not one Delilah must be spared, no sin indulged, or connived at, or lived in.

Terror. What will you do that condemn, despise, and reject the Lord Jesus, or make light of this marriage-feast? You that love the world, love your sins, or anything else above Jesus Christ; what will you do when death comes, and in the day of judgment? O know, ye sinners, that such are cursed, who love not the Lord Jesus! "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maramatha." Let him be a curse till the Lord comes; such are cursed both living and dying, and for ever.

Consol. To you that are espoused to Jesus Christ, what comfort and consolation may this afford and administer: O what a choice have you made! Or rather Christ hath made of you! What princess is thus honoured! What is all the preferment that an earthly

The evils and dangers of refusing Christ.

Inherent grace must not be trusted in. Acts iv. 12.

A whole Christ must be received with a whole heart.

Christ must be immediately espoused.

Sinners must come to Christ's terms.

king can raise any unto this honour! You are espoused to the son of this sublime, this noble and mighty King!

Your Husband is coming, and the marriage day is now very near: how sweet will that meeting be in the air, when you shall lie in the bosom of the blessed Jesus for ever: "We shall be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall ever be with the Lord," 1 Thess. iv. 17.

"Behold the Bridegroom comes," Matt. xxv. 6, prepare to meet him (get ready) this turns all our water into wine; never rest O believer, until thou canst say, my "Beloved is mine, and I am his." Thus I close with this point of doctrine.

SERMON X.

And all things are ready, come to the marriage. Come, for all things are now ready.—
Matt. xxii. 4, Luke xiv. 17.

MATTHEW calls it a dinner, and St. Luke, a supper. The one may allude to the dispensation of gospel grace by the prophets, they being the first servants that were sent to invite sinners to this wedding. And the other may refer to the dispensation of the gospel, in the last age of the world; which may, perhaps, from thence, be called a supper: or, the one to the beginning of the gospel-feast, and the other to the latter end of it.

Why it is called a supper.

In these words are four parts.

1. Plentiful provisions prepared: "All things are ready."

2. An invitation: "Come."

3. The nature and design of the feast explained. "Come to the marriage." Not to a common, or ordinary feast, but to a marriage, viz., To feed by faith on Christ, or to espouse Jesus Christ.

4. A strong motive, denoting speed, to come presently: "For all things are [now] ready."

Doct. The blessings of the covenant of grace, or union with Christ, contains in it, all sorts of spiritual dainties, as a sumptuous feast, ready prepared, to which sinners are invited.

Here I shall do (God assisting) five things.

1. Show, why the blessings of the gospel, or union with Christ, is compared to such a feast.

2. Show you, what those things are, that this marriage feast doth consist of, which are said to be all ready; or, what that denotes.

3. Show you, the nature of those things, of which this feast doth consist.

4. Show, what is meant by coming, and what is required of them that come.

5. Show you, who they are, that may be said to come, and eat of this feast.

1. The blessings of the gospel, or of union with Christ, may be compared to a great feast, a marriage feast.

The soul's marriage with Christ the noblest and most glorious design that ever was.

I. From the glorious design or end of it. A feast, a noble marriage feast is prepared upon a high design, even the marriage of the king's son: therefore the provision of such a feast, such a banquet, is prepared upon a high and great design.

Consider, was there ever a higher, a more glorious design than this! What, the marriage of the Son of God to poor sinners! No dinner, or supper can be provided on any occasion, equal to this. Every king and nobleman, prepares a marriage feast for his son, according to his greatness and high grandeur, and the magnificence of his son. Now, brethren, God is no petty prince, but the great King of heaven and earth, to whom all earthly kings owe subjection, and homage. Sirs! All the mighty and chief monarchs of this world, are but subjects of this King; and his Son is heir of all things, as well as "He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," Heb. i. 3; and all things are given into his hand. Therefore, in respect of the design of this supper, it may be compared to a marriage feast, yea, and the noblest and most glorious that ever was, viz.,

To join heaven and earth together, the great Creator, and the undone sinner; or, to bring mankind into a lasting union, and near relation unto God.

This marriage feast denotes the highest act of grace, and rich bounty in God, that ever was shown.

The Father heartily consents to this marriage.

II. A feast, such a marriage feast, where multitudes of poor subjects, or rather traitors and rebels are invited, denotes the highest bounty, generosity, mercy, and goodness, that a king can show, as to offer to marry his own Son, to such a person so unworthy of such favour and honour.

So, my brethren, this marriage of Christ the Son of God to sinners holds forth infinite grace, mercy, and rich bounty, even to the admiration of men and angels. What king did ever offer to marry his own son, to an enemy, to a cursed rebel and traitor, that had conspired to dethrone him?

III. A king that makes a marriage feast for his own son, thereby clearly shows, his hearty consent, it being made at his own charge. So God the Father shows his hearty consent and approbation, as to his Son's espousing and marrying of sinners, since he (as you have heard) doth not only provide all things for this feast, at his own charge, but also sends his servants to invite the guests. The love of the Son doth not exceed the love of the Father.

Choice bread and wine at this feast.

IV. A princely marriage feast consisteth not only of all choice meats, or rich dainties to be eat, but also of the choicest wines to be drunk. We read that at the marriage feast in Cana in Galilee, they had wine, though the best was reserved unto the last. So, brethren, at this spiritual banquet God hath provided in the gospel, at the marriage of his Son, are all things that are desirable to eat, and that too in a plentiful manner; "There is bread enough, and to spare, in my Father's house," Luke xv. 17. But much more for the marriage day, and also the finest and best he hath. Jesus Christ, under the name of wisdom, saith, "Eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled," Prov. ix. 5. Alas, sirs, you that are unbelievers, never eat of such bread, nor drank of such wine in all your lives; "Why do you labour for that which is not bread," Isa. lv. 2. That which cannot feed and satisfy your soul. Here is bread indeed, meat indeed, drink indeed; all sorts of meat, such that suits with all ranks, degrees, ages, and appetites of men; as babes, young men, and fathers; "If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink," John vii. 37, Cant. i. 2.

V. At the marriage of an earthly prince, there is no want of any thing that can be desired, to feed, to delight, and to satisfy all that come. So in this marriage supper, there is no want of any thing that the soul needs: all things are here ready, the best of the whole kingdom may be expected to be had at the marriage feast of the king's son. So, here is the best of heaven, even all the choicest rarities and dainties, which are no where else to be had. A table is here richly spread, to the astonishment of the holy angels. Take a short view of those rarities on which you are to feed.

1. Here we feed by faith on the mystery of God's amazing wisdom; his wisdom in a mystery, that was hid from ages and generations: "That hidden wisdom that God ordained before the world, unto our glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew," I Cor. ii. 7, 8. In another place it is called, "The knowledge of Christ in a mystery; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs of the same body, and partakers of his promise, in Christ by the gospel," Eph. iii. 4.

This is a choice dish, here we feed on that infinite wisdom of God, in the contrivance of the way of our salvation by Jesus Christ, and of our redemption through his blood.

Here we see how God hath defeated the devil in his bellish contrivances, in his overthrowing and ruining mankind. And how God hath not only displayed in our redemption, the attribute of his wisdom, but also the glory of all his other blessed attributes, and caused them to meet together in sweet harmony.

2. Here we also feed on the sweet dish of God's eternal council, purpose, and decree, before the world began. His cabinet councils, (if I may so say, with reverence) are here opened at this marriage feast, before our eyes; "Which from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ," Eph. iii. 9, 10. In which are so great and sublime rarities, that the principalities and powers in heavenly places, greatly desire to feed with you herein, as they are made known by the church, even the manifold wisdom of God. Though they are not concerned in marrying of Jesus Christ, (he not taking hold of the nature of angels) yet they are greatly affected with the secret wisdom and counsel of God, as it is here revealed.

3. Here also poor sinners by faith, may feed on the infinite love of God the Father, and on the love of Jesus Christ, which passeth knowledge.

4. Moreover, here they may feed on the Antitype of all those Jewish feasts, and legal

sacrifices, which were under the law. They had many feasts which were types of this marriage feast; they had the shell, but we have the kernel; they the shadow, we the substance.

5. Here sinners may feed on the true manna that came down from heaven, which far exceeds that which the fathers eat of in the wilderness, and are dead, "but he that eats of this manna, shall live for ever." Here also at this marriage supper you may drink of the antitypical water that came out of the rock, which is of admirable virtue, and sweet to the taste.

6. Here sinners may feed on those precious dainties, which kings and good men of old longed for, but it was denied them in that manner as we in gospel-days have it. They saw Christ's day but darkly. They beheld this marriage supper afar off, as it is solemnized in these days, it prophesied as a thing to come, "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make a feast," &c., Isa. xxv. 6.

Kings and righteous men desired to see this marriage feast.

7. The King hath now, as it were opened his princely closet of his choicest rarities, and brings forth all his delicate sweet-meats, and bids us eat. Jesus Christ takes now his spouse into his banqueting-house; "This is the day of the gladness of his heart." Here we sit with the King, and behold him in his arms, whilst we are ravished with his love.

The King's closet opened.

8. Here we feed on the blessings of union and communion, with the Father, and the Son, and have the fellowship of the Spirit, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Union and communion tasted of at this marriage feast. Wine of consolation at this supper.

9. Here we drink of the wine of consolation, which those who taste of, soon forget their sorrows. Here we eat the bread of reconciliation, and drink the wine of free justification, and adoption. Here we fed on the sweet-meat of pardon of sin, all past, present, and to come; and on peace of conscience, which is a continual feast.

10. Here sinners may taste of those heavenly dainties, which the glorified saints partake of in abundance, in the celestial paradise; though our vessels can take in but a little of it, though their's are enlarged, yet believers here, partake of the same joys, the same in quality, though not as to degree, or quantity. This, my brethren, is that "Feast of fat things, a feast of wine upon the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined," Isa. xxv. 6.

The saints' joys are of the same quality as those in heaven.

This feast, saith our late Annotator, is made up with the most exquisite delicate provisions, which are manifestly meant of the ordinances, graces, and comforts, given by the Lord to his saints.

Mr. Poole.

11. As this marriage feast consists of the choicest rarities, and varieties of heaven, so it is also all free. It is free to sinners, free to the receivers, but costly to the Provider and Founder of it. It cost the Father dear, and the Son dear; but all that are bid and invited, are not to pay one farthing for any thing. Sometimes people that come to a feast, are sumptuously entertained, but yet may not know what bill may be brought them; but when the master of the feast says, "Gentlemen, you are all heartily welcome, but here is not a farthing to pay." This makes them cheerful. Even so it is here, God bids all that come to this feast, Welcome; but it is all of his own free grace; "Wine and milk without money," &c., Isa. lv. 1, 2. A poor sinner may say with Peter and John, "Silver and gold have I none." Yet he may come to this wedding, and eat freely. Oh! what a dishonour indeed would it be to a king, that bids you to the marriage feast of his Son, should any of you bring something of your own, and set it upon his table, in the midst of his dainties! How would he frown upon you, should you do this, and say, Who brought this hither? Am I not able to entertain you with my own, but you must bring your paltry stuff? Let those who are tainted with the errors of Arminianism, or Baxterianism, think of this, who strive to mix the King's wine with their muddy water, or mix their polluted works with God's free grace. How doth he loathe their notions of free will, and their own righteousness! Do they think to be the more welcome at this wedding, because, forsooth they would, through the pride of their base hearts, help God, and bear some part of the charge of this feast? As if the Almighty Jehovah, was not rich or able enough, to do all Himself alone! Oh! how fain would sorry man have somewhat to boast of, and glory in, of their own, and God not have the whole honour of our salvation?

VI. A wedding dinner of a prince is prepared in the king's own house, in his palace; so this feast is prepared and made in God's holy mountain, in his church; "Sion is God's habitation," it is the King's palace, "In Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Sion," Psal. lxxvi. 2. "This is my dwelling-place for ever, here will I dwell," Psal. cxxxii. 11. Thither, sinners, you must go, thither you

This marriage feast is made in Sion.

are invited, if you would eat of this supper; "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people, a feast of fat things," Isa. xxv. 6.

The church, beloved, is Christ's banqueting house, or his house of wine; "He hath made us sit down together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." Do you, sinners, think to feed with the saints, and eat of this supper, whilst you remain without? This marriage is not kept abroad in the market-place, in the open air of this world. You must not expect any choice entertainment by the king, if you come not to court. True, some that come to the door only, may, perhaps have a small morsel from the king's table; so some sinners that never come up to God's terms to espouse Christ, have the ministry of the word; they may taste of that, though they feed not freely on it, nor of Christ in it. I do not say, none can feed on this feast, but such that are of this, or that particular church; but, however, they must be members of the mystical church, of the universal church. But they that are convinced, it is their indispensable duty, to join with the visible church, and have an opportunity so to do, it may be feared, if they sin against conscience, whether they shall ever taste of the King's supper.

All are not called or bid to this feast.

VII. A marriage feast is prepared for such that are invited; and a king is at liberty to bid or invite whom he pleaseth; all is at his own sovereign pleasure. Is he bound to bid all that dwell in his dominions? No, surely, if any of you make a marriage feast for son or daughter, you are at liberty to invite whom you will; nor can any justly censure you, because you do not invite all that dwell in your parish. So it is here, in this respect, no man treats himself, invites himself, but it is God's prerogative to bid whomsoever he pleaseth, though many that are invited, do not, will not come; yet none can come but such that are called by the Gospel. True, "many are called, but few are chosen." But God doth not call all nations, all the world have not the gospel preached to them; no, many dark regions of the earth never heard the joyful sound. Though we hear it in England, few ever heard it in India; the antichristian world, the

Many nations are ignorant of this supper, and not called to it.

Mahometan world, and the Pagan world have it not, and, is God therefore unjust? God forbid. Is he deprived of that liberty of his own will, which, in such a case, none can deny unto man? May not God act from his own sovereignty, and do what he pleaseth? "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Matt. xx. 15. And, though God is pleased to afford the gospel to England, yet all in this nation are not invited, no, not all of this city, of this and that town, or parish, nor all of this or that family. See what God says, "I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and bring you to Sion," Jer. iii. 14. He called and invited Abraham of old, but left the rest of his kindred and father's house in gross idolatry. Was he unjust, to choose the nation of the Jews, and leave all the Gentile nations in blindness? Oh, that these things were well considered! Brethren, God might have refused to send his Son to espouse one of Adam's race; he might justly have suffered all to perish in their sins. "I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," Rom. ix. 15.

Great joy at this marriage feast.

VIII. A marriage feast denotes a time of joy and mirth. If music and merriment be ever lawful to be used, it is at a wedding.

So this marriage feast doth hold forth a time of greatest joy to sinners. Should a prince court a poor virgin, and set the marriage day, and invite her to court, to be taken into his embraces, would not this fill her full of joy? So nothing can more cheer and rejoice the hearts of lost sinners, than the news that Jesus Christ is fallen in love with them, and has appointed the marriage day, and has also provided a marriage feast, and invited them to come and accept of his love, and most gracious purpose to espouse them unto himself; "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feasts, thou, and thy sons and thy daughters," &c., Dent. xvi. 14. What was the feast of the tabernacle a type of, but this marriage feast? It is said, when Philip came down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them, and they believed, "there was great joy in that city," Acts viii. 8, and great cause for it! What, be espoused to Christ! Be freely justified by God's grace! Have all their sins pardoned, and not see cause of joy, and of singing God's praises!

The waiters at this feast, who.

IX. At a marriage feast of a prince, there are waiters who are persons of honour, called, maids of honour. So here wisdom "has killed her beasts, mingled her wine, and sent forth her maidens," Prov. ix. 2, 3; which are the ministers of the gospel, who are waiters, or such that attend at this marriage feast, "Who are to give to every one his portion of meat in due season," Luke xii. 42. The queen of Sheba was wonderfully taken with the sitting and attendance of Solomon's servants; noble persons, especially kings, have noble attendance. Solomon was a

type of Christ, and the order of his house, and attendance of his servants amazed the queen of Sheba. But besides the ministers of the gospel, the holy angels attend on the bride and bridegroom. "They administer unto them that are heirs of eternal salvation," Heb. i. 14. This shows the great honour Christ doth vouchsafe unto his Saints. What are the ministers of Christ on earth, to those blessed angels of heaven, who he commands to wait upon, and minister to his people here.

X. Sometimes, perhaps, at a marriage feast, all that are invited, will not come, and, for their neglect, others are sent to, who were not at first invited.

So it is here, the Jews were first invited to this marriage supper, but they refused to come; and we poor Gentiles were then sent to, and are graciously invited; we, who lay in the highways, and under hedges, that we may partake of their leavings, and sup with Christ.

APPLICATION.

I. I infer, That God is exceeding good and gracious to sinners, it is beyond all the conceptions of our hearts, and expressions of our lips. Let all in heaven and earth stand and wonder that such a banquet should be prepared, and such invitations vouchsafed, to vile and ungodly ones.

EXHORTATION.

2. O bless God for this supper, and for such large provision prepared! What encouragement is here for all to come! Here is enough, "Come who will." But to proceed,

I shall show you what a feast is. This is my next great work. It is a great feast.

1. Brethren, this is a great and large feast; here is provision for multitudes, the quantity is great, consisting of many costly dishes; here is all; "Who can understand the loving-kindness of the Lord?" "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? who can number the clouds in wisdom?" Job xxxviii. 22, 37, stand and wonder!

2. It is a costly banquet; the life of the bridegroom went to purchase the food and provision of this feast; sirs, gold and silver cannot purchase the least morsel of this banquet, it may be said of it, as Job speaks of wisdom, "It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof; it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire; the gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold," Job xxviii. 15—17. It is a costly feast.

3. It is a noble feast, a most honourable banquet, a most magnificent stately supper, on the marriage of the mighty King, the royal heir of both worlds, here earth is married to the noble line and offspring of heaven, it is therefore a most glorious feast, the design of it is a most glorious design, (as you have heard) proceeding from a most glorious cause, and is attended with the like glorious effects. It is a noble, a glorious, and magnificent feast.

4. It is an heavenly feast, the food of which it consisteth is heavenly; the bread eaten here came from heaven, the subject it feeds is heavenly, viz., the soul of man; and the nourishment such receive that feed upon it, is heavenly nourishment; the company that here sit and eat together, are all heavenly, being born from above; the music that is at this banquet, is heavenly music, heavenly songs, sung with heavenly and gracious hearts. It is an heavenly feast.

5. It is a love feast, or a feast made wholly up of love, eternal love was the spring of it; the rise and cause of it was love, the design and purport of it is, to manifest love, infinite love, sweet and eternal love, soul-enriching, soul-delighting, soul satisfying, and soul exalting love; here the rich feed the poor, the rich Creator feeds the poor lost, undone creature; the rich Saviour feeds the miserable, and wretched sinner. It is a love feast.

6. It is a mysterious feast; such a feast as to what is meant, and held forth by it, very few understand; for all that come to eat and feed at other marriage feasts, do not marry the bridegroom, nor doth eating of those dainties produce such an effect as union in bonds of nearest affinity, with the lord and master of the feast, but all that come to this marriage feast, and eat of this food, are thereby united, or espoused to Jesus Christ; for what is it to eat of this provision, but to believe, or receive Jesus Christ by faith? by which means, through the Spirit, they all are immediately espoused to the Lord Jesus. It is a mysterious feast.

7. It is a wonderful, a full, an incomparable feast: Solomon's provision for his table, was nothing unto this; no feast that ever was made by any king, was any thing to this; yet Solomon's provision for one day amounted to a large bill, viz., "Thirty measures of fine flower, and threescore measures of It is an incomparable feast for richness, &c.

meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, besides harts, and roe-bucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl," 1 Kings iv. 22, 23. But alas! the supper of this King, i. e., the great God, is far richer, and more abundant store, more in quantity, and richer far in quality: the lamb that is ready slain, and prepared to be eaten at this feast, is more in worth and value, than ten thousand feasts, and every thing that can be contained in them, that ever was, or can be made by mortals; nay, worth more than ten thousand worlds: the water that is here drank at this wedding, one drop of it is better than ten thousand tuns of the rarest wine than ever was provided at any other feasts: it is the water of life, all such that drink of it shall never die. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him as a well of water, springing up into eternal life," John iv. 14.

The bread at this feast came down from heaven; "the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world," John vi. 33. Bread of life, spiritual bread, heavenly bread, or true bread from heaven, "He that eateth thereof shall never hunger," John vi. 35.

At this feast we eat of the hidden manna of election, and of the sweet-meats of spiritual knowledge, and divine and saving illuminations, and feed on the marrow of justification, and pardon of sin, and on the honey-comb of free grace, and drink of those consolations that are in Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit, and bowels of mercy, on the comforts of love, on the choice rarity of a lively hope, and taste of the oil of joy, peace of conscience, and the fat of ordinances, and the sweetness of the promises, and blessings of the word, that is sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb; better than gold, yea than much fine gold. Here we are stayed with flagons, and comforted with apples, being sick of love.

Here we eat of the rarities of the covenant of grace, and are delighted with the effects and fruits of saving faith, and may taste of the blessings of assurance.

Now put all these together, and then say, this is a marriage feast indeed; Oh, who would not come unto it, that are invited! Oh know ye poor sinners (that hear me this day) you are some of them, you are again bid to this marriage; what are your resolutions? Will you come? Do you think these things are but stories? or are you persuaded of the truth and reality of them? How then can you refuse to embrace Jesus Christ.

CONSOLATION.

Oh! and what is the happiness of all those that are come and do partake of this supper! Let such be thankful, and live answerable to such privileges. But no more at this time.

SERMON XI.

Come, for all things are now ready.—Matt. xxii. 4. Luke xiv. 17.

THE last day I closed with the second general head.

I have shewed, what a kind of feast this marriage feast is, I shall proceed to the next thing.

Thirdly, I shall shew you, what is meant by all things being now ready. And,

1. What these words do imply, "all things are now ready."
2. Shew you, what these things are, that are now ready.

What is meant by all things being ready. I. These words, now ready, do imply, that the sinner that is invited, is not to bring anything with him to this wedding, to entertain himself; no morsel of his own, nothing is required of him, unless it be an hungry stomach, or a thirsty soul; "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink," John vii. 36, 37.

Object. Some perhaps may say, is he not to bring a wedding garment with him?

Ans. No person will be entertained without a wedding garment; but that is not of the sinner's own providing, nor can he prepare it, he hath nothing to make it of; the wedding garment is a very rich robe, (as you will hear hereafter) but all a man's own righteousness is not worth one farthing in God's account, being compared to filthy rags: the wedding garment is, my brethren, given to those that come and eat of this marriage supper; and it is among those things that are ready, and it is one of the first things that the sinner that comes ought to look after, and if he hath it not, there will be no room for him at this wedding.

II. These words, all things are now ready, do imply, that all the provision of this marriage feast, is of God's providing; and that all is of his own free grace, through Jesus Christ; all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, etc. "By grace ye are saved." 2 Cor. v. 18. Eph. ii. 8.

III. These words do imply, that all things that concern our salvation and justification, are all ready purchased, provided, and prepared for us: the Lamb of God is not now to be slain, but he is already slain; satisfaction is not to be made to God's justice by anything Jesus Christ is to do in, or for the sinner that is invited; no, but justice is already satisfied, and sin is expiated already by Jesus Christ. Heb. ix. 26, 28, cap. 10, 10.

A robe of righteousness is not to be prepared, or wrought by the Spirit of God, (much less not by the sinner himself) but that this robe of righteousness is by Jesus Christ wrought out for us, by his active and passive obedience, and it is ready to be put upon every sinner that comes to this wedding.

If brethren, [faith] was this wedding garment, either as a sacred habit or grace of the Spirit in the soul, or as the act of the soul, then it could not be said, that all things are now ready; because the words denote, that all the provision is made for us, without us, not within us; that righteousness by which sinners are justified at God's bar, is not a righteousness wrought in them, but without them, in the person of Christ, and it is put upon all that do believe in Christ, whose obedience is the meritorious, and the material cause of our justification, he has done all, in respect of our justification, the robe is made, although the Holy Spirit has not done all his work as to the application of Christ's righteousness, blood, and merits, to poor sinners, yet the Holy Spirit is ready to enlighten, to quicken, to regenerate.

IV. These words, now ready, may respect the clearness and fullness of the gospel provision, and revelation of it above the law, "The law made nothing perfect," Heb. vii. 19, but the gospel doth: now we need no higher, no other, or clearer revelation or discovery of God, Christ, and salvation. The law shadowed forth (in its types and ceremonies) the gospel, but all things then were not fully ready, to be presented to our open view, as in the gospel they are.

V. Now ready, may denote, they were not so ready until now; and they are so ready now, that God seems to wait for his guests; and Christ hath now no more to do, but to receive and embrace, and bid all welcome, that come to this marriage; and they therefore carry a sharp reproof to all that make not haste to come to this wedding: shall God's costly supper be quite ready, and Christ the Bridegroom stay for us, and we not hasten away?

Lastly, it is a strong motive to sinners to come away, it is supper-time, and all things are quite ready, Luke xiv. 17.

Secondly, I shall show you, (how) what those things are which are now ready.

1. Here is the mighty God, who was greatly offended, and full of wrath, ready pacified and reconciled in Christ, to all that come to this wedding; "Fury is not in me:" fury was in him, but in Christ it is put away; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son," &c., Matt. iii. 17, Rom. v. 10.

God is ready
pacified and
reconciled in
Christ.

The reconciling sacrifice is offered, that atoned for our offences, yet none but they that believe receive the atonement.

The price is paid, but the captive may not presently be discharged, his fetters may not be knocked off, Christ's blood may not yet be applied, but it shall be to all them for whom he died.

2. The blessed God and Father is ready to receive all that come to this marriage supper; he stands ready with his arms spread open to embrace them, and bid them welcome, let them be never such sinners, profuse prodigals, that have wasted all their substance on harlots; Sirs, were not sinners besides themselves, sure they would haste away to this supper, or arise and go with the prodigal to their Father; it is said, "And when he came to himself he said, how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger: I will arise and go to my father," Luke xv. 17. Well, and will his father receive him, shall he be entertained that hath thus sinned, thus offended? Yea, his father no sooner saw him, though he was "afar off," but he had compassion, and ran to meet him.

God the Father
is ready
to receive
sinners.

By the Father of this prodigal, the great God is meant, and by the prodigal an ungodly sinner, one that has been most profane, and abominably wicked. God doth not stand ready only to receive a returning sinner, until he come home, but

See the para-
ble of the

prodigal opened. he runs to meet him; indeed, he knows that there are such obstructions, or obstacles in the way, that they cannot come to Jesus Christ, unless he draws them, unless he helps them, or brings them, by the power and influences of his Spirit. But, O see how ready God is to embrace returning sinners! The father "fell on the neck of his prodigal son, and kissed him," Luke xv. 20. Though your sins be as red as scarlet, as red as crimson; though you have done as many evil things as you could, yet if you come to Christ, the Father stands ready to bid you welcome, Jer. iii. 5.

Jesus Christ stands ready to receive all that come to the marriage. 3. Jesus Christ is also ready to espouse all poor sinners that come to him, or that come to this marriage supper: he stands waiting, looking out, (as it were) to see who comes unto him, that he may manifest himself, in all his perfections, and personal excellencies, to them, in the ministration of the gospel; saying unto them, "Behold me, behold me; look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Isa. lxx. 1, Isa. xlv. 22.

Jesus Christ stands ready waiting, having all his glorious wedding robes on, being every way decked as a bridegroom for the bride; and says, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. They, and they only that believe in Christ, that come to Christ, do enter into rest. Christ is the only rest for the soul; there is rest from the labour and sore bondage of the law; in him is rest, also, from the guilt of sin, and from the fear of wrath, and divine vengeance, the punishment of sin; and Jesus Christ is ready to give this rest to all that believe in him, or that come to this wedding supper; "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and he that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37.

The wedding garment is ready. 4. And, as I have hinted, here is also a wedding garment ready, it is wrought by Jesus Christ, he made it; it is not to be made or spun out of our bowels; the sinner hath no stuff, no materials to make this garment of; it is, brethren, a robe that is compared to cloth of gold, "Upon the right hand did stand the queen, in gold of Ophir," Psal. xlv. 9; it is made of the choicest gold; it is said, "her clothing is wrought gold;" this is not that glory that is within her, but it is a robe put upon her. True, "The king's daughter is all glorious within," ver. 13. This, no doubt, refers to the graces of the

Spirit, and to her inward holiness, or the righteousness of sanctification that is within, or inherent; but her clothing, that is prepared for her without, and put upon her, is wrought gold: the matter of this garment (saith a divine) was prepared by the Father, the first Person of the Trinity: the Son he wrought it, he made the garment, by his perfect obedience to the law of God, and suffering the penalty thereof in our room; and the Holy Ghost puts it upon the soul, he applies Christ's merits; he unites us to Christ, and works faith in us, and so puts this glorious robe on our souls.

But, pray brethren, see, I beseech you, to take care rightly to distinguish between the garment of justification, and that of sanctification; many confound these two together, and strive to mix our inherent righteousness in our justification, with the righteousness of Christ: this was that error that Mr. Baxter led the people into (though I hope he was a good man, God might open his eyes before he died.) It is, sirs, a dangerous thing to adhere to such a notion; this is to make our justification to be partly by works, and partly by grace. I tell you once again, all works of righteousness, either done by us, or wrought in us, are utterly excluded in our free justification. O! how do I long to see you all well established in this great fundamental truth of the gospel! "If it be by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work," Rom. xi. 6. Our justification in the sight of God, is as much of free-grace, as is our election and effectual calling. "He that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5. In the Lord, shall one say, have I righteousness and strength, not in ourselves, but in the Lord; "Who of God is made into us, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. This is the wedding garment that is ready. Do not think you must bring this robe along with you, that come to this marriage supper: no, no, all our righteousness is but as dung, compared to this righteousness: "He made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21.

A physician to heal sinners. VI. Here is Christ as a skilful and able Physician, ready to heal all your wounds, and sickness of your souls; he that is our Bridegroom to espouse us, is our Physician (I told you) to heal us. Sirs, you must not think to get rid of your sins, or cured of your sores, before you come to Christ; you must come to

him as sinners; "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," Matt. ix. 12. Nothing can heal our wounds, but the blood of our Physician, applied by faith to our souls.

Sinners when they first come to Christ, are wounded in every part and faculty of their souls; "From the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet, there is nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores," Isa. i. 6. But he stands ready to heal all that come to this marriage feast.

1. He heals the plague of a hard heart; he breaks this, and none but he can break the heart of stone, and take it away; "I will take the stone out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh."

What diseases Christ cures.

2. He it is that heads our stubborn and obstinate wills; "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life," John v. 40. It is Christ that bows and subjects the rebellious will; "My people shall be willing in the day of my power," Psal. cx. 3.

3. He cures us of that great blindness of our understanding; it is he that hath the eyesalve, to open their eyes that were born blind, and none but he; "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see," Rev. iii. 18. He is appointed of God to open blind eyes; all men are born blind, spiritually blind, and no man can see till Christ opens their eyes.

4. It is he that must cure the soul of that tympany of pride: man naturally is conceited, and very proud and rich in his own fancy; but Jesus Christ shows him his poverty and wretchedness, and brings him to his feet, even to clothe himself.

5. Christ cures our souls of that carnality that is in our affections; mankind naturally have their hearts set upon earthly things and objects.

6. Here is a fountain ready to wash the poor polluted sinner from all its filthiness: you must not think you are to wash yourselves from your pollution, and then come to Christ, then come to this marriage supper, then espouse Christ; as if you thought he would not accept you, receive you, espouse you, in your blood and filth. O take heed, for the Lord's sake, of this. You are not first washed, and then believe, then come to Christ, or espouse him: pray see what he says by the prophet Ezekiel, "And when I passed by, and saw thee polluted in thy own blood, I said to thee, live. Yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness," Ezek. xvi. 6, 8. That is, I cast upon thee my robe of righteousness; "Yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." Christ first saw us polluted in our blood, and died for us. Again he looked upon us, to call us to this marriage feast; this was also the time of his love, when we lay in our sins, and were originally and actually defiled and polluted, and when we were in this condition, he swore to us, and entered into a conjugal covenant with us, or was pleased them to espouse us, and make us his own; and now see what follows, "then I washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with fresh oil," Ezek. xvi. 9. This refers to the sanctifying virtue of the Holy Spirit; the sinner is not to wash himself first, and then come to Christ; but come Christ that he may be washed. Sanctification doth not precede our union with Christ, but follows, (it is an effect thereof) at least in order of nature, though not in order of time.

A fountain ready to wash in.

VII. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the blessed Trinity, is ready to discharge his office, to all sinners, who are made willing to come to this marriage, or are chosen ones. His work is to quicken, or to infuse a vital principle into the soul; no sinner can come until this is done, where there is no life, there can be no motion.

The Holy Ghost is ready to quicken dead sinners, &c.

The work of the Spirit is, to enlighten, to renew, or regenerate the soul; and all this the Holy Spirit is ready to do, for all those that God hath chosen and called to this wedding.

VIII. Free grace in God, is ready to adopt all for sons and daughters who come; "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father," Gal. iv. 6. This ariseth from the favour of God; "to as many as received him, to them gave he power (or privileges) to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe on his name," John i. 12. Such are no more servants, but sons.

Adoption is ready to be conferred on all that come to Christ.

IX. Here is a Lamb ready slain, and prepared, as choice food for the soul to feed upon, with bread and water of life, and all other spiritual varietics, suitable for such a marriage supper.

Bread and water of life is ready.

Spiritual
music is
ready.

X. Here is the great master of spiritual music ready, to rejoice and cheer all the guests that come to this wedding.

The Holy Ghost fills the heart with grace and peace, peace with God, and peace of conscience, and joy in believing; "and they began to be merry: now the elder son was in the field, and as he came, and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing." Luke xv. 24, 25.

Ornaments
of grace
ready.

XI. Here is an ornament of grace ready, like a crown unto thy head, and chains beyond gold, to put "about thy neck," Prov. i. 9; and a ring ready to put upon thy finger, with this motto, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Every soul that espouseth Jesus Christ, is very richly adorned in the inward man, with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Pardon of
sin is ready.

XII. Here is pardon ready, under the broad seal of heaven. Pardon! perhaps some may say, how large and extensive is it? Is it a pardon of all my sins, that ever I have committed against God? and not only a pardon of all past, but is it of all to come also?

I answer, It is a pardon of all sins past, present, and to come, as to that vindictive wrath that is due to them; although perhaps the soul may not see it quickly, or have the feeling comfort of it in his own conscience. Nay, God may, for present and future sins, be displeased and offended, and as a tender Father may correct the child he loves, yet he

Psal lxxxix.
31, 35.

will not disown, nor turn his child out of his house, nor remove his loving-kindness from it. I mean, there cannot be a breach made on our justification, God's covenant of peace he will not break, union with Christ cannot be lost. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. If all sins present and to come, of believers, as to vindictive wrath, were not forgiven, then there might be condemnation due to them that are in Christ Jesus; for that sin that is not forgiven; as touching that just wrath and divine vengeance that is the demerit of it, binds the soul under eternal condemnation, but such "That believe in Christ, shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death to life," John v. 24. That is, they are passed out of a state of spiritual death and condemnation, and are always in a state of eternal life, and shall at last pass into it actually. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," Heb. x. 14.

Strong consolation
ready in Christ.

XIII. Here is a cup of strong consolation ready, enough to ravish the souls of all that espouse the Son of God, or rather that are espoused by him; God having passed both his word and oath to confirm his covenant, even salvation to all his seed; "Wherein, God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us," Heb. vi. 17, 18.

This is enough to cheer our drooping spirits to the full, and to vanquish all doubts and fears for ever. God can as soon lie, or be guilty of perjury, (which is the highest blasphemy to say) as that one believer shall eternally be lost, or perish for ever. Sure such who refuse to come to Christ, esteem the consolations of God to be but small, and the reason of it is, because the consolations and comforts of this world, are great with them, they value earth above heaven, and the pleasures of sin more than joy in the Holy Ghost.

Christ's ministers
ready to watch
over the
saints.

XIV. Here are the servants of Christ ready. I mean, his ministers, to give them that come the right-hand of fellowship, and to break the bread of life unto them; yea, "To give every one his portion of meat in due season." They will withhold nothing from them, that their Great Master hath appointed for them; "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house," Acts xx. 20. Again he saith, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you, all the counsel of God," ver. 27. Ministers are ready to watch for their souls.

Angels ready
to guard and
defend the
saints.

XV. Nay, my brethren, here are the angels of God ready also, to conduct them, to guard them, to defend them, and to minister to all that shall be, or are heirs of eternal life. "They are, saith Reverend Bifield, appointed as special attendants about Christ, as the Messiah; and they serve also as ministering spirits, to keep and attend upon the elect; in life they defend and keep them, as a strong guard about them, and plague their enemies, Heb. i. 14. And in death, they are about them, and carry their souls to heaven, as they did the soul of Lazarus. Psal. xci. 3, 4." The Bridegroom doth readily vouchsafe his own guard, his own retinue, his glorious courtiers, to be a guard and retinue to his bride, and to every soul he doth espouse.

XVI. Here are ordinances also ready, i. e., holy baptism ready, that so you may have communion with the Lord Jesus, (in a lively symbol) of his death, burial, and resurrection which you ought to receive, as a pledge of the remission of all your sins, and to show, that all your iniquities are washed away in his blood, and buried in his grave; and hereby also you come to be let into his church, and in a regular way admitted to his holy table. "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls," Acts ii. 41. Baptism is ready always to him that comes to Christ, that believes in Christ, and it is a great sin then, for such to neglect it; "And now arise, why tarriest thou? and be baptized," said Ananias to Paul, Acts ix. 17.

Ordinances
are ready,

XVII. Here is also imposition of hands ready, that so you may receive a further measure of the promised Spirit, which is made to all them that love Christ, and keep his commandments, to the end you may be confirmed and established in the truth, and receive the earnest of the Spirit, and the seal and comforts thereof, to your own souls.

Eph. i. 13,
14. Chap. iv.
30.

XVIII. Here is a place ready for you that come to the house of God; I say, a place in the church is ready for you; holy David greatly valued this privilege, it is that one thing which he desired; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life," Psal. xxvii. 4.

A place in
the church
is ready.

Certainly this is a glorious privilege, is it not esteemed a high honour to dwell always in the king's palace, in his courts, nay, to dwell with the king in his own house; and dwelling-place? "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north is the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces for a refuge," Psal. xlviii. 2, 3. Again saith the Psalmist, "The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation; this is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it," Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. Again he saith, "blessed are they that dwell in thy house," none have any right to dwell in the gospel church, but believers only, none but the true spiritual seed of Abraham. The bond-woman, and her seed, i. e., the fleshly seed, (as such) are cast out in this, there is a difference between the legal, and the gospel church; "cast out the bond-woman and her son," Gal. iv. 30.

XIX. There are mansions in heaven also ready for your souls, when you die, every one that comes to this wedding, ought to be told of this, Christ hath prepared, and made ready dwelling places for them above; "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you," John xiv. 2. The poorest saint here, that lives in the meanest cottage on earth, hath a glorious house prepared for him in heaven; "for we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. v. 1.

A place in
heaven is
ready.

XX. There is a glorious kingdom ready, every believer is born an heir to a kingdom, and when they come to age, they shall possess it: the poorest saint is an heir of a kingdom; "hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him," Jam. ii. 5. Oh! how rich is Christ, the Bridegroom of our souls! he hath a kingdom to give, or to bestow upon all he espouseth, a rich kingdom, an immovable kingdom, yea, an eternal kingdom: "Fear not, little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32.

A kingdom
is ready for
every belie-
ver.

XXI. There is not only a kingdom ready, but a throne is ready also, for every believer; all that Christ espouseth, shall sit down with him on his throne, and judge the world with him; "He that overcometh shall sit down with me in my throne, even as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21.

A glorious
throne is
ready.

XXII. And lastly, there is likewise a crown of glory ready: surely, all may see here is encouragement enough to come to this marriage supper; every believer shall have a crown of glory, far better than a crown of gold; earthly crowns are troublesome things, as I am persuaded they that wear them at this time find, by woful experience. One of the French kings found it so formerly, which made him say, as I have read, "That if a crown lay at his feet, he would not put forth his hand to lift it up to put it upon his head." But this crown will be an easy crown; no trouble, no sharp thorn will attend the crown of life: see what Paul says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me

A crown of
glory is
ready.

a crown of righteousness," 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8. Aye, perhaps you may say, a crown was laid up for Paul, that may be, but we are not Pauls, we are not such captains for Christ as he was. Well, but see further what he says, "Which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearance." Every true believer shall have a crown of glory; "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10. Earthly men strive for an earthly crown, a corruptible crown; but we, saith the apostle, for an incorruptible, 1 Cor. ix. 25.

APPLICATION.

Reproof. Is it so? Are all things now ready? Then I infer, it is an unreasonable thing for any to neglect to come to this wedding; how severely doth it reprove such who delay? Should any noble man make a great supper, and bid many, and send one servant after another, to bid those that are invited to come away, for all things are now ready, and they should defer coming to another time, would it not greatly offend him, and be horrid ingratitude, and a shameful abuse of his bounty? Pray observe what St. Luke says, "And he sent his servants at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready," Luke xiv. 17. It was just at supper-time, when every thing was ready, and set upon the table, the King sent his servants; if you come not, you cast great contempt upon the King, and slight his rich and gracious favours; nay, and so far as you can (to speak after the manner of men) disappoint him: shall he provide all these great varieties in vain? Shall the glorious Creator wait for, and look out, to see when his guests will come, and all to no purpose? "They all, with one consent, began to make excuse;" Ver. 18. Wonder, O ye heavens, at this!

EXHORTATION.

2. Be exhorted to come away; be not like these wretched creatures: will you make excuses too? Have you other business to do, and cannot come? Then will the King be wroth, and say, concerning you that hear me this day, as in the words following, "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper," Ver. 24. That is, not one of them shall have the pardon of their sins, be justified, sanctified, saved, none of them shall ever know how good Christ is, his love is, nor how good peace with God, and peace of conscience is. It is as much as if God should say, all these men shall be damned, and perish in their sins, and be undone for ever.

Sirs, mind the words as a strong motive, "Come, for all things are now ready;" can there be a more prevailing argument than this is, now ready; there is no staying one moment without the highest peril, and severe displeasure of Almighty God. What do you say? Will you deal kindly and truly with God, and with your own souls? Let me allude to, and make use of the words of Abraham's servant, who was sent to Rebecca, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milah, the wife of Nahor, to take her to be the wife of Isaac, Gen. xxiv. 15. "And now (saith he) if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me, and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right-hand or to the left," Ver. 49. O that you would say with Laban and Bethuel in the next words, viz., "The thing proceedeth from the Lord, behold Rebecca is before thee, take her, and let her become thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken," Ver. 50, 51. Will you say, we will this evening go to Jesus Christ, or accept of this most gracious invitation, and embrace the Lord Jesus. The thing is of the Lord, and we cannot longer refuse to come to this supper: O were it thus, though it were but one soul that should thus do, what cause of joy should I have, who thus have spent my time and strength amongst you, though the great profit will redound to your own immortal souls!

I may truly say, this day, life and death are set before you, though it is God that must work in you, to will and to do of his good pleasure. If you do come, if you do believe, and receive Jesus Christ, you have life; but if you do refuse him, and abide in unbelief, expect nothing but death: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16.

CAUTION.

Secondly, One word to you that are professors, and I will conclude at this time.

I. But by way of caution, you profess yourselves to be believers, such that are come to sup with Christ; but take heed lest you are deceived; you are this evening to come to eat the Lord's supper, and that you may do, and yet not partake of the provision of this mar-

riage supper; they are not all that eat of the bread and drink of the cup, in the sacrament, that feed indeed on Jesus Christ, or that have union with him; no, no, many of the visible church may perish for ever.

Therefore, see what faith you have, what love you have to Christ, and whether you are thoroughly changed, effectually renewed in heart and life.

O see what fruits of faith, and of divine union with Christ, appears in you: do not please yourselves with a name, or with an external profession of religion; you may have lamps, but no oil in your vessels, you may have the shell, but not the kernel. Many in these evil days have a form of godliness, but want the power of it; but the time draws near now, when the sinners in Sion shall be afraid: fearfulness will surprise the hypocrite.

CONSOLATION.

2. But to you that are sincere, who do believe to the saving of your souls, what comfort and consolation doth this doctrine administer to you! What though you are poor in this world, and despised of men, yet know, "You are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. You have heard what your spiritual robes are, how rich, how glorious, and how high you are advanced. You are made near to God, espoused to Christ, and born heirs to a crown of glory. Live, O live as such that are thus raised to honour; carry yourselves as Kings' children, and trample all sublunary things under your feet.

SERMON XII.

All things are ready, come to the marriage.—Matt. xxii. 4.

He sent his servants at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready.—Luke xiv. 17.

THE parts, according to Luke, are these following:—

1. Here is a mission, "He sent his servants."
2. The person commissionating, a certain man; according to Matthew, a certain King, viz., the great God.
3. The persons commissioned, his servants, viz., his ministers.
4. The commission itself, "To say to them that were bidden, come," viz., preach the gospel, and excite sinners to come to Christ, to believe in him, receive him, or eat of his dainties, or espouse Jesus Christ.
5. The time when this commission was given, viz., at supper-time.
6. The motive, "For all things are now ready." We have observed, Doct. That the blessings of the gospel, or grace, and union with Jesus Christ, contains in it all sorts of spiritual dainties; or of a sumptuous banquet ready provided, to which sinners are invited, to come and eat.

1. What this feast doth denote you have heard.
2. Why compared to a feast.
3. What King it is that made this feast.
4. What is meant by these words, "All things are now ready."
5. I shall now proceed to show you, the nature, or blessed quality, of the provision which this feast, or marriage supper doth consist of.
7. And then show what is meant by coming, and by eating.

I. As to the nature of the food, I told you it is heavenly food, it is a spiritual or heavenly feast; therefore the nature of all the provision is spiritual, it is food for the soul, not for the body; as is the nature of the soul, such is the nature of that food it liveth upon: material food cannot feed an immaterial creature, that which is earthly, is fed with earthly food, but that which is spiritual, is fed with spiritual food; therefore the food of this feast must needs be of an excellent nature, the meat came from heaven, bread from heaven, the word of God is called "the incorruptible word, that liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Pet. i. 23.

II. Transforming. This is the marvellous property or efficacy of this food, if a sinner eats it, it will beget in him a divine likeness unto God, or form Christ's image in his soul: brethren, by eating, we lost God's image; I mean, "by eating the forbidden fruit," and by eating of this food, we have God's image

Food of a soul-transforming nature.

again restored in us; by our first eating we came to have an evil nature, evil qualities infused into us, or a likeness to the devil; and by eating, i. e., in believing, the Holy Spirit, infuseth a holy nature into the soul. "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of God, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. This beholding and believing, or feeding on Jesus Christ, is all one, and the same thing, the Spirit is the only agent that doth it, he works this change, he works in the soul this faith, and in his helping a poor sinner to believe, eat, or receive Jesus Christ; holy habits of grace, and so a glorious change is wrought in the soul. "whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. Not a communication of the essence of God to us, but an infusion of divine qualities and dispositions, i. e., the true knowledge of God with righteousness and true holiness.

Food of Gods providing. III. It is food of God's own providing, and indeed the best of heaven, and it is food that can be had no where else, but at this marriage an earthly king may provide choice provision, or costly and rare dainties at the marriage of his only Son, and heir of his kingdom: but perhaps some of his nobles may provide as costly, as rare and rich dainties at their son's weddings, but so it is not here, "thou hast the words of eternal life;" John vi. 68. That is thou, and none but thee; none hath eternal life to give, grace to give, glory to give, but thee alone; "neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12.

It is wholesome food. IV. It is wholesome food; other diet, or rare dainties, may be choice, sweet to the taste, and please the pallet; but they may be hurtful to the body, and breed diseases, or forfeit the person that feeds on it; but so it is not here, it is not of a destructive nature, but contrary wise, by eating, by believing, sin dies; it tends to kill the old man, i. e., the body of sin. A wicked man may say, as those in another case, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot;" 2 King iv. 40. Sirs! there is death to every beloved lust, by believing in Christ, or feeding by faith, on him; therefore to the soul it is very wholesome food, you cannot eat too much here, no man ever believed in Jesus Christ too much, you cannot have too much faith, the more you eat and drink of this provision, the better, the more strong, healthy and hearty you will be.

V. It is physical food, as well as it is sweet to the taste, and excellent in nourishment, it will heal all your soul diseases, many are averse to take physic, they love no purging-potion, nor any other medicines whatsoever; but could they find a physician that could prescribe some delicious food to them, meat, or drink, that would cure them of all their bodily distempers whatsoever, such a physician would please them well; especially if upon trial they should experience a perfect cure thereby, O what flying would there be to such a person!

Why, if you come now to this marriage supper, and feed on these spiritual dainties, I can assure you sinners, on the word of my great Master, and by the experience of many thousands of true Christians, it will cure you of all your soul maladies, or spiritual distempers, let them be whatsoever they are, or can be.

VI. Though it be physical food, yet it is sweet and delightful meat also; "I sat down under his shadow, with delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste," Cant. ii. 3. It is sweet in the mouth, and it will not be bitter in the belly, not like John's little book; the very judgments of God, in the way of his providences, may be sweet to the souls of the godly, yet bitter to the wicked, nay unto the saints they may be bitter in some sense, yet in Christ is nothing bitter; how sweet is it to feed on his love, on his righteousness, on justification, on pardon of sin, on adoption, on communion with him? nothing is so good as God in Christ; whosoever feedeth on the creature, or on their lusts, how sweet soever they may taste in their mouth, they will be bitter at last, bitter in the belly, bitter to eternity. "Surely he shall not find quietness in his belly," Job xx. 20, no, nothing but horror, pain, and perplexity, for ever.

VII. It is not cloying, a little of some food cloy a man presently; hence, saith Solomon, "It is not good to eat too much honey," Prov. xxv. 27, he gives a reason for it, viz. "Lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it up;" too much of earthly and sensual delights are not good; they oppress the stomach, I mean the conscience, and must therefore be vomited up by repentance; but this sweet and delicate food will not turn the stomach, it is consoling, but not cloying, nor surfeiting.

VIII. It is (as one observes) undiminishable food, you may feed upon Jesus Christ day by day, and yet he is a whole Christ still, a full Christ still, this food doth not waste by

eating, it is like the "widow's barrel of meal, and cruise of oil," 1 Kings xvii. 14, it diminisheth not. Let millions come and eat plentifully, they will not leave (notwithstanding) as much in Christ as they found. The blessed God need not go and buy more provision, though never so great multitudes come to this marriage supper.

IX. It is incorruptible food, immortal food, all other food perishes in eating, and he that feedeth upon it perishes also. But as this food, this bread, never perisheth, so shall he that eats of it never perish; the meat that is eaten at this marriage feast, endureth for ever. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 27. What labour is it which our Saviour intendeth? Are we to work for life, or must we earn our bread before we eat it? No, no, all our labour cannot procure it. Hence, he adds, "which the Son of Man will give unto you;" they that followed our Lord in the days of his humiliation, eat of those loaves, which he broke unto them freely, it cost them nothing; they had all on free cost; yet in following him from place to place, they are said to labour for it, for our Saviour alludes unto that, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled," John vi. 26. Some think that the food Christ blessed and multiplied, namely, the bread of fishes, tasted more sweet, and was more delicious than any other of the same kind, perhaps it might be so, and that might make the multitudes follow him, to eat thereof, for no doubt many of them did not want bread, however they had it freely, though in following him they are said to labour for it, so, all the labour thou art to take for this incorruptible food, is to come to this wedding, or to come unto Jesus Christ, for though it perishes not, yet it is to be had "without money, and without price," Isa. lv. 1, 2.

X. It is suitable provision, agreeable, and meat for all sorts of guests, that come to this feast.

A little to open this.

(1.) Consider it suits, or is agreeable with every age of those persons which come, here is milk for babes, and "strong meat belonging unto them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern both good and evil, Heb. v. 14. Here is the "sincere milk of the word," 1 Pet. ii. 1. 2, for weak converts, that which suits and is agreeable to them, i. e., plain and easy truths for weak capacities, and also more sublime mysteries of Christ, or those deep things of God, which are proper for men of great knowledge and understanding, and of long experience to feed upon.

(2.) Here is food suitable to every state and condition, the souls of men can be in.

1. Such that are dead, here is that food that will quicken them, give life to them.

2. Such that languish, and are ready to die, here is food to revive, and increase life in them.

3. Such that are cold and lifeless, here is such food that will enliven, heat, warm, and quicken them; "thy word (saith David) hath quickened me," Psal. cxix. 50, 93, before he was dead and flat in his spirit, but by feeding, i. e., by believing, or receiving the word of God, he was quickened, it strengtheneth the weak soul.

4. Such that have dim eyes, this food will strengthen their sight, as well as open the eyes of the blind; it is like "Jonathan's honey; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple," Psal. cxix. 8, Psal. cxix. 130. So soon as you let this food go down, or let the word enter into your hearts, you will find your souls much enlightened thereby.

5. Such that are sad, and dejected in their spirits, here is food to cheer and console them.

6. Such as are consumptive, here is food that is restorative, "He restores my soul," Psal. xxiii. 3. I might enlarge, but let this suffice to open what we intend.

XI. It is suitable food, in respect it so well agrees with the souls of believers, at all times, in sickness and health, in prosperity and adversity, whilst they live, and when they die.

XII. It is soul satisfying food, go where you will else for food, it will be bread that satisfies not; "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Isa. lv. 2. All things short of Jesus Christ, the bread of life, never nourishes nor satisfies the soul, they are all vain, empty, and foolish things, there is no soul-satisfying food, but at this marriage-feast, at the great King's providing, at the marriage of the Son; his food will allay all spiritual hunger, fully satisfy all the desires, and necessities of the soul, as the prophet David found by blessed experience. "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles,"

Psal. ciii. 5. Again, he saith, speaking of the Lord; "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness," Psal. cxvii. 9. It yieldeth such satisfaction that ariseth to joy, and sweet delight; they delight themselves in fatness.

Fifthly, what is meant by coming to this marriage supper.

1st. Negatively.

What it is not to come to Christ or to the marriage.

1. Not a bare coming to hear the word of God preached; No, no, a man may come to hear sermons every day of his life, but never for all that, come to Christ.

2. Not a giving heed to what may here be preached. They may attend with some diligence to the word, yet not come to Christ, or come to this wedding-supper. "The eyes of all that were in the synagogue, it is said, were fixed upon him; they heard no doubt with great attention, but few of them believed on him.

3. It is not legal repenting, or reformation of life.

4. It is not a simple obeying of the precepts of Christ, some talk of coming to Christ by repentance, and others by obedience; they think that if they come to baptism, they come to Christ. But, alas! a man may arrive to legal repentance, and reformation of life, and be baptized, and receive the holy supper, and never come to Christ, never come to the marriage supper.

What it is to come to the marriage supper.

2ndly. And directly in the affirmative, to come to Christ, or unto this wedding, so as to answer the purport of this invitation, is to believe, or receive Jesus Christ by faith. Believing in Christ, and coming unto Christ, are convertible terms, implying one and the same thing. "I am the bread of life,

he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," John vi. 35. Here is mention made of bread, eating of it; our feeding upon him is employed and held forth by coming to him, which also he expresseth, by believing on him; all which is no more, nor less, than a true receiving him, as Mediator and the only Saviour.

Sixthly. What is meant by eating or feeding on the provision, provided at this marriage supper?

Answ. What it is to eat of the food of the wedding supper.

1. I answer, the very same thing, believing, and coming, provided it be such a coming, such a eating, as the invitation intendeth; or that answers the design of God therein; for though there is one that was said to come, who had no wedding garment; yet he did not come in a true and right manner, i. e., he did not believe, he did not eat, for thereby the wedding garment is put on; had he believed truly on Jesus Christ, he had not wanted a wedding garment.

2. Feeding or eating, is to experience the preciousness and sweetness of the Lord Jesus Christ, or to know that the Lord is good, a man that sees food set upon a table, and beholds it with his eyes, may conceive or suppose it is good and excellent food; but he doth not without tasting know how sweet and choice it is. So a man that hears the word, hears Christ preached, and the excellencies of Christ opened; may be persuaded, in some degree that there is great good in him, or that he is a precious Christ; but if he doth not receive him by a lively faith, or not savingly believe in him, he knows not by experience how good he is to the soul. Hence David cries, "O, taste! and see the Lord is good," Psal. xxxiv. 8. Labour to feed upon him, to receive him by faith, and then you will find how good he is. "If so be that you have tasted the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3.

3. To feed on this supper, is to make Christ our own, as he that feedeth upon food makes that food his own; so a believer makes the promise, and Christ in a promise, and in an ordinance, his own. This it is to eat. i. e., it is to apply Jesus Christ to our own souls.

4. It is to live wholly upon Jesus Christ, or to go out of ourselves, to him alone, fetching all we want from him, leaning upon, and trusting in his righteousness, and on the merits of his blood only, exclusively of every thing else, and inclusively, of whatsoever in a spiritual sense, we need.

5. It is to stay upon Christ; as bread is the stay and staff of man's life, and he that feeds thereon finds strength and support thereby; so Christ is the stay and staff of the soul, and to feed on this food, is to receive strength from Jesus Christ. Strength against sin, against the power and dominion thereof; and strength against Satan's temptations, and also against slavish fear, and the spirit of bondage and strength; against all reproaches, trials, and persecutions, a believer may meet with (and all discouragements) for the sake of Christ.

APPLICATION.

Reproof. This reproves, and shows the great folly of all such sinners, who refuse to come to this marriage supper. Is such the nature of this food, and wilt thou slight and contemn it, nor desire to taste it?

2. It inform us also, what the cause is, that the spiritual diseases, and soul-sicknesses of sinners remain, and they are not healed. Alas! they do not come to Jesus Christ, they do not believe in him, receive him; there is in believing a cure for every disease of the soul. Also there is no help, no cure, no healing, anywhere else, nor by any other way or thing, but by Christ alone.

3. It, moreover, discovers the cause or reason, so many of the saints and people of God are so weak, so low, and ready to faint, in their spirits; it appears evidently it is because they have no more faith in Christ, they do not with a strong faith rely upon him, or feed upon him. Can a man expect to be strong, or gather strength, that forsakes his food, that cannot, or doth not eat? The way to be strong is, to feed plentifully on wholesome food; so the way to get spiritual strength is, to feed freely upon the Lord Jesus. This is to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, or to be "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus," Eph. vi. 10, 11, i. e., to believe with a strong and fixed faith, upon that fulness that is in Christ, "Eat, O friends, drink, drink abundantly, O beloved," Cant. v. 1. O take in freely and plentifully, by faith, the merits of my blood, see how my Father in me is pacified towards you, and fully reconciled, and you in me are accepted, justified, and pardoned for ever.

4. From hence also we may see what the cause is, that some who come to hear the word, receive no spiritual and saving benefit thereby, nor know how good it is. Alas, they believe not, they do not eat the word, "Thy word was found, and I did eat it." Such only receive Christ, and receive the good that is in the word of Christ, that truly believe in him.

5. Moreover, it informs us, how exceedingly precious the Lord Jesus is unto a believer, or what he is made to be unto him, even every thing.

EXHORTATION.

Oh, believers! Be persuaded from hence, to bless God for Jesus Christ, and prize him as your all; you that have Christ, have all, you have every thing that is truly good. O how happy are all they that feed by faith on Jesus Christ! What soul-strengthening, soul-healing, soul-comfort have they!

But no more at this time.

SERMON XIII.

But they made light of it.—Matt. xxii. 5.

THEY, that is, the Jews first, it principally in the first place refers to them, and also to all who slight the Lord Jesus, or union with him, or his gracious benefits, and that glorious provision provided in the gospel. From hence let me take notice of this point of doctrine, viz.

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DOCTRINE.

That although there is so much good to be had in Jesus Christ, to whom sinners are invited, yet many of them make light of him, and all he hath to impart to them.

I. Show what it is to make light of a thing, and so what it is to make light of Jesus Christ.

II. Show you, what sinners do make light of.

III. Show you, the evil, and great danger in making light of the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Give you the reasons, or causes, why sinners do make light of Christ, or from whence it doth arise.

I. To make light of a thing or person, is to slight it, or slight the person, or not value him, accounting him not worth regard. And thus sinners make light of Christ, and of this most gracious invitation. They slight, and value not the Lord of life and glory; they value neither an interest in his person, nor the merits of his blood, but slight his love, grace, and infinite goodness; and regard not the offers he makes to them.

What it is to
make light
of Jesus
Christ.

2. To make light of a thing, or of a person, is not so much as to think seriously of it, or of him, not accounting the person worth one deliberate thought. As perhaps a virgin may be told of a very good match, or of a deserving person far exceeding her quality or merits; but she cries, pish, away with him, she will not let out one thought upon him; perhaps she hath heard something of him, that is distasteful to her. Thus many sinners make light of Jesus Christ; tell them that Christ commends his love to them, and would gladly embrace them in his arms, and espouse them; but they, in their hearts, cry away with him, I see no beauty, no loveliness in him; I cannot leave all my sweet delights and pleasures for such a choice, for such a companion. Pray, saith the poor messenger, (the minister of Christ) think seriously of this so great and glorious an offer: pish, say they, trouble not yourself with me, I will none of him: thus God spake of old, of his people Israel, "My people will have none of me;" They say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. This is to make light of this marriage-feast, or of union with the Son of God.

3. To make light of a thing, or person, is to contemn it; this is a higher degree of making light of a thing, &c. Will you accept of such an offer, of such a person? The answer is, no, I contemn the motion and person you mention, I despise him in my heart; to set light by parents with a witness, is to despise them when old or poor.

And thus do some sinners make light of Jesus Christ, or set light by him, and all the spiritual dainties prepared at this marriage supper, i. e., they contemn and despise him in their hearts; "Ye have both hated me and my Father," John xv. 24. You are so far from liking, loving, and receiving me into your bosoms, that you even abhor me and my people; "If the world hate you, you know it hated me before it hated you," John xv. 18.

4. To make light of a thing, or person, is to do some action, directly contrary to that which is proposed: as Ahab, who did evil in the sight of the Lord, "And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the Son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal," 1 Kings xvi. 31. That which he knew was directly contrary to the will of God, or distasteful to him.

Thus sinners do some base actions, contrary to what God professes to them in the gospel, viz., They join in with the devil, and in affinity with their filthy lusts, and strengthen themselves in their own evil ways.

5. To make light of a thing, may be yet further opened, viz., When a matter of greatest moment is propounded unto a person, and he presently says, truly, I will think of it, but I cannot now attend upon that affair, I have other business to mind at present, which, may be, is to go prove some yoke of oxen, or see a farm which he hath newly bought, or other things of like nature; or walk for their health in the fields, when they should attend on the word: now when such frivolous things are chosen, before a diligent attention upon the means of grace, or about the affairs of another world; this is to make light of Christ, and of all the blessings which he hath purchased.

As of one of the French kings, who was playing at some game with his nobles, and one came to acquaint him with a treacherous design against his life; the messenger signifying it was a serious thing, or matter of a great moment, he replied, he would mind serious things to-morrow, he was not at leisure then, so he lost his life. Pray mind what Luke speaks of those whom Matthew saith made light of it; the first said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go to see it, I pray thee have me excused," Luke xiv. 18. One would have thought, he should have went to see it before he had bought it. "Another said I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and I cannot come." Now this is to make light of this great concernment; are not these frivolous excuses? And are they not strangely deluded, thus to court their own ruin, and to pray to be excused from minding their own eternal happiness? This is to make light of it, i. e., not only to defer this great business till to-morrow, or till hereafter: but to prefer earthly concerns above the matters of everlasting life, or union with Jesus Christ.

II. What is it which sinners make light of?

1. I answer, they make light of the word of God, or of the preaching of the gospel, which must needs be a very great sin and evil: because the preaching of the gospel is appointed to work faith, through the influences of the Spirit. "So then faith cometh by hearing the word of God," Rom. x. 17; it is a mighty instrument of "God's power unto salvation, to every one that believeth," Rom. i. 16: hence it is said, that it pleaseth God. "By the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," 1 Cor. i. 21

What sinners make light of

Now they make light of this great blessing, which is the means of their salvation: and will not attend upon the word, or when they heard it, slight it.

2. They that make light of the convictions of their own consciences, as Felix did; "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled," Acts xxiv. 25. His conscience was awakened, and he was convinced of his sin, of his intemperance, and unrighteousness; Paul touched him in his tender place. Well, but did he cherish these convictions? No, no, but he, contrariwise, liked it not; but answered, "Go thy way at this time, when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee." But evident it is, he soon forgot Paul's doctrine, and so made light of it, and continued in his former evils. And thus many sinners still daily do; it may be under the word, their consciences may convince them, and sorely gripe them, for living in this or that sin, and in the neglect of this and that duty; but they turn a deaf ear unto the checks and convictions of their hearts and consciences, and so make light of it, or regard it not. They that make light of the convictions and rebukes of their consciences, which rise from the light of God's word, make light of God himself. Now, they that make light of this offer, do make light of the most gracious offer and invitation that ever was afforded to the sons and daughters of men; and this will appear by the induction of particulars following.

1. It is an invitation of the greatest and highest pity; God the Father is called, "The Father of mercies," 2 Cor. i. 3; because he is the fountain or original of good, which floweth to poor creatures. "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16. And now as he, out of pity and compassion, sent to them, under that dispensation, so he hath sent his ministers and messengers to poor sinners, under the gospel, knowing what wrath and ruin will fall upon them, which they must endure to eternity, if they come not to this marriage supper, but rather slight and refuse his most gracious invitation.

What an invitation this is.

2. It is not only an offer and invitation full of pity and mercy, but also as full of love and rich bounty. O, what a feast is here prepared! and what a design hath the Lord in it! He invites them to a noble banquet, and what is comprehended in it, and God's gracious design therein you have heard.

3. It is an often repeated offer and invitation, "and he sent other servants." God tries what one minister may do; but if sinners will not hear him, hearken to him, or come at his bidding, he sends another, another after him, "Go, say to them that were bidden, all things are now ready." May be, some of you have been invited an hundred times, to come to Christ, to believe in Christ; yea, a thousand times, and yet refuse. O! how inexcusable will God leave sinners, that eternally perish. "I have called, and you have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." Certainly, such who make light of this invitation, are such that do thus, i. e., they set at nought all God's counsel, and condemn his love and favour extended to them.

4. It is a free invitation; all the provision (as you have heard) is prepared at God's own proper charge; sinners are not required to bring anything with them; It is a free invitation. no, that would be a dishonourable thing to him, and stain his glory.

1st. God was under no necessity to make this marriage feast, nor to invite this and that man or woman unto it; it was an act all of his own free mercy, love, and goodness; it was this only which moved him thus to do.

2ndly, doth the blessed God receive any profit, or advantage, to himself hereby? "Can man profit God? If thou art righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" Job xxxv. 7. Our righteousness cannot oblige God; we are but unprofitable servants, when we have done all we are commanded: the righteousness, or righteous actions of men, contribute nothing to God; they are no advantage to him, the best that we can do; "My goodness (saith David) extendeth not to thee." If the righteousness of Christ added nothing to the essential glory of God, how should any thing that sinners can do? Can their believing make God more happy, more glorious than he is? "Who hath given unto him, and it shall be recompensed," Rom. xi. 34? All that we can do is due to him; it is a debt we owe to God. Besides, we can do nothing in a way of faith, &c., but what we received power to do from him. There can be nothing added to him, God is so full; what can be put into a vessel that is full to the brim?

O, sirs! All that God hath to impart to sinners, in this marriage feast, is of his own free grace; he receives not a pin of us for any thing: he says to his guests that come and eat plentifully, you are all heartily welcome, here is nothing to pay. It would, indeed,

be ridiculous for a king to invite men to a wedding supper, and let them pay any thing for what they eat or receive; but much more dishonourable to God; therefore, they that join their faith, and sincere obedience with God's free grace, and Christ's merits, have cause to blush and be ashamed.

3rdly. All the good and heavenly blessings imparted to sinners, is bestowed without the least merit or desert of the creature. Doth a man deserve such favours? Can a rebel deserve a free pardon of a prince, or to be advanced to high honour?

4thly. It is a clear, a plain, and full invitation; God in the gospel speaks plainly to sinners, though sometimes in parables; which he pleased to help his servants to open them; yet at other times sinners may say with the disciples, "Lo! now thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb." John xvi. 29: doth not Christ speak plainly, when he saith, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. And again, "He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son hath not life. If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. What plainer expressions could he use? He tells you it is not by works, but by grace ye are saved; nay, it is "He that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." Rom. iv. 5. That is, Christ received by faith, or his righteousness so apprehended, is our righteousness to justification, in God's sight, Isa. lv. 1, 2.

5thly, it is an open and public invitation; it is like a proclamation put forth by a king, to pardon all guilty and rebellious traitors, that come in and plead his gracious clemency, through an atonement made by another: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price:" be ye whosoever, whether Jews or Gentiles, great sinners or small, bond or free, young or old, rich or poor: whoever thirstest after happiness, or would be saved, but know not the way: "Hear, and your souls shall live," ver. 3. What grace is here, and how publicly offered! "Go, and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, return, backsliding Israel, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not keep my anger for ever; only acknowledge thine iniquities, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God," Jer. iii. 12, 13. Here is a loud cry, an open proclamation to be made in the high place, at the opening of the gate. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words," &c., Prov. i. 20, 21. Those sinners that make light of this invitation thus openly made, will find many to witness against them at the last day.

6thly. It is a large and comprehensive invitation; it is to all sinners, none by name exempted; so that one hath no more cause or reason, to say I am not comprehended in it, any more than another. "Go into all the world, preach the gospel unto every creature," Mark xvi. 15.

The chiefest of sinners have encouragement to take of this gracious offer of pardon and peace, through Jesus Christ; yea, the backsliding sinner, the stout-hearted sinner; "I have spread out my hands all the day long to a rebellious people," Isa. lxx. 2. One would think this should melt the hard and obstinate sinner's heart, and that none should be so vile, as to make light of this invitation. "Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness," Isa. xlvii. 12; that have no righteousness of their own, and seek not after any, but delight in sin and wickedness; "I bring near my righteousness," ver. 13, I have provided you a righteousness of my own, a righteousness which I am well pleased with; it agreeing exactly with my holy law, and holy nature; and I bring it near to you, that are unrighteous, and ungodly persons, come to this marriage feast, and God will put this robe of righteousness upon you, though you are never so filthy, and unclean in yourselves.

7thly. It is a pressing and most earnest invitation. Alas! the sinner's life lies at stake, his soul is in danger; "We, knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade men," 2 Cor. v. 11; to believe and be fully assured, that there shall be a great and terrible day of the Lord, and that the slights of God's gracious call and invitations, shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone; we therefore are earnest with sinners; "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 20. The angels bid Lot hasten, "while he lingered, the men laid hold upon him," Gen. xix. 16. Brethren, God must lay hold upon sinners, and pull them out of Satan's hands, and out of the pit where they lie.

8thly. It is at a seasonable time you are invited, it is while it is day, and just at sup-

per time, when the table is spread, and every thing quite ready ; and the great God waiteth for your coming. The Lord waits to be gracious, he (as it were) looks out for you ; he sees a coming sinner, though he be as yet a great way off. Sirs ! would not an earthly king be greatly offended, if such that he should invite to supper with him at such an hour, should delay coming, though he sends to them just at supper time, and waits for them, and yet they come not ?

9thly. It is to some an effectual invitation, it tends to make the soul willing, that is, given to Christ. " All that the Father hath given unto me, shall come unto me," John vi. 36. Whosoever has a heart, a will to come, a desire to believe, may be assured that they are given unto Jesus Christ. " The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live," John v. 25 ; Christ calls shall be made effectual to them ; Lazarus could not resist the call of Christ, when dead in the grave. Grace, my brethren, or rather the God of all grace, works irresistibly. " My people shall be willing in the day of my power," Ps. cx. 3.

APPLICATION.

From hence we may infer, that sinners naturally are strangely blinded and deceived by Satan. Is it not strange that such an invitation should be slighted, that any sinner should make light of it ?

2. This also may inform us, that God is infinitely good and gracious to undone sinners ; what heart can conceive of it, or what tongue can express it ? His mercy, love, and goodness, doth not only appear in his sending our Lord Jesus Christ, to espouse sinners ; but also in sending his ministers to invite them to come, and accept of his most gracious offer ; nay, and in his often repeating his call ; his kind and compassionate invitations.

3. Moreover, from hence we infer, that God will leave all men at the last day, without excuse. What will such vile sinners have to say, when they stand at God's tribunal, who were sent to, and called upon, perhaps a thousand times, to come unto Jesus Christ, or to come to this marriage supper ; who wickedly refused it, and made light of it ?

4. Also, from hence we may be informed, how sinners are ensnared with the love of this world, and the perishing things thereof. They prize and value these things above their immortal souls ! Nay, above an interest in Jesus Christ. They rather choose to have their lusts, their earthly riches, honours, and pleasures here, than the free pardon of all their sins ; and to be acquitted, justified, and made the sons and daughters of the Most High God ; and to be made heirs of the everlasting kingdom of glory, and a crown that faileth not away.

5. Believers, also may from hence perceive, what cause they have to admire God's free grace to them. For had not he by his special love, and divine goodness, overcome them, influenced them by his Spirit, and drawn them to his Son ; bowed, and subjected their rebellious wills, and changed their hearts, they would as certainly made light of this gracious invitation, as any of the rest do. This is signified by these words, viz., " Compel them, who hath made thee to differ from another," 1 Cor. iv. 7. Didst thou, O soul, make thyself to differ ? Was it by virtue of thy own power ? Have they anything to glory in, or make their boast of ? " It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth ; but of God that sheweth mercy," Rom. ix. 16.

6. Ministers may also learn from hence, not to be discouraged ; though they see but little success of their great pains and labour ; it is no new thing, if the people would not be entreated, be persuaded, nor prevailed with, to cleave to the Lord, and accept of his mercy, by the holy prophets, and apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ ; but made light of their words, and of that message. Is it any marvel, they slight the word in our mouths, and make light of the message we bring unto them ? Well may we say, " Who hath believed our report ?" Isa. lix. 1. And not wonder ? If they would not hear their report ? Nor the report of our blessed Lord himself.

7. And since this is so, let poor ministers labour to be like their Master, viz., to wait patiently upon the souls of those people, to whom they preach ; God the Father waits long, Christ waits long, the Holy Spirit waits long, and are not weary ; therefore let us also wait ; let ministers faithfully discharge their duty, and deliver their message, and leave the success of all unto God ; and say with their blessed Lord, " Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength," Isa. xlix. 5.

SERMON XIV.

But they made light of it.—Matt. xxii. 5.

I have showed you what it is sinners make light of.

I shall now proceed to show further what sinners make light of, and also the great evil and danger that attends this sin.

The great evil and danger of making light of gospel grace.

1. It is a very great sin in respect of what they make light of. They slight and cast contempt upon that glorious contrivance, of God's infinite wisdom, in that high and sublime council, that was held between the Father and the Son, before the world began. They make light of the highest act of God's wisdom, that ever was; and this too, in the clearest revelation, and manifestation thereof: our salvation was the highest act of the wisdom of God; and that the gospel containeth the clearest and fullest revelation of this glorious wisdom, none will or can deny. The result was to send the Second Person of the blessed Trinity, into the world, to assume man's nature, or to be incarnate in the flesh; and to lay the sins of all the elect upon him, as their great Sponsor, or Surety; public Head and Representative, and to die for them, i. e., in their stead and room. My brethren, should God have called the angels together, to consult about a way to raise fallen man, from under the fall and curse, for the breach of the first covenant (so that the honour of God might be preserved, in respect of all his blessed attributes, and that sin according to the demands of the law, and justification, might be unsworded and yet divine mercy be magnified, in pardoning sinners; could they, think you, have found out such a way? No, no, none but infinite wisdom, could do this; hence God saith, "Deliver him from going into the pit, I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. Our deliverance is by a ransom, by a price paid to satisfy the justice of God. I have found a ransom; it is the contrivance of God, the invention of God, and of him alone.

"If all men on earth (saith a worthy divine), yea, if all the angels in heaven, had sat from the foundation of the world to this day, in council, beating their brains, and debating this question, viz., how sinful man might be delivered, out of the hands of the law, or that condemnation or sentence, under which the law had cast and detained him, with satisfaction, or without damage, to the justice and righteousness of God; they would never have found it out, nor anything like it; this is God's own intention. Or if God had said to fallen man, I see thou art in a lost and pitiful condition; but sit down and consider how I may do thee good, and not wrong myself; how I may relieve thee, and not dishonour myself, and I will freely do it. If God (I say) had given man a blank to write down, what would he have done to bring this about? he could never have found it out, but must have perished for ever in his sin." Thus far this great man; no, no, it was God that devised the means, that his banished might not for ever be expelled from him.

But now, Sirs! must not this be a most abominable evil, for any man or woman to slight this contrivance of God's profound wisdom, or cast contempt upon it, or to use the words of my text, make light of it. O! what is the nature of this sin? and what fearful danger do such sinners expose themselves unto for ever?

2. The evil and danger must needs be great, not only as it casteth contempt upon the wisdom of God, but it is also a making light of God's infinite mercy, love, and goodness. No greater act of love could spring from boundless eternity, than for God to part with his own dear Son, the only delight of heaven: no gift could ever equal this gift. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. Gave him to what? To redeem sinners. Which way must he do it? He must die, he must bear the curse of the law for us. O, this was the most stupendous evidence of his mercy, and divine goodness! Nay, and it is to slight and make light of the precious love of Jesus Christ, who freely gave himself to die for his enemies. Oh! what ingratitude is this! What, make light of such love! such mercy! Be amazed, O ye heavens! and be astonished, O earth! What power hath the devil over mortals? What blindness is there in their understandings? What enmity in their minds? What rebellion in their wills? What earthliness and carnality is there in their affections? But what will be the end of these persons? What dangers do they run? and, what a hot hell do they prepare for their own souls for ever?

3. It is to make light of God himself, for he offers himself to be our God; he stands

waiting to give himself and all he hath, so far as it is communicable to creatures. But as he said to Israel of old, "My people would have none of me." So he may say now, this sinner, and that sinner will have none of me: they despise me, not only my love and tender mercy, but they also contemn me, and slight me. They value five yoke of oxen, a small parcel of land, and their pleasures, above me.

God offers himself, in Christ, to be the sinner's God, to be their Father, to be their Friend, to be their inheritance, and portion for ever: but what saith my text, but they made light of it. They slight and contemn him in their hearts. They think it is a better choice to enjoy their earthly riches, honours, and pleasures, their sensual delights, their cursed cups, and wicked companions, their pride and ambition, and merry meetings, which they spend in swearing, drunkenness, and blasphemy, treading the Holy God under their feet, vilifying his laws, spitting in his very face, and contemning all things which are good and virtuous. But what will be the end of these things?

4. They make light of Christ, who waits to espouse them. They slight his person who is "the chiefest among ten thousands," Cant. v. 10. They make light of his beauty, light of his riches, his unsearchable riches: make light of his most precious love, his early, his infinite, his incomprehensible, his dying, his bleeding, his redeeming, and his espousing love! O! what sin and folly, nay, madness, is in their hearts!

5. They make light of the merits of Christ, and of his satisfaction, of his sorrows, of his bloody sweat, when in his fearful agony of his bloody passion, they regard not the piercing of his hands and feet, by cruel nails, nor the piercing of his tender heart with that bloody spear. But by their contempt of him, by their unbelief, and hardness of heart, they make it a light thing to wound and pierce him again: they regard not his blood, no more than if it had been the blood of a malefactor: they offer violence to his Spirit, resist him that would apply his blood, to the salvation of their souls: they contemn his authority, make light of his kingly, priestly, and prophetic offices. O! what evil is there in this sin? and, what danger do they run? They make light of a marriage with Jesus Christ. To this end you have heard they are called, or invited to this feast. The evil therefore in refusing so gracious an offer, must needs be very great and abominable. What! will the prince espouse his poor servant, a person of so low and base degree? nay, one that hath been in actual rebellion against him? and shall this kindness, this love, this honour so undeserved, be made light of? Wonder, O heavens!

6. They make light of a marriage with Christ. This is the effect of this refusal. And this contempt they offer to the Son of God, and of all those glories that attend and accompany him!

7. They make light of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit waits upon them, to apply the blood of Christ to their wounded souls: but they make light of his motions, influences, and operations.

The Holy Spirit strives to unite their souls to the Lord Jesus, or to tie that most blessed and sacred knot. But they quench the Spirit, grieve the Spirit, resist the Spirit, in the discharge of his office, until he leaves them, and gives them over to their own heart's lusts; they must therefore of necessity perish, in regard the Holy Ghost is the only Agent that must make the death of Christ effectual to their souls. What can a sinner do, when the Holy Spirit utterly withdraws from them? All spiritual life, and vital motions, are alone from the Holy Spirit.

8. They make light of their own precious and immortal souls; they contemn and wrong their own souls. "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all that hate me, love death," Prov. viii. 36.

Such that make light of Christ, hate him; the lesser love is counted a hatred, and they do not only hate Jesus Christ, but their own souls also. To love the world, to love riches, honours, and pleasures, above Christ; or husband, or wife, son, or daughter, more than the soul, is to hate and wrong Christ, and that precious soul God hath given them. Here is a blessed match offered to the soul, a spouse, a rich and glorious husband for the soul, but the sinner being led by the flesh, and by Satan, is beguiled of this inconceivable blessing. How might a child see cause to hate such an enemy, be it father, or mother, and any else, that should persuade it to slight the offer of a prince, who makes love to it, until he is so provoked, that he rejects it for ever, and resolves to visit it no more, wait at his door no more.

9. They make light of pardon of sin, which is only to be had in Christ, through his blood, and in obtaining of union with him. Brethren, none ever find pardon, who make light of Christ, and of his invitation to this marriage supper.

And, O! what is the state of that soul, whose sins are charged upon him, who lies under the guilt and power of his sins!

10. Their sin and danger is great, because they make light of all the promises of the covenant of grace, all the promises run in Christ; first, they were made to Christ, and then to believers in Christ. God hath promised to be the God and Father of all that love Christ, that espouse Jesus Christ, and many other promises there are also. See John xii. 26. "If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be; and if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." What a great evil is it to make light of such great and precious promises! Moreover, whosoever slights and despises the promises of the gospel, do incur on themselves all the evil, and direful wrath, that is contained in the threatenings thereof.

11. They make light of communion with Christ. "Behold! I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. But they made light of this so great a privilege; they value not supping with Jesus Christ, communion with Christ; they slight all those choice refreshments he affords to them, that embrace him in the arms of their faith.

Moreover, as they make light of communion with Christ, so they also make light of communion of the saints, as if there was "No consolation in Christ, no comfort in love, no fellowship of the Spirit, no bowels and mercies," Phil. ii. 1. No good in ordinances, no soul refreshment in the holy sacraments. They contemn the fat things of God's house, bread of life, and water of life, is not worth any thing with these persons; their souls loathe the heavenly manna, they cannot relish Christ's spiced wine, nor do they esteem of the sweet juice of his pomegranates, they prize their cups, their merry-meetings with their ungodly companions, above the meetings of the saints, and all the joys of Mount Zion.

12. They make light of eternal life, or of the salvation of their souls; therefore, the sin and danger which attends these persons, must needs be great. Heaven, and all the glory thereof, is slighted by them; they sell their birth-right (with profane Esau,) for a mess of pottage; they will not part with their earthly inheritance, for the glorious mansions above.

That "Far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 18; of which the apostle speaks, is as light as vanity, in the judgment of these persons; and as they make light of all things that are truly good, really good, spiritually good, whilst here; so, I say, they do of whatsoever is truly, and eternally good, great, and glorious, hereafter.

13. They also make light of hell, as not to fear the pains and punishment thereof.

They make light of the wrath of God, they fear not the anguish of an accusing conscience, the worm that dieth not; nor do they tremble at the thoughts of that fire that cannot be quenched; the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, is but a light thing in their eyes. These things considered, may serve to show their sin and danger is very great.

14. They make light of the gospel; such that sinned against Moses' law, died without mercy.

Every contumacious going beside the law, or casting it aside by commission of evil, was death; no such contumacious transgressor could escape God's just wrath; yet that obedience the law required, so far as men were capable to perform it, delivered no person from God's most strict and severe justice. But Jesus Christ, in our nature, hath answered all the demands; the gospel gives life, though the law could not. Therefore, to slight this great and glorious Redeemer, must of necessity bring the severest wrath and vengeance on all such sinners.

Sirs! There is no escaping, no avoiding the righteous punishment which the just God, will inflict upon all gospel sinners, see Heb. ii. 3.

15. The danger of such who make light of Christ, and of the gospel, must needs be very great, because it is the rejecting or casting contempt upon the only remedy God hath provided; they that sinned against the law, might fly to the gospel; but what will they do, or whither will they fly, that sin against the gospel? Who tread under their feet the blood of the Son of God! O what sore punishment shall these be thought worthy of? See Heb. x. 2. Hath God sent his Son to be a sacrifice, to pour out his blood to save them, and shall they make light of such a cure, of such a remedy, of such grace, and divine favour? O! how low must such think to lie in hell. "Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city," Matt. x. 15; for that city, or that people, or person, that will not hear

the words of Christ's ministers, but make light of their message, or of that offer, which they in their great Master's name make unto them. These shall have a hotter hell than the people of Sodom. Sodom is not so great a sin, as to make light of Christ, and his blood; which hath procured pardon for all such abominable sins. There is no sin, nor blasphemy either, against the Father or the Son, but the gospel offers pardon for. Therefore, such who slight such a remedy, procured at such a dear rate, must needs be (it being a slighting, or making light of Christ,) the sin of unbelief, which is the worst of all sins. This is the root and foundation of all other sins, as faith is the root of all other graces. "Not one sin, (saith a learned author,) but will be engendered in the womb of this sin, as well as there Charnock. is not one grace, but springs from the womb of faith." Why are men proud, covetous; why do they swear, lie, steal, commit adultery, &c., but because they do not believe, God hates them, and will condemn them; they believe not his word; nay, and this sin of unbelief, or making light of Christ, maintains all other sins in their full strength. As faith tends to weaken all sin, so unbelief keeps every sin in its full power. Also it is the great supporter of the devil's kingdom; as faith overcomes him and his kingdom, so unbelief strengthens him and his kingdom, in the soul of every such sinner, and in the world.

16. Their danger is great; for all the attributes of God, are set against this man, viz., against him that makes light of Christ. Not only divine justice, but divine mercy, love, and goodness also; therefore his sin and danger is great. "The face of God is set against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," Psal. xxxiv. 16. The face of God may denote his glory, or the perfections of his nature. All God's holy and blessed attributes, are set against those persons who are guilty of this evil. O! it is sad indeed, when once mercy, love, and divine goodness, pleads against a sinner; no wrath like that which is kindled in the heart of God, for the abuse of mercy, and infinite love and goodness. Brethren, as all the blessed attributes in Christ, meet together in sweet harmony, and unite their strength to save a poor sinner that believes in Jesus; so they all unite together, to cut off and destroy for ever, all such who do not believe in him, but contrariwise make light of him, and of the merits of his blood.

17. The evil and danger that attends those that make light of Christ, and of all gospel grace, is great; because, in their so-doing, they are obedient to the devil: it is his lusts which they do, and in this he shows his utmost malice against God, Jesus Christ, and the sinner's own soul. This is to cast dirt upon God's glory, in the work of redemption. What is Satan's design herein, but to cause the sinner, as much as lieth in him, to render the grace of God in Jesus Christ, to be of none effect. So that his blood might be shed in vain. If Satan cannot hinder men from hearing the word, he stirs them up to make light of it; and such that so do, are obedient to him, and do his will, they show that they are his obedient servants and vassals.

6. From hence it appears, they do, as much as lieth in them, endeavour to nullify the glorious work of Christ's mediation, it denies him the honour of his meritorious passion; no sin doth so immediately oppose Christ as Mediator, and trample upon that inestimable sacrifice, as this doth. What, make light of such an undertaking! a work of such a nature, brought in as the result of such a council, effected by such a price; and to accomplish such a high design, and not value it above one base lust! What, choose rather to see a new bought piece of land, or a farm, or to prove five yoke of oxen, rather than to have an interest in Christ's most glorious mediation, person, and benefits!

APPLICATION.

1. Information. We may from hence see the infinite patience of God, O! admire this God, in his long-suffering and forbearance!

Doth he still wait upon such wretched sinners, that thus slight and contemn his most infinite love, goodness, and mercy? Is it not a marvellous thing, that God should let such creatures live one day longer? God certainly bears infinitely more reproaches and indignity, by this sin, than all men in the world ever bore; yet he hath as much patience to bear with them, as he hath power to punish them: it is not because he wants power to ease himself of these adversaries, that he spares them so long; none but God could endure such affronts from an enemy.

2. This sin is aggravated by their continuance in this sin, as God's patience is greatened, by his repeated offers of his grace and mercy. "He sent his servants to invite them again, he sent other servants to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready," Luke xiv. 17; but as often as God invited them, they rejected, and made light of his invitation. O wonder that after the first refusal of Christ, God will send to

them again, and again! and yet doth the sinner persist in his obstinacy and infidelity; and will God still solicit the sinner, and call and cry to him? yea, knock again and again at his door.

3. Here is great encouragement for the worst of sinners, to come to Christ, and not to give up their hope, though they have many times slighted and made light of his sovereign grace; God nevertheless calls you again. If there were no sinners called but once, your state perhaps might be lamentable indeed, because some of you have been called many times. Oh, how many times did some of you that are believers, make light of Christ, and of his gracious invitations, before you were made willing to receive him? Therefore, let not such that have refused his calls, despair of his acceptance, if they embrace him now.

4. Terror. It may be, notwithstanding, for terror to all such sinners that are guilty of this sin, i. e., of making light of Christ and the gospel.

1. Consider, as you have heard, how great this sin is, and what dangers you do run?

2. Is it not irrational, or a most unreasonableness, to make light of God himself, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? do not you own the holy scriptures? and that the gospel is a true revelation of his eternal purpose, of saving men by Jesus Christ? Do you not own he was put to death to save your souls? and that there is no other way of salvation? and is it not a most irrational or unreasonableness in you, to make light of this Christ, and way of everlasting happiness? Art thou convinced, that there is no other way to save thy soul from hell? and wilt thou make light of this way? Art thou wounded to death! and art convinced there is no other balsam can heal thee but this? And wilt thou make light of it? Art thou convinced that thou art polluted, and abominably filthy, and that there is no other Fountain can wash and cleanse thee, and wilt thou slight, or make light of this fountain?

3. Is it not also a most ungrateful act, or a most unkind requital of God and Christ, for such inconceivable love, grace, and favour; what, wilt thou fly in the face of him, and cast dirt upon him that wrought out a way of life for thee, by his own blood? Do you not think it was a most horrid wickedness and ingratitude in the Jews, who preferred Barrabas before Jesus, and in Judas, to value Christ but at thirty pieces of silver? And dost not thou know that thou art as guilty of as great ingratitude, and casts as great indignity upon him, that dost value a soul-murdering lust above him, that will not part with thy beastly pleasures, sinful profits, and cursed companions, for all the good that is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ?

4. It is also an inexcusable evil, there is no plea for this thy great wickedness. The Jews (as one observes) had some plea, though it would not excuse them for their great evil, in refusing of the Lord Jesus, i. e., he was clothed with infirmities, appeared as a poor man, and had no form or comeliness, or no external beauty and glory, as they expected their Messiah would appear in. But what plea canst thou make, since thou knowest he was indeed the Son of God? they saw darkly, and were under a cloud, and knew not well the meaning of those mysterious types and shadows, but we see, with open face, now the Lord is ascended, and glorified in his highest majesty and glory; thou dost not doubt of the truth of the Christian religion, and yet darest thou make light of this Saviour, and of that great salvation purchased by him? Will not thy misery be great? Is it not a just and righteous thing in God to set thee at nought, or make light of thee, who hast set him, and all his counsel, at nought, and hast made light of him?

5. Exhortation. Strive to be sensible of the malignity and greatness of this sin, and repent of this thy wickedness. There may be yet mercy, if thou dost not further proceed in thy abominable evil. All thy former sins shall be forgiven, if thou now dost believe, and come to this marriage supper.

6. This affords also much consolation to believers, who are delivered from so great sin and danger. Oh! prize God's favour, who hath dispersed the cloud of darkness, which had seized upon your noble souls. What a blessed state are you in, who are pulled out of the pit, and whose feet are set upon a rock, who are saved from hell, and have an undoubted title to eternal life.

SERMON XV.

But they made light of it.—Matt. xxii. 5.

DOCT. Many sinners make light of Jesus Christ, and of all the blessings that are offered unto them in the gospel.

I showed you the great evil and danger of making light of Christ, and his benefits.

IV. I shall show you from whence it doth arise, or come to pass, that sinners make light of Jesus Christ; or give you the reasons of it.

1. It ariseth, or is occasioned from that great ignorance, and woful blindness that is in the hearts of sinners.

1. They are ignorant of that need and necessity there is of coming unto Christ, and so to feed upon the provision which is prepared at this marriage supper. If people were convinced that there was no corn, no bread to be had, but at the king's court, or in his granary, they would haste thither; or, that there was no water, but in the king's fountain, provided the granary and fountain were opened, and free to all comers, and this was made known by his proclamation, what multitudes would resort to get corn to supply their necessity!

Ignorance is one cause why sinners make light of this heavenly banquet.

Now, brethren, it is thus here in a spiritual sense; there is no bread of life, nor water of life; no food for our souls to be had, but in Jesus Christ alone; it is in this respect, as it was in Egypt, there was no corn in all the land, but what was laid up in Joseph's hand by the order of Pharaoh, and when the people came to Pharaoh, he sent them to Joseph, so the Father sends all poor, distressed, and needy souls to Jesus Christ, the true Joseph, But whilst men remain ignorant of this, or do not see the absolute necessity of coming to Christ, or of coming to this marriage supper, they will not come, but make light of this gracious invitation, thinking that they may be provided otherways, or have peace with God, justification, pardon of sin, and eternal life elsewhere, or in some other way: as,

1. Perhaps they think to have it by a sober life, or by doing that which is just and honest in the sight of all men; they think this way to be justified, and saved for ever.

2. Others think inherent holiness through Christ's merits, is that which justifies them in the sight of God.

3. Another sort affirm, that the light which is within all men, is the true Saviour; and that, by obedience unto that light, men may be led into all truth, convinced of all sin, be justified from sin and be eternally saved.

The light within all men is of the law of works.

Now, brethren, this is to seek justification by the works of the law; for pray note it well, that the law that was written on two tables of stone, and that law or light which is within all men that come into the world, is as to the matter or substance of it, but all one and the same law: hence the Gentiles, who were said to be without the law, (that is, without the law in tables of stone, or without the ministration of it, that was given to the people of Israel) had the law, or light thereof in their hearts; which shew the works of the law in their hearts, Rom. ii. 15. That is the sum of the law, i. e., to love God above all, and our neighbours as ourselves; or else the office of the law, which is morally and naturally just and good, and to convince and reprove such that walk not according unto it; but if by the law in either of these respects, justification is to be obtained, Christ is dead in vain, Gal. ii. 21. So that the ignorance and delusion of these men, is very great: for,

1. Their doctrine teacheth poor people to seek justification by the works of the law.

2. To frustrate and make void the grace of God, in sending of his own Son, and so to render his death a needless thing; for if Christ had not come, all men would have had the law and light within; and if by that righteousness, viz., by the law; either without us or within us, we might have been justified and saved, what need was there of Christ to come and keep the law for us, and to die in our stead, to satisfy the justice of God, for our breach of the law? "But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent his own Son," &c. Rom. viii. 3. Therefore it appears, that these men who are for the works of the law, are under the curse, as the Apostle shows, Gal. iii. 10; and evident it is, that by the law no man is, nor can be justified: "for if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. iii. 21. If there had been any law, or light which could have given life, justification, and salvation, it should have been by it: and thus these men, like the Jews of old, being ignorant of God's righteousness, that is the righteousness of Christ, who is God as well as man; and from

hence it is that most men make light of Christ, and of salvation wrought for us by him. The apostle ascribes it to their ignorance, and plain it is, it was these our Saviour, in the first place, means in my text, they made light of it, and it was upon this foot of account.

If I am persuaded, that I have enough bread of my own, I will not go to my neighbour's door for it; he that thinks he can spin a righteousness to clothe him out of his own bowels, he will never go to Christ to beg a garment of him, to hide his nakedness, and so to present him comely in the sight of God. But when a sinner comes to see all his righteousness is but filthy rags, and all his own food is but husks, as the prodigal did, he will soon see cause to go to the Lord Jesus, or to go to his Father's house.

Ignorance of the nature of gospel provision, one cause men make light of this invitation.

2. They make light of Christ, and of all his benefits also, by reason of their great ignorance, of the nature, worth, and excellency of the provision which is prepared at this marriage supper. Alas! they never tasted how good God is, Christ is, how sweet his love and favour is! how desirable pardon of sin, and peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost is! O taste, and see that the Lord is good! Psal. xxiv. 8. This denotes their ignorance, or their want of experience. They may have heard of that great good which is in God, and in

the Lord Jesus Christ; but it was only by hearsay; they were ignorant of it, as to a true experimental knowledge thereof, and therefore may, and no doubt do, make light of it.

Ignorance of God's nature the cause why Christ is slighted.

3. They are also ignorant of God in the perfections of his nature, and blessed attributes of his absolute purity, holiness, justice, and righteousness. They think that God forgives our offence, without a plenary satisfaction to his infinite justice, and holy law: nay, and many in these days are left so to the

ignorance and blindness of their own hearts, as to disown all revealed religion, and hence some have of late affirmed, that there is nothing contained in the gospel, or doctrine of Christianity, that is mysterious, or above human reason; though, blessed be God, he has raised up some worthy men who have been helped fully to confute such notorious errors: the apostle says, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. &c. Is not that a great mystery, that God should be man, and man be God, in one person; that he that made the world, should become a babe of a day old; and that we should be justified by the obedience and righteousness of another, by a righteousness imputed to us. The truth is, man is unable to understand, by all his natural wisdom, things of God; as the apostle show, in the wisdom of God, "the world by wisdom knew not God," 1 Cor. i. 21. And yet is there nothing contained in the gospel mysterious; but men being born under the covenant of works, and having some remains of that broken law in them, they condemn the wisdom of God in a mystery, viz: his great and glorious contrivance of our salvation by Jesus Christ; because it is above their carnal, or human reason to comprehend it.

It is strange to them that we should be justified, acquitted, and pronounced righteous, perfectly righteous in God's sight, who, to that very time, were ungodly, and that by the righteousness and obedience of a poor man, condemned as a wicked person, or a cursed malefactor who was hanged upon a tree. This doctrine the learned Greeks of old accounted foolishness, and it ariseth from that great ignorance which is in them, of the holy nature of God, and tenor of his holy law; and from hence it is, that they make light of Christ, and of all his benefits.

4. It may also be through, their ignorance of God's invitation as to them; they do not think that God speaks to them, or that they are the lost sinners Jesus Christ is offered unto; because perhaps they have got more righteousness of their own than many others have. They make light of Christ, and of his righteousness, because they are not swearers, drunkards, thieves, nor unclean persons: possibly some men may think none need trouble themselves about coming unto Christ, but profane persons.

5. Some of them also may be ignorant of the voice of God, in the ministry of the gospel: they know not the voice of God like Samuel, when a child, they know not who it is that calls them; Samuel thought that it was Eli that called him; "Here I am, for thou didst call me," 1 Sam. iii. 6. Many think it is not the voice of God that calls them; but the voice of such or such a minister, not Christ's voice, but man's voice, man's invitation; "If thou knewest who it is that saith unto thee give me to drink," John iv. 10. She knew not it was Christ, the true Saviour, the blessed Messiah that spake unto her. She took him to be a mere man, only one of the Jewish nation: and thus sinners may think, when ministers call them to come to Christ, to come to the marriage supper, it is nothing more but a call of men, and perhaps they may conclude, that the servants of God, chiefly by all preaching, design to proselyte them to their opinion, to make them either presbyterians,

independents, or baptists, whereas, if they are faithful ministers, it is chiefly to bring them unto Jesus Christ, it is to deal with their consciences; but this they may be ignorant of, and so make light of this most gracious invitation.

6. They may, moreover, be ignorant of the freeness of these good things, to all right comers; some perhaps may think they may not come, must not come yet; they are not humble enough, or are not prepared for grace; the world is too much in their hearts at present; they dare not come whilst they are so much incumbered with worldly affairs; or that they must not believe in Christ, until they have got a good degree of repentance, and sorrow for sin; they think that they must bring some worthiness with them, some money, or something to commend them unto Jesus Christ, or else they may suppose they do not feel themselves so empty, so hungry, as they ought to be before they come to eat of the food prepared at this great supper. The truth is, none will come to Christ, none will feed on him, or receive him by faith, but such that see the want, or need of him; it is the thirsty soul, the hungry soul that invited; but many may look for this to be in them, to a greater degree than at present they experience, which may arise from their ignorance. No doubt but some are more hunger pinched than others, or they may have a more extreme thirst in them than some have, and yet they are invited; it is not the degree of the sense of the want of Christ, as the truth of that sense they have of the want of him, and of his righteousness.

Brethren, this ignorance in some persons, as touching the way and manner how they must come to the Lord Jesus, may cause them to neglect, or defer coming. What, venture now upon Christ? what, believe now, before we have reformed our ways? or have got some meet qualifications? no, this they dare not do. What so filthy, so unclean, and yet venture to come to Christ? as if great sinners, such that are most abominably filthy, must not come to the Fountain to be washed; as if morality could prepare men for grace; or that none but sober moral persons ought to believe in Jesus Christ, and yet he says, that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners; and that the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Alas, sirs! all reformation of life, repentance, sorrow for sins before faith, are dead works, and profit no man as to the salvation of his soul. All these things are but a man's own righteousness, which are but filthy rags, and please not God; wouldst thou come in these vile and loathsome rags, to this marriage, to be espoused and married unto Jesus Christ? O blush and be ashamed! Know, O sinner, that thou must come as a poor, naked, polluted, and undone wretch (as you have been often told) and yet wilt thou not come to him until thou art more fit, more trim, in thine own eyes. Believe it is a delusion of Satan; if thou makest light of this great truth, thou wilt be found to make light of the gospel, and of the free-grace of God.

From that enmity which is in sinners' hearts they make light of Christ.

II. It is from that natural enmity, that is in the hearts of sinners against God, which causeth them to make light of Jesus Christ; this is another cause why sinners do thus contemn and despise the riches and freeness of God's grace, in Jesus Christ; "The carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. viii. 7. Sinners are in captivity, under the power of sin, yea, the very slaves of sin and Satan; and it is grace alone that slays that enmity. "Of the same that a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage," 2 Pet. ii. 19; they are in strong chains (and fetters, to their own lusts) and Satan by these bands and cords, holds them back from coming to this marriage, he fills their hearts with prejudice to Christ, and stirs up that evil seed and principle, which is naturally in them, to make light of the Lord Jesus; "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his own sins," Prov. v. 22. He thinks to be disentangled hereafter, from his lusts, and from the world, but it is all in vain; for he is in perfect bondage, and is neither able nor willing to see himself at liberty, his sins hold him fast,

III. Many make light of Christ, from the inordinate love of this world, in respect of the riches, honours, and pleasures thereof; there is a cursed trinity, as well as a blessed Trinity, a trinity below, as well as a Trinity above, viz., "The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16; and sinners love these, adore these, and bow down to these three, more than they love, adore, and bow down to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; earthly things suit with earthly hearts, carnal delights feast the carnal part, the flesh shall be fed, though the soul be starved, and out of love to these things, all spiritual dainties are slighted, and made light of; they had rather feast at the devil's table, than feed and feast with the Lord Jesus Christ, they had rather be feasted with the sweet, flesh-pleasing meat, roasted at the fire of lusts, and as it is taken off the devil's spit, than with

Sinners make light of Christ from the inordinate love of the world.

the fat things of God's house. Tell them where they may have a good bargain, or how to get riches, and be made great and honourable among men, or of a merry meeting, to carouse, drink, and be jovial amongst their beastly companions; it is out of love to these things, that they condemn all things that are spiritually good; but let such know that they cannot feed with Christ, and with devils, "Ye cannot (saith Paul) drink of the cup of the Lord, and of the cup of devils. No man can serve two masters," 1 Cor. x. 21, that is, who are directly contrary the one to the other, and have quite opposite interests to carry on; "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," men cannot love sin, love the world, and yet love Jesus Christ. "He will either love the one and hate the other, or cleave to the one, and forsake (and make light of) the other," see once again this parable as it is recorded by Luke xiv. 18—20. "And they all with one consent began to make excuse; the first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused." Strange! Is this all the business this man had for to do? It was not to go buy the piece of ground; no, he had bought it before, and no doubt but he had seen it before: men do not use to buy land, before they have seen it: here was no ground to fear of losing his purchase, for he had bought it, but he must needs go again to see it: it ran in his mind, it had got possession of his heart. But is not this a poor and lame excuse? Oh! for what a trifle do some men make light of Jesus Christ? They had rather go and walk into the fields, and see their land, and how their corn grows, then to attend upon the word of God, and to obtain an interest in the Lord

Jesus. "And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused," ver. 19. It was not to buy his oxen; no, but it was to prove to them, no doubt but he had made some proof of them, before he knew they would draw; but this shows how little he valued spiritual things, and that his love was set upon the things of this life. "And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Sensual pleasures, drown and swallow up the hearts of some men; carnal men do not only pursue their lusts, or do such things that are a direct breach of the law of God, but also inordinately let their hearts run out upon lawful things, a man may lawfully marry a wife; marriage is God's ordinance, but some men through an inordinate love to their wives and children, make light of Christ, and of all the blessings of the gospel: I have, in speaking to another parable, largely opened this, and therefore shall say no more to it here.

Whoredom and excess of wine, take away the hearts of some, who like unclean birds, choose rather to feed on carrion on a dunghill, than with doves upon pure grain; or like swine, they will not exchange their acorns or husks, for the best rarities in the world: and others by overprizing earthly enjoyments, (which are blessings in themselves) eternally lose their souls; it is no wonder that men who have sensual hearts, are inordinately in love with earthly things, make light of Jesus Christ, and of union with him.

IV. Sinners make light of Christ, and of all spiritual blessings, from a conceit of self fulness; will such that are Laodicea like, i. e. see no need of anything, buy of Christ gold tried in the fire, to enrich them, or white raiment to clothe them? No, they, are increased in goods, and in their own conceit need nothing; such that have a fulness in themselves, bread to eat of their own, will not come to this feast: tell some learned men who study philosophy, and other human arts and sciences, that they had better study their own hearts, and the knowledge of a crucified Christ; they will but laugh at you, and make light of such good counsel, and perhaps tell you, that you are a fool: and will you teach them, sirs? As there is a religious fulness, as well as a sinful fulness, so there is a learned fulness, which renders Jesus Christ but of little worth, and value with some men, they had rather study Aristotle, Seneca and Plato, than Jesus Christ and him crucified, some of this sort, study more how to get a fat benefice, than to feed on Christ, and win souls to him. Moreover, tell some other men, who are pure and righteous in their own eyes, of the righteousness of Christ: alas! they make light of that, and say, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men, nor as this publican," Prov. xxvii. 7; these men have such a full stomach, that their souls loathe the honeycomb.

V. Some make light of all gospel dainties, by reason their hearts are so full of the cares of this life; tell some poor men of the bread of life? Ah, (saith he) I had rather you could tell me how I may come out of debt, and have whatsoever I want for myself and family; intreat them to believe in Christ, and tell them that the Lord Jesus hath paid all the debts of poor believers, and that God is satisfied in Christ; that all that believe in him are happy for ever; press them to come to this feast, away with those stories (say they), we cannot sleep, our hearts

What small excuses sinners make to keep them from Christ.

See parable of the sower.

Self righteousness hinders from coming to this marriage, in making light of Christ.

The cares of this life hinder others.

are so full of the cares of this world ; we fear our other debts, more than those you speak of, not knowing but we may be laid in prison are long : Martha, though a good woman, was too remiss in attending on Christ, through the incumbrances of the world, “ Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful,” Luke x. 41, &c.

VI. Many make light of Christ and gospel blessings, by reason of the sufferings of the cross, they that embrace Jesus Christ, may be undone to be religious, say they is the way to be ruined : I assure you, say they in their hearts, the food you invite us to eat, that is to be had at this marriage feast, is but melancholy diet, and it will embitter all the comforts of this life. But, alas ! all this is because they never tasted how good the Lord is, they have no experience of that real, good, and transcendent sweetness that is in the enjoyment of Christ’s love.

The suffering of the cross, hinder some men in coming to Christ, and making light of him.

VII. Some perhaps make light of Christ and of this gospel banquet, by means of their carnal relations, they are afraid to displease them, it will cause (saith a man) strife to rise between me and my wife, or saith a woman, between me and my husband, or between me and my father and mother, or between me and my best friends ; by which it appears that they love husband and wife, father and mother, better than Jesus Christ. O, saith one, I must obey my parents, will you have me to be a disobedient child ? Many are like Ahaziah, whose mother was his counsellor, to do that which was evil in the sight of the Lord ; but know such, who in religious matters chose to please their parents more than to please Jesus Christ, make light of those things, and refuse the offers of eternal life. Some parents who are ungodly, hate the thoughts that their children should be religious, and are ready (like a wicked wretch I have heard of) to seek ways to debauch a pious son or daughter, rather than to see them truly religious ; wicked relations and ungodly companions cause some to make light of this gospel banquet.

Carnal relations cause some to make light of Christ. 2 Chron. xxii. 3.

VIII. The main cause of all from whence most make light of this invitation, to come to this marriage feast, is unbelief. Some believe not what they are told of the blessed state such are in, who receive Jesus Christ, but are ready to conclude, they are but fancies and idle dreams.

Unbelief the main cause why sinners make light of Christ.

Some others are also under the power of unbelief, and ready to say, though Christ be a blessed object, and pardon of sin be no small blessing, yet they are never like to obtain those high privileges, no, but seem to say, as some of old did, “ there is no hope ; but we will walk after our own devices,” Jer. xviii. 12. You have here, first, a desperate conclusion, there is no hope ; and secondly a desperate resolution, “ but we will walk after our own devices.” There is no hope, that we should obtain an interest in Christ, and be justified, pardoned, and saved for ever. No hope, that we should get our hearts changed, or get power over our evil and abominable lusts, and hence they slight and make light of all the means of grace, they not considering the mighty power of God, who is able to change the vilest hearts in the world ; but sin is so rooted in their affections, and they withal are lazy, and love to sleep, or abide in, a spiritual slumber, or slothful condition, and being not willing to strive against sin, nor attend upon the world, nor cry to God, they make light of this heavenly feast.

SERMON XVI.

So the servant came, and shewed his Lord these things ; then the master of the house being angry, said unto his servant, go out quickly, into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither, the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.—Luke xiv. 21.

THE rich Pharisees among the Jews made light of it as you have heard, and now the poor, the maimed, and blind, two things may be signified.

1. The poorest sort ; the poor have the gospel preached to them, and they receive it.

2. Great sinners, or such that are in a miserable condition, in respect of their souls, or notorious sinners, as Publicans and harlots, the Scribes and Pharisees, making light of the gracious offer of eternal life ; true, all men naturally are in a poor, maimed, and deplorable condition ; but these no doubt appeared so to be, in their own sight :

“ Go out quickly,” &c.

Doct. That sinner must presently, without delay, come to Christ, and even as sinners, as poor, maimed, halt, and blind.

Sinners must presently

come to Christ and believe in him. I have, under another parable, showed, what to do a thing quickly doth imply; here it signifies the great speed sinners should make; they must believe presently, without delaying it one moment; they must not stay to get any previous qualifications, before they come to Christ.

First, I shall give you a few reasons, why sinners should presently come to Christ or not delay.

Secondly, Show, who are poor, maimed, halt, blind, &c.

Why sinners should presently come to Christ. I. Because God (or the great King that made this feast) was angry with others who made light of it, making excuse, and delay coming, and for this they were cut off from tasting of this supper. The base delays and trifling of some provokes God to anger.

II. Because this is business of the highest concernment in the world; what, are sinners wounded, mortally wounded, and shall they delay accepting a plaister presently? what malefactor condemned to die, would not presently accept of a pardon, if it be offered to him.

III. Because now all things are just ready: shall God wait, Christ wait the sinner's time? Or, shall not God's time be their time.

IV. Because the present time is the accepted time: "Behold! now is the accepted time; behold! now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. Now, "to day, if you will here his voice;" Heb. ii. 7. If God calls to-day, none must say to-morrow. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth," Prov. xxvii. 1.

V. Because now is the day of sinners' visitation; and if they lose this day, the things of their peace may be for ever hid from their eyes, as they were from Jerusalem. "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 42.

The gospel proclamation runs thus, quickly, presently; it commands sinners presently; to throw down their arms, and lay hold of the offers of free pardon now, and delay not.

VI. Quickly, Because ministers are commanded to endeavour to bring them in presently; they cannot assure any person, that he shall be entertained or find mercy, if he delays one day.

VII. Because the day of men's lives are very short and uncertain; sinner, thou mayest be dead before another day; God cast some off suddenly, therefore thou must presently close with Christ, or throw thy soul upon the Lord Jesus.

VIII. Because the harvest-day and gospel summer may be soon at an end; the length of other harvest-days may be known, and also market-days, but the length of the day of grace we know not.

Secondly, Show, who these poor maimed, halt, and blind are, who are to be brought in presently.

Who the poor, maimed, halt, and blind are. I. The poor refer to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, or to such that are sick, and see the need of a physician, or wounded and want a sovereign balm to heal their sores; that are also hungry, starved, having no bread of their own to eat, or nothing to sustain food, satisfy, and support their languishing souls; so that a plentiful feast of fat things, must needs be welcome to them, though the rich and self-righteous Pharisees made light of it.

II. These poor and maimed ones see also, that they are naked, or have nothing but filthy rags to cover them; and therefore are glad to hear there is at this wedding a rich garment, prepared for all the guests that are invited, and that come to it. They see they have nothing of their own, neither to eat nor to clothe them, nor a penny to buy anything withal.

III. Neither can they work to earn anything to supply their necessities, being maimed, halt, and blind; he is not so poor and miserable, though he has nothing, if he can work, and that way get him bread to eat; but these see, that they have laboured for that which is not bread, and that which satisfies not.

IV. Moreover, they are so poor and miserable, that they have no friend nor brother to Isa. lv 1, 2. do anything for them; no help by the law, no help by their own righteousness, no help from men, no nor by what any saints, ministers, or angels can do for them.

V. So poor, wretched, and miserable, that, besides their present want, they are in debt owing ten thousand talents, and not one farthing to pay.

Question. How came they to be in this miserable condition?

See the parable of the man Answer. By original and actual sin, or by falling among thieves, who wounded them, and stripped them of their raiment, and left them half dead; sin and Satan are those thieves.

Question. How come they to see and know this is their sad and deplorable condition?

Answer. 1. They come to see and know it by the law, the law being opened to them, in the spirituality of it; "sin revived and I died," as to all hope or help by it.

2. By the revelation of the gospel, in Christ's poverty, in his bloody agony and crucifixion, they came to see the horrid evil of sin; and know that there is no help nor relief, but by his obedience, by his righteousness, or by his atonement.

3. They come to know this to be their miserable state, by the conviction of the Spirit; "When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince the world of sin; of sin, because they believe not in me," John xvi. 8, 9. The Holy Spirit convinceth these poor sinners, that they have no bread to eat, no clothes, no garment to cover them, nor any power or strength to work for life; and that they can do nothing to wash away the guilt and filth of their sins.

Question. Why doth God bring them to see this their condition, and send his servants to call such as these, yea, and with all speed, presently to bring them to the marriage feast?

Answer. 1. Because God would embitter sin unto them, which is so evil in itself, and was so bitter to his own dear Son. God will make all men know, what sin is first or last; either in this world, in a way of grace and love, or in the world to come, in a way of wrath and indignation.

2. Because the rich, or self-righteous ones will not come: they that have a self-fulness, that find no want in themselves, make light of this spiritual banquet, as you have heard: the prodigal thought not of returning home to his father until a famine arose in his souls.

3. Because until sinners are convinced that this is their condition, they will never value Christ, prize and esteem of the bread of life, nor will any but such exalt free-grace, and magnify the Lord Jesus; and then God sends for them in haste, or that they may quickly be brought to Christ; because otherwise, they will fall under utter despair, and Satan would get great advantage over them: they being ready to die, are proper objects of God's rich mercy, love, and favour.

APPLICATION.

1. This may tend to humble proud sinners, and show what a condition they are in: they will not come to Jesus Christ; they are blind, wounded, and wretched, but see it not know it not, and so are like to perish for ever.

2. This also may tend to reprehend such who tell us, that the elect are not really in a naked state, wretched and miserable, before faith is wrought in them; but that they are actually justified, healed, and pardoned, whilst profane and ungodly persons, though they know it not; can such be said to be naked and miserable, that are clothed with the righteousness of Christ?

3. This shows the absolute necessity of Christ, and of a vital union with him; and also with what speed convinced sinners should come to Jesus Christ.

4. Moreover, it shows what a wonderful mercy it is, for a sinner to be brought to see his sin, and to have a true and real sense of his undone condition: God saith to his servant, "Go quickly, and bring hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind;" these shall come, nay they will come; God hath opened their eyes, and wrought a will in them to take the water of life.

5. These souls are willing to beg, they are ready to starve, and know they have nothing of their own, and so readily go to Jesus Christ for all things they want; they see divine wrath ready to consume them, but are convinced, that, by the blood of Christ, that wrath is quenched, and God reconciled; and they being maimed, are in great pain, and therefore gladly receive a plaister to heal their wounds.

"And the servant said, Lord it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room," ver. 23.

The poor outcasts of Israel, lost sinners of the Jews came in, they believed in Christ, they came to the marriage supper: but still there is yet room for more, even for poor sinners of the Gentiles also.

Doctrine. Though many receive Jesus Christ, or come to the marriage supper, yet there is room for more still.

First, I shall show you, what these words denote, there is yet room.

Secondly, show you, where there is room.

Thirdly, why it is said, there is yet room; and show you how long there will be room.

What there
is yet room
doth denote.

I. This word implies, that there is a certain definite number, that shall and must come to this supper, i. e., there are places prepared for more, which are yet empty.

II. It signifies, that God will have his house full: see "that my house may be full," all the elect must be called, and many of them were among the Gentile nations.

III. It implies, either that some who were called did delay, or else that there were some that were not yet invited, or not yet called, the servant was sent again.

IV. It denotes the largeness, or the extensiveness of God's love to sinners; his love is not extended to all universally, yet it is extended to all the nations of the world, not to the Jews only, but to the Gentiles also: Christ was "sent to be a light to the Gentiles, that he might be God's salvation to the ends of the earth," Luke ii. 32. Many have been called, and yet there is room for multitudes more, who, in the latter days, shall be called, and shall flock like doves to the window.

How we
may know in
what nation
the elect of
God are.

Question. How may we know in what nation or place some of God's elect are who shall be called?

Answer. I. Where the gospel is sent, there no doubt are some of God's elect ones, be it what nation, kingdom, city, or town whatsoever: God will not sow where he shall not reap. O happy England, happy London, happy Bristol, happy are those cities, that have the gospel in a clear ministration; if sent to them, there is a seed, a remnant, that God will bring or gather to himself.

2. Where God sows the seed of the word plentifully, and brings the gospel to their very doors; and also brings sinners under the word: this is a sign of grace to many of their souls; there is little hopes of them that will not hear.

3. When people give attention to the word, hear it diligently, and the convictions of Acts xvi. 14. the word and Spirit takes hold of their hearts: when God opens the heart of a man or woman, as he opened the heart of Lydia, to attend upon the word, it is a sign they belong to the election of grace.

Secondly, where there is yet room.

Answer. I. There is room in the heart of God, and in the heart of Jesus Christ. Solomon; (it is thought) in his great love extended to so many, was a type of Christ; and also, that his loving of Pharaoh's daughter, held forth Christ's love to the Gentiles. Oh! what love hath Christ to us tawny and sun-burnt Gentiles, that we should be the darlings of Jesus? there is yet room in the Father's heart, and in the Son's heart, for thousands of sinners.

II. There is yet room in the election of grace, that is not full yet; I mean, they that were given to Christ, and chosen to eternal life, are not all yet called: God sees and knows who are his, and who have been called, and are gone to heaven, and who are not yet called, and until they are all brought in, there is room in the election for the conversion of them.

III. There is room in God's house below, I mean in his Church; there are yet many empty places that must be filled, and God will fill his house with guests; Egypt, Ethiopia, Sheba, must come in; Turks, Tartar, Pagans, and infidels, shall be called: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to the windows?" Isa lx. 8. "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong people, & the Lord will hasten it in his time."

IV. There is yet room in the marriage chamber, i. e., the covenant of grace, into the bonds and bonds of which, Jesus Christ will bring all his elect; they that are deceptively his, and he struck hands for them, and therefore he will espouse and marry them all first or last.

V. And lastly, there is room in heaven, heaven is not yet full; "In my Father's house are many dwelling-places," John xiv. 2. And not one of them places shall be long empty.

Thirdly, why is it said there is yet room.

Why it is
said there is
yet room

Answer. I. Because God would discover his great love to poor sinners, even to the sinners of the Gentiles; and that no poor sinner might despair who is not yet called.

II. Because Christ's mystical body is not yet complete; some members are yet wanting; all the branches are not yet grafted into the true vine and olive-tree.

III. It is said, there is yet room, that ministers may know their work is not yet done; and therefore, be diligent to bring in all whose hearts are made willing.

IV. To let us know the great patience and forbearance of God, though sinners still refuse to come in, and accept of mercy, and persist in their evil ways, yet God sends to them, to acquaint them there is mercy for them in his heart, and a place for them, yea room enough still in his house.

Question. How long will there be room?

Answer. I. So long that God is pleased to continue the gospel, to this or that place, land, or nation. How long
there may
be room.

2. So long as the patience and long-suffering of God is continued, or he is upon the throne of grace, and is not risen up from his place, where he sits between the cherubims.

3. So long as the Spirit of God strives with men, or with any poor sinner: when God said, his Spirit should strive no more with the old world, there was no more room for them in his heart, no, nor in the world.

4. So long as the harvest lasteth, and until all the elect are not called, and some things are not fulfilled that God hath spoken, even until Christ deliver up the kingdom to the Father, having finished his mediatorial work and office.

APPLICATION.

I. Bless God, poor sinners, that there is yet room: O, how good is God, in providing so large a wedding-chamber! and to extend his love and favour to so many! "And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," Rev. v. 11.

II. Let no sinner from henceforth say there is no room; if thou hast got room for Christ in thy heart, there is room for thee in his heart.

III. Comfort. Sirs! It is a sign you are some of them from whom there is yet room, for these reasons following:

1. Because you have the Gospel continued to you; the kingdom of heaven is not yet taken from you.

2. Because you (especially some of you) attend upon the word with diligence, as men that are sensible of the worth of it.

3. Because it begins to reach some of your hearts, and causes you to cry out, what must we do to be saved?

IV. Reproof. Yet it may be, by way of reprehension, to such of you that delay; O, consider you are called to come quickly, presently, and not defer the great concerns of your precious souls, to another day; for the Lord's sake take rebuke: what! will you be like Lot?

V. Exhortation. Haste, haste to the wedding-chamber, lest you never eat of the King's supper, no, nor taste of it; you know not how long the harvest may last, and the Spirit of God utterly leave you, and strive no more with you for ever.

"And the Lord said unto his servant, go out into the high-ways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," ver. 23.

I have already opened these words at the beginning, by way of exposition. These that are here mentioned are the Gentiles, who were out of the Jewish Church, and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and were afar off, who seemed mere outcasts or vagabonds, lying in the high-ways, and under hedges. What this compulsion is we have opened, and showed it does not intend outward force or violence; our Lord never taught any Spanish conversion, nor French conversion; not to dragoon them, or, by inhuman cruelties, to compel them against their consciences; no, this is of the devil, and not of Christ.

High-ways. Such that go on in the common road of sin, or in the high-way to hell and destruction, the ways that all the Gentiles walked before called. From hence, note the

Doct. God extends mercy to the worst of sinners, even to idolaters.

As all the Gentiles were; even such that sacrificed to devils: "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God," 1 Cor. x. 20. They had images, and the evil angels answered in those images, which they called oracles, and thought it was a speech from God, whereas it was the devil that spoke, and them they worshipped; as many of the poor heathens do now, whom they call evil gods, and fear and serve them, more than the God of heaven and earth, and yet God offered grace, and invited such sinners as these, to come to this blessed Gospel feast; which may be great encouragement to the vilest of men, to look to Jesus Christ, and not to despair of God's mercy, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

For I say unto you, that none of those men who which were bidden, shall taste of my supper; that is, none of them, Jews or others, who desired to be excused; and made light

of the gracious tender of the Lord Jesus; they shall not taste of my love, of pardon of sin, of free justification, nor of any other gospel blessings or privileges; they shall not taste of anything that is truly spiritually good; they shall never see my kingdom, nor know what heaven is. O! it is a dreadful and most dangerous thing to slight Jesus Christ, or make light of the offers of grace, or gospel invitations; let all such therefore tremble, who are found guilty of this great sin and wickedness.

“And when the king came to see the guests, he saw there a man not having a wedding-garment on, and he said, Friend, how camest thou hither, not having a wedding garment, and

he was speechless?”

When Christ
may be said
to view his
guests.

Question. When may the king be said to come and view the guests? shall any wicked man get into heaven, or into the wedding chamber, when Christ comes at the last day?

Ans. No no, the door will be shut against 'all unbelievers then; therefore it must refer to the visible church: here many get in amongst the saints, in the church militant, who have not a wedding garment, and Christ will say unto such, friend! How camest thou here, or how gottest thou among my people, not having on a wedding garment, or not being clothed with my righteousness; but appearest in thy filthy rags, in my presence?

Doct. The Lord Jesus takes, or will take a view of all his guests; and if any have not a wedding garment, he will soon have his eye upon such a person.

In speaking to this point of doctrine; I shall,

First, show, what a view Christ takes of all his guests.

Secondly, show, why Christ will or doth take such a view.

Thirdly, show, what is meant by the wedding garment.

Christ views
all our
hearts.

1. Jesus Christ doth and will take a strict view.

1. He will and doth view their hearts: “I am he that searcheth the heart and reins,” Rev. ii. 23. This shows Christ is the most high God, he sees whether all those who are in his church have changed hearts, new, or renewed hearts, or not, whether their hearts be sincere and upright, or not, whether they have believing hearts, or true faith or not, whether they have humble obedient hearts or not.

2. He views their thoughts, to see whether evil thoughts are lodged in them or not.

3. He views all the motions, counsels, designs, purposes, desires, ends, and aims of all their hearts.

4. Christ views the lives of all his guests, or such that are got into his church, he sees how they live, and what conversations they lead, how they behave themselves at home, and abroad; when in the company of wicked men, as well as when among his own people; also he sees what conscience they make of their duty, and what love they have to one another, and to his poor saints, and faithful ministers, and how they carry it in their families, the husband to the wife, the wife to the husband, parents to children, and children to parents. “All the ways of men are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders their goings,” Prov. v. 21.

5. Jesus Christ views their principle, whether they are sound in the faith or not, or hold such principles and notions of Christianity as are according to the holy doctrine taught by himself and his apostles, or not; if any hold erroneous or corrupt principles, he sees and knows them, as he did some in the church of Pergamos; “Thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam,” Rev. ii. 14; which some think was marrying with idolators, others a community of women; “So thou hast also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate;” that all agree was the community of women, as it is said, Nicholas himself prostituted his own wife to others. Let all take heed what doctrine or notions they suck in, and see whether they consist with the revelation of the word, the holy nature, justice, mercy, and goodness of God, “Christ will judge the world in righteousness,” Acts xvii. 31; and though he saves in a way of sovereign grace alone, yet he will condemn none without respect had to their sins, and contempt of his word; “He will judge every man according as their works shall be,” Rev. xxii. 12. If men, by their notions, justify the wicked, whom God condemns, or seek to be justified by their own righteousness instead of renouncing it, and counting it as dung to be found in the righteousness of Christ, and so appear before him without the wedding garment, they will be speechless. Let such that join their faith, and sincere obedience, with the righteousness of Christ, in justification before God, (as they call it) see to it; Christ sees and weighs men's principles, their spirits, their actions; nay, their persons; “thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting.”

Question. In what balance will Christ weigh men?

Answer. In the balance of the sanctuary, or in the scales of truth, righteousness, and justice; therefore, he that is put into the scales without Christ, (or not both weighed together) the law and justice of God will find them as light as vanity; justice, the law, and the holiness of God, will have full weight and measure, thou wilt be viewed and weighed. O sinner, look well to it, you may be viewed by men, and pass for good Christians, but may not bear Christ's view, nor his weighing here, nor at the great day; or men may, on the other hand, condemn you out of prejudice, and yet Christ may find you sincere and upright ones, and acquit you.

Secondly, why may, or will Christ put this question, "friend! how camest thou hither, not having a wedding-garment?"

Answer. I. Because none ought to attempt to come into the church, or to come to this marriage, without a wedding-garment: he alludes to the custom of the Jews, all that were invited to a marriage among them, were to have a wedding-garment.

Why the question will be asked, friend, how camest thou hither?

II. Because such is the clear revelation of the gospel, in respect to this matter. What is more fully laid down than this, that no righteousness of the creature, no inherent righteousness will avail any man? this is so sufficiently declared, that Christ may, and will say, how camest thou hither, not having on my righteousness; but thinks to be justified and accepted by thy own righteousness, or by thy works, or by thy faith and obedience: friend, why didst thou not give credit to my word and faithful ministers? Christ may say, did not I tell you, that all that trusted in their own righteousness should perish for ever? did not I confirm this doctrine by miracles; nay, by my own blood? and, how often did I tell you, that, unless you eat my flesh and drank my blood, ye had no life in you.

III. Or the Lord Jesus may put this question to him, because he had on nothing but filthy rags: what a bold and rude thing is this? Dare you appear, before the eyes of a holy God, in these loathsome rags, who hates all sin and filthiness? O what a pickle art thou in, and how odious and how hateful in the sight of God, and in my sight.

IV. Or, may be, this man was one that talked much of Christ's righteousness, as that only which justifies a sinner before God, i. e., he might hold that notion and plead for it, dispute for it, but only pleased himself with the speculative or notional knowledge thereof, but was no true believer; but perhaps one that turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and sinned because grace abounded; or never regarded sanctification, in order to a meetness for eternal life; but perhaps was one that pleaded for an imputative sanctification, (as some do now) as if the personal sanctification of Christ is imputed to them, for their sanctification, as well as his obedience to the law, and his sufferings, is imputed to them that believe, to justify them in the sight of God, which certainly is an abominable doctrine, and tends to encourage sinners in their sins, and to damn their souls; for without inherent holiness, or the sanctification of the Spirit, no man shall see the Lord.

The notion of imputed sanctification, detected as abominable.

"Friend! how camest thou hither?" such a one as thou without a wedding garment, that spent so much time in talking of, and disputing for an imputed righteousness, or for a wedding garment, and yet hast it not on, but appears here without it? What can such a man say? he, to be sure, must needs be speechless.

V. Or, Jesus Christ may put his question well, to such who have it not on, considering what he hath done to procure the wedding garment. He may say, Friend! did not I take the nature of man, into union with my own divine person, (though without sin) that in the body I might work out a righteousness, or a glorious garment, for all that I espouse? and, dost thou come hither without it? What contempt dost thou cast upon what I have done and suffered? Did I live that holy life in obedience to the law, and die in vain? for so it will follow, if any other righteousness, save mine only, could justify a sinner before God. This, my brethren, is according to what Paul saith, "for if their had been a law that could have given life, Christ died in vain," Gal. iii. 21. How speechless must this render all that think to be saved by any other righteousness, than Christ's alone: besides, Christ may say, is not my church and people an holy priesthood, and dost thou think that any holiness, save that wrought by my Spirit, or imparted to them, can sanctify them?

VI. Moreover, was not this wedding garment offered to thee? Is it not tendered unto all? "Even the righteousness of God unto all, and upon all that believe," Rom. iii. 22. It is offered to all, but it is put upon none, or imputed to none, but to them that believe in Jesus, they and none but they have on the wedding garment; others are naked, even the elect themselves before faith, or before their actual union with Christ.

VII. Christ may say, how camest thou hither? thou art an unbeliever, and did I not

say, "he that believeth not shall be damned?" Mark xvi. 16. And dost thou think to be saved, and make me a liar?

Thirdly. What is meant by the wedding garment.

What the wedding garment is. Answer. You have heard over and over, it is the righteousness of Christ God-man, as he is apprehended by faith alone; and whosoever hath Christ, union with Christ, hath on the wedding garment: some I know would bring sanctification as here meant; but certainly, Christ's righteousness only is the wedding garment: whosoever hath Christ on, put on Christ for justification, he hath on the wedding garment. It is said, the king's daughter is clothed with wrought gold: the wedding garment is put upon the soul, it is put upon all them that believe, it is not wrought in them: the king's daughter is also said to be all glorious within; that I conceive refers to the graces of the Spirit, or to the righteousness of sanctification; but the wedding garment is not that righteousness that is inherent, or wrought in the soul, but put upon the soul; and though sanctification is a glorious work, yet it is not perfect in this life, but Christ's righteousness is complete and without spot, and therefore that which renders the soul lovely in Christ's eye, and so the wedding garment.

Question. Why is it called the wedding garment? Also, what is the nature of it?

See the parable of the prodigal son. Answer. Because I have spoken to it, in opening the parable of the Prodigal son, where it is called the best robe, I shall but touch upon this here; but to proceed.

Christ's righteousness covers all our imperfection. 1. It is a long garment, it covers the soul (as I may say) from the head to the foot; it covers all our infirmities and deformities; it covers like a garment, all the defects and blemishes, that attend our lives, our duties, and all the imperfections of our grace. O what is there wanting in our faith? what defects and weakness in our faith? and how weak and imperfect is our love to God, to Christ, and to the saints and people of God? and who is he so humble, so meek, so patient, so temperate as he ought? the sins that cleave to our graces and best duties, were it not that God looked upon us in the righteousness of Christ, we should be loathed in the sight of God.

There is an absolute need of Christ's righteousness. 2. As a garment is absolutely necessary since the fall, to cover our naked bodies, so is the righteousness of Christ also absolutely necessary to cover our naked souls; and as innocent Adam needed no garment to cover his body, so he needed not the righteousness of Christ to put upon him, to cover his soul: the necessity of this robe came in by the fall, through our want of a perfect inherent righteousness of our own.

3. A glorious garment is ornamental; it makes a poor beggar that hath it on, to appear like a prince; so the righteousness of Christ, put upon a vile and wretched sinner, puts a beauty upon him, and renders him like a prince, or very glorious in the sight of God; thou wast comely, through that comeliness I put upon thee, Ezek. xvi. 14.

4. As a garment defends the body from the scorching beams of the sun; so the robe of Christ's righteousness defends the soul of a believer from the scorching beams of God's wrath, and also from the fiery darts of the devil, and from the power, guilt, and punishment of sin, and the curse of the law.

5. As all old garments are put off by a princely bride, and esteemed of no value, in comparison of a rich wedding-garment that is bespangled with jewels and diamonds, Phil. iii. 8, 9, so a poor believer, that puts on this wedding-garment esteems all his own righteousness but as dung, in comparison of this glorious robe; "upon thy right-hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir," Psa. xlv. 9. The wedding-garment renders the bride amiable, and most lovely in the sight of the bridegroom, and to rejoice over her; "and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so thy God shall rejoice over thee."

This garment none can tear, neither doth it ever grow old, nor is it the worse for wearing. It is called a white robe; but though it be so, yet it has no spot or stain; nor can the value if it be counted; nay, let me add, the holy angels are not so richly clothed, for they no other righteousness, than that of mere creatures: but this is the righteousness of God, i. e., Jesus Christ, the Mediator, who is God over all, blessed for evermore, Amen.

APPLICATION.

1. This may put a rebuke upon such who attempt to come into the presence of God without a wedding-garment.

2. It also shows the miserable condition of hypocrites, who, though they may not be discovered in this world to men, yet Jesus Christ will find them out expose them to shame

at the last day; "Friend, how camest thou hither, not having a wedding-garment?"

3. Also, by this we may see who will be rejected, and the cause of it, in the great day.

4. Be exhorted to seek after and provide the wedding-garment; the damnation of sinners will not only be for their horrid sins and unrighteousness, but also because they trusted on, and depended upon their own righteousness, good works, and inherent holiness.

5. This moreover informs us, of the happiness of the weakest believer; he that has the smallest degree of faith, is in as good a condition as the strongest believer; all are equally justified, or clothed alike, all have on the wedding-garment, all are pardoned and have the same righteousness of Christ put upon them.

6. O be persuaded to put a high value on his robe, and fetch not your comfort and hope of justification, and acceptance with God, from the inward purity and uprightness of your hearts, nor from the liveliness of your frames; yet remember, that all such who are justified, are also sanctified: "Put on the Lord Jesus, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," Rom. xiii. 14. "And he was speechless," ver. 12.

Doct. That when God comes, by Jesus Christ, to judge sinners, they will be speechless, or have nothing to say to excuse themselves, who have not got the wedding garment.

First, I shall prove this point of doctrine.

Secondly, I shall give you the reasons of it. Thirdly, apply it.

I. Let this be premised, i. e., I do not mean sinners shall speak nothing to excuse themselves, no, this is not meant when it is said he was speechless; for it is said, some will say in that day, "Lord, we have cast out devils in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works," Matt. vii. 22. Moreover, our Lord, in another place, saith, "Then ye shall begin to say, we have eat and drank in thy presence, and thou hast preached in our streets," Luke xiii. 26.

What is not meant by being speechless.

My brethren! sinners may speak many words to excuse themselves (as I hinted in the explanation of these words) one may plead his ignorance, he was not learned, and another that he was poor, and had a great charge of children to provide for, which took up all his time and thoughts; also another, that he was misled by his teachers; moreover, another perhaps may plead his moral righteousness, or sober life; another his external obedience and inherent righteousness; but, alas, none of all these things will avail them anything, they having not got the wedding-garment; therefore they shall be silenced, "All mouths shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19.

What is meant by his being speechless.

Their own consciences shall accuse them, and put them to silence, "Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to thy gospel," Rom. ii. 15, 16.

Secondly, to give you the reasons of this point, and demonstrate the truth thereof.

Why all men shall be speechless in the day of judgment.

I. The first shall be taken from the justice and righteousness of God; "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right," Gen. xviii. 25. God will be cleared when he judgeth, and justified when he condemneth; his goodness and righteousness is such, he cannot do wrong to any man, and this every man shall see, and be convinced of in that day; and therefore when judgment passeth, all shall be speechless, or put to silence; hence it is said, the judge "will be upon a white throne," Rev. xx. 11, which denotes the justice and righteousness he shall be clothed with. "We know the judgment of God is according to truth," Rom. ii. 2. "The sceptre of thy kingdom is a righteous sceptre," Heb. viii. Moreover, it is positively said, God "will judge the world in righteousness," Acts xvii. 31. "The Lord shall judge the people righteously," Psal. vii. 8.

II. They shall be silenced, and become speechless, because of that clear revelation and declaration God hath made of the necessity of the righteousness of Christ, to the justification of a sinner at his bar.

The law lays all men under wrath, that condemneth every unbeliever: there is no clothing, no garment to cover their nakedness, by the law, nor any standing in judgment before God in that righteousness; "Now we know, whatsoever the law saith, it saith, to them that are under the law, that all mouths might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19. Alas, the law, or light within, is weak through the flesh, that cannot help nor relieve one soul; and therefore God sent his own Son, and God hath plainly, and positively said, that "he that believes not, shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. That is, he that dies not to Jesus Christ, or takes not hold of his righteousness, and the merits of his blood, or wholly does not rest on him, or truly believe in him, shall perish.

And this wretch, that had not on the wedding-garment, read this text, and many more of the like nature, and yet believed not in Christ, but either trusted to his own righteousness, to his own repentance, tears, contrition, and reformation of life; or else trusted in the simple mercy of God, without having a respect to the sacrifice and atonement of Christ's blood; now this plain revelation of the gospel, so often repeated concerning the necessity of faith in Christ, or getting on the wedding-garment, will cause every unbelieving sinner to be speechless.

III. They shall be silenced, considering what the sacred scripture testifieth, concerning the inherent righteousness of the best of men, calling it filthy rags, and vile raiment, now this being so, shall any dare to appear in those rags? Isa. lxiv. 6.

Object. But it is not in the power of a sinner to get this wedding-garment, none have it without faith, and faith is the gift of God, may not a sinner plead this at the great day?

Which way sinners will be silenced, and left speechless, at the great day.

Answer. But though they know this is so, yet they do not look to God in Christ for power; but perhaps think, they may have this robe without faith, nor else trust to their own power, and they can believe at any time, and this will silence them in that day.

IV. They shall be speechless, because their own consciences will bear witness against them, that they did not what they had power to do: could they not forbear their lying, their drunkenness, their thieving, their whoring, &c., and could they not attend upon the word of God? or go to a meeting as easily as to an alehouse, or to walk in the fields, or be at home? or, could they not give as much credit to the word of God, as to a human history? The word saith, "He believeth not is condemned already; and that he hath not then Son, hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him," John iii. 18—36. Had they not as much power to believe such a record of God, as to believe what is told them in human history? True, it is one thing to have the faith of credence, and another thing to have the grace of faith, but ungodly sinners do not act or exercise that faith on the verity of God's word, which they are capable to do; but rather by their pride and infidelity seem to declare God's word is not to be regarded, but look upon it to be a fiction; and from hence they will be speechless.

The witnesses will silence the sinner in the day of judgment; Who, the witnesses will be.

V. They will be silenced by those severe witnesses that will come in against them at the great day,

1. The moral law will be a witness against them: "Do not think that I accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust," John v. 4, 5. The holy law will be brought in against them (by which they thought to be justified) they having broken it many thousand times, and are cursed as well as accused by it. Does not the law require a sinless righteousness, "This do, and thou shalt live," that is, live and sin not? and doth not the law pronounce death and wrath against all that have broken it? This will silence all that have no interest in Jesus Christ.

2. The gospel will witness against them also; because that discovers there is no other way or name given by which we must be saved, but by Christ alone, and him they have rejected; the gospel offers free pardon to all that come to Jesus Christ, but they would not come to him, nor cry to God, to help them to believe in Jesus, and to change their hearts; therefore they shall be speechless.

3. All the holy attributes of God will come in, and witness against sinners, and put them to silence.

(1.) Divine wisdom will silence them, because that way infinite wisdom contrived to recover lost sinners, was slighted, and other ways adhered unto.

(2.) The truth of God will witness against them, and make them speechless, because neither the promises of the word were believed, nor the precepts obeyed, nor the threats thereof feared.

(3.) Divine power will come in and witness against them, because God's almighty arm was stretched out, to help and save them, but they did not endeavour to take hold of it.

(4.) Divine justice will also witness against them, and exact full payment of all their debts, and call for execution, because the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ was despised and slighted, they not pleading that, for their discharge at God's bar.

(5.) The mercy of God likewise, will come in and witness against them; because all that favour, love, and mercy, let out in and by Jesus Christ, was abused, and abominably neglected. The very flood-gates of mercy were opened, yet they went on in their sinful ways; and because the sentence against their evil works was not speedily executed, their hearts were fully set in them to do evil; and that goodness that should have led them to repentance, they abused, and made an occasion to harden them in their sinful courses.

4. Jesus Christ, the Judge himself, will witness against them; because against

him, his love, and infinite goodness, their sins were committed, they trampling upon his most precious blood, and disesteemed of all he had done. O then the Lamb of God will appear like a lion; and "will say to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," Rev. vi, 15, 16. As the knowledge of the judge is infinite, and his righteousness just and wonderful, so his wrath and fury will be also terrible, "When he comes in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon all that know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. i. 1.—8. He then will say, "Bring out them my enemies, that would not have me reign over them, and slay them before me," Luke xix. 27.

Christ himself will be a Witness against the sinner.

5. The ministers of Christ will be called, it is thought, to witness against them, who offered Christ to them, and told them what their sins, and their unbelief, would bring upon them in the end; but they regarded it not, but, may be, contemned them in their hearts.

6. Their own consciences, I told you, will witness against them, and convince them, that the sentence will be just and righteous. Conscience now reproves them according to its light, but then all clouds and veils shall be taken away, and all these pretended excuses which now they make, shall be gone for ever, and they will see it will be in vain to plead their own good deeds or righteousness, and much more in vain to plead their perfections, which some now boast of; for they will find they have sinned, and did sin daily; that they had very proud, envious, lustful, unbelieving, and erroneous thoughts; as well as many sinful actions; they thought not rightly of Christ, and were mistaken in their moral and inherent righteousness.

Conscience, my brethren, keeps a record of all our thoughts, words, and actions; and in that day this book shall be opened; conscience is privy to all evil thoughts, evil words, and secret deeds of darkness, and will come in and witness against sinners in that day.

Jesus Christ, the Judge, will appeal to every man's conscience, whether it be not a just and righteous sentence that he passeth upon them, and all will justify him in that day. "That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest," Psal. li. 4.

Now, from hence, all these things being considered, every man that is found out of Christ, shall be speechless.

APPLICATION.

1. Let none think to escape the righteous judgment of God, or to hide his sins from his eyes. Now, you may hide your sins from men, but all your secret sins will be laid open in that day.

2. We infer, that God is very gracious to discover in his word how it will go with sinners in the great day; search, and you may know now what your state is, and what your doom will be then.

3. This informs also, that the damnation of sinners will partly be for their trusting in their own righteousness, and slighting of the righteousness of Christ. No wonder that they do not believe Christ's faithful ministers, who tell them of the danger they are in upon this account, and of the vanity of their hopes of being saved, any other way than by Christ alone, since our Saviour shows, they will have the boldness to plead for their acceptance some other way, than by his righteousness, before the great Judge of heaven and earth; for this is clearly implied here.

TERROR.

Let hypocrites, and all unbelievers, tremble. O! what will you do, in the day Christ comes to view his guests, who are without the wedding-garment? Perhaps you may have something to say now, and may deceive yourselves; yet know, that in that day you will be speechless. Will a place among the people of God avail you anything then? No, you will be silenced in darkness for ever.

EXHORTATION.

Let every soul despair of salvation any other way than by Jesus Christ; you must believe, rely upon Christ, be clothed with his righteousness, or perish; then labour to throw your souls upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe with all your hearts. But be not deceived, to think you do believe, unless you find the effects of true faith; faith without works is dead, it purifies and sanctifies the soul where it is wrought in any person.

Do not say, Wherefore should you strive to believe, because you cannot tell whether you are elected or not; for if you believe, this is the way to know you are one of God's elect. Think not you shall have any plea, upon the account of election, in the day of judgment, that will avail you nothing; what, though he hath chosen some men to salvation, will he be unjust in condemning ungodly sinners? No, in that day you will find all men will be speechless, and be convinced that their condemnation will be just and righteous; if men cannot make their principles comport with the justice and righteousness of God, let them conclude they are false principles; for they shall find that every man shall be damned for his own sins, and abominable wickedness, in that day.

COMFORT.

This may be for consolation to all true believers, or such who have espoused Jesus Christ; you have got the wedding-garment, you love the person of Christ, you value the Person as well as the portion, you love the image of Christ, as well as the righteousness of Christ; and therefore it appears, your state is happy for ever.

“Then said the king to his servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into utter darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” verse 13.

It is very observable, that our Saviour ends several of his parables after this dreadful manner, to deter sinners from their evil ways; and to assure them, that hell is a place of intolerable misery.

Binding them hand and foot, shows the certainty and unavoidable nature of their punishment; the unchangeable decree of God shall be executed upon them, and when once in hell, they shall never come out; they shall be as unable to deliver themselves, as a man that is bound in fetters, and chains of iron, can stir or move out of the place where he is cast.

And gnashing of teeth, denotes the great pain and anguish of those torments which they must undergo, for evermore.

“For many are called, but few are chosen.” Many hear the gospel preached, or have the outward call, but few are chosen to eternal life, and so are effectually called, or find the gospel come to them in power, and not in word only to them. But this being spoken to in the opening of the parable, Matt. xx. ver. 16, I shall say no more to it here.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT.

SERMON XVII.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season.

Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing, &c.—Matt. xxiv. 45—51.

WE have the same parable recorded by the evangelist Luke, with a little difference; but whether our Lord spoke it only at one time is doubtful, from the coherence, or what proceeds in both the evangelists; as the occasion of our Lord's speaking this parable; the occasion of which, according to Luke, was that question put forth by the apostle Peter, “Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, who then is a faithful and wise steward,” &c., Luke xii. 41.

The occasion of this parable.

The scope and design of this parable.

As to the scope or main design of this parable, it seems to me,

1. To excite or stir up all believers to watchfulness, and a due preparation for our Lord's coming, according to what proceeds in both the sacred writers, and the duty of watchfulness concerns all Christ's disciples.

2. Another reason of it is, to stir up all the ministers of the gospel to faithfulness, in their places, work, and office, both to himself, and to his church and people, whom they

have the care and oversight of. Indeed, it chiefly refers to them, and shows :—

(1.) That they are stewards of God's house.

(2.) That they are rulers in or over the household where they are set.

(3.) To discover the blessed condition that all faithful ministers of Christ are in, and what happiness shall attend them, in the day when he cometh.

3. It also seems to be a prediction of the multitudes of unholty and unfaithful persons (who call themselves ministers) that there would be in the latter days, or a little before our Lord's coming, viz., such that would be drunkards, gluttonous persons, &c., and such also who would smite their fellow-servants, or be persecutors of Christ's faithful people and ministers, and that shall say in their hearts, the Lord delayeth his coming.

4. And to show what a dismal state they are in, and what a fearful end they may expect to meet withal, at the great day, when the Lord cometh. But to proceed, and open the parts.

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, &c.

Ministers are Christ's servants, not lords, but servants in Christ's house, not lords over God's heritage; and ought to be men of great wisdom, and of faithfulness; also St. Luke call them stewards, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household," &c.

The parts of the parable opened.

Every steward a lord chooseth is a servant, but every servant is not a steward; and a steward over a lord's household is not a mean place of trust, nor is he a servant of a low or inferior rank or quality.

"Whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household," &c.

All stewards may not be made rulers over their lord's household; but only to perform that part of their work, or office they as stewards are appointed to do, which may differ; some are only made stewards, to gather in their lord's rents, others not only do that, but to provide all necessaries for the whole family in respect of meat, drink, &c.

Ministers are Christ's stewards.

Now the pastors of churches being made stewards, have a very great trust committed to them, in the absence of our Lord Jesus Christ; they are called stewards of the mysteries of God. "Let a man so account of us, as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," 1 Cor. iv. 1.

A minister is a servant, so that the honour that principally belougs to his master, he must not take to himself; yet ministers, being Christ's stewards, and also his ambassadors, there is honour due to them, as they represent Christ's person; and such that despise, slight, and contemn them, they will be found to despise, slight, and contemn the Lord Jesus Christ; like as all princes look upon themselves slighted or contemned, when their ambassadors are slighted, &c.

"Made rulers over his household."

Not over households; no steward of Christ is a steward or pastor of more than one church; they must meet, he fed, and worship God altogether.

"Whom he hath made," &c. Men are made ministers and rulers by Jesus Christ. It is the Lord Jesus that gives them all their ministerial gifts, and divine graces. "When he ascended on high, he gave gifts to men," &c. Eph. iv. 8. Moreover, authority to preach, and take care of the church of God, is given to them, by Jesus Christ. He hath left directions about the choice of his ministers, that are to be bishops or overseers, how they ought to be qualified, and how, and by whom (in his name) to be ordained. "By prayer and laying on of hands," Acts xiii. 3.

1 Tim. iii. 1,
2, &c.
1 Tim. v. 22.
1 Tim. iv. 14.

The rite of laying on of hands, was the way of investiture into office, under the law, as well as under the gospel; "Moses laid his hands upon Joshua," Deut xxxiv. 9.

Doct. A minister of Christ is his steward, and is entrusted with the household of Christ, and all he hath. In speaking to this, I shall,

1. Show what Christ's ministers are entrusted with.
2. Show what ministers may be said to be stewards and rulers.
3. Show what is required of them; or show, who are faithful servants.

1. Ministers are entrusted with the gospel, called the mysteries of God. The gospel is committed unto them, I mean, a ministration of it, even all the whole doctrine thereof to study, open and publish it unto the world, and unto the church of God, especially to that household they are made stewards of.

II. The administration of all the sacred ordinances of the gospel, is committed unto them, particularly the ordinance of baptism and breaking of bread, and to pronounce church censures.

III. The care of the church, or whole household, where they are stewards, is committed unto them, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," Acts xx. 28.

IV. The souls of every particular member is committed to them where they are placed by the Lord Christ. "They watch for your souls, as they that must give an account," Heb. xiii. 17.

Secondly, What ministers may be said to be Christ's stewards and rulers of his household.

Ans. Ministers are of two sorts.

Two sorts of ministers in the church.

Acts xv. 28.
1 Pet. v. 1, 2.
Heb. xiii. 17.

Teachers as well as pastors are left in the church.

1. Such who are only teachers, who preach by virtue of their gifts Christ hath given them, being regularly called so to do.

2. Elders or pastors; now, they that are pastors, only are made stewards and rulers over Christ's household; the trust or care of the family may be committed to every particular teacher in a church; no, it is the pastor only that is the chief steward and ruler therein.

Question. What authority then have men to preach, besides ordained pastors or bishops?

1. Answer. Christ hath not only left pastors in his church, but teachers also, "He gave some pastors and some teachers," Eph. iv. 11. These two remained in church, when the extraordinary gifts and offices and officers ceased, as that of apostles, evangelists, and prophets.

If Christ gave some teachers to his church, besides pastors, then such to whom he hath given ministerial gifts unto, may and ought to preach, but the former is true; ergo.

2. Such that have those ministerial gifts, may and ought to preach, though not ordained ministers or pastors, because they are required so to do; "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," 1 Pet. iv. 10. Some that oppose this, would have the gift here mentioned, to mean common gifts that every parent or master of a family hath received, or any gift or ability whereby he may be servicable to the good of others, but do these at all turns of whom they speak, speak as the oracles of God; see the very next words, "If any man speak, (that is teach) let him speak as the oracles of God."

3. There can be none chosen to be overseers or pastors, if there are no teachers besides pastors in the church, because a bishop or overseer must have (among qualifications) this one, viz., he must be "apt to teach," 1 Tim. iii. 2; and also by "sound doctrine, be able to convince gainsayers," Tit. i. 9; therefore there are teachers left in the church, and ought to be trained up there, and due encouragement given to them, besides pastors, and the consequence of denying it, would be pernicious to the churches of Christ. What church dares utterly dispense with one of the qualifications of a pastor or bishop.

4. Men are exhorted to covet the best gifts, but rather that they may prophecy, that is, teach or preach the gospel; but why should men desire such gifts, if they may not be allowed to preach?

Question. Who have right, or authority to preach the gospel, as teachers?

1. Answer. I answer first negatively. Not all who have human learning, or the knowledge of the tongues, although they may be set apart by men to preach; for Papists and profane persons may have learning, and take their degrees in universities, but doth that make them Ministers of Christ, or give them a lawful call and authority to preach. Christ, my brethren, hath not appointed such men to be his ministers; no, nor is the knowledge of the tongues any of the qualifications either of a teacher, bishop, or overseer. See 1 Tim. iii., Tit. i.; in which two chapters, all the qualifications of pastors are left upon record.

2. Nor hath Christ ordained universities, or schools of human learning, to train up ministers, neither can that qualify, or authorize any man to be a true minister; if the word of God be a sufficient rule, (as certainly it is in this great case) for what can any man living say to the contrary, from God's word, or confute what I say? Though I am no enemy to human learning, but have often wished (if God saw it good, and it might tend to his glory) that all that are true ministers had the knowledge of the tongues, but perhaps God hath on purpose chose such who are base things, or men unlearned, to confound the wise and learned, "That no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord," 1 Cor. i. 29, 31.

Learning is good, if not abused; it is a good hand-maid, but a bad mistress. It is indeed a shame to some that have lately rendered men, who have not the knowledge of the

Human learning and a call neither qualifies nor can give any man authority to preach the gospel.

tongues, unfit to preach, as if they could not speak sense, or good English, nor understand the scripture; and what is this but to magnify such learning above the Spirit's teaching, and the gifts of men above those ministerial gifts given by Jesus Christ?

3. Man ought not to preach, to whom Christ hath not given ministerial gifts unto, and capacitated to open the word of life. It is one thing to do it by art or by human learning, and another to do it by virtue of that gift God hath given to a man; and he cannot be a minister of Christ, whom Christ never gave gifts to, nor authorized to preach the gospel.

Secondly, and in the affirmative.

The call to the ministry is either extraordinary or ordinary. But none now pretend to have an extraordinary call, unless they are some imposters that are crept up of late times; but unless they could work miracles, no wise men will regard what they say or affirm, on that account.

An extraordinary, and an ordinary call to the ministry.

1. Therefore, a true regular call to the ministry lies in a true church of Christ; and indeed, the churches are Christ's universities, where all his ministers ought to be trained up.

1. God converts this or that man; he gives them his Spirit, his grace, and also ministerial gifts, of which gifts the church is the proper judge.

2. When gifted, or thought to be gifted, the church may, nay, ought to admit them to exercise their gifts, and try them, nay, try them again and again, "Let the prophets speak two or three, (though one by one) and let the other judge," 1 Cor. xiv. 29, 30. As extraordinary gifts were then to be tried by the church, so ought ordinary gifts now.

Question. What kind of persons ought teachers to be?

Answer. 1. They ought, as I told you, to be sure that are looked upon to be truly gracious, giving no just cause to the church to judge otherwise, but that they are regenerated persons.

What kind of men teachers, who are not pastors, ought to be. 1 Tim. iii. 6.

2. They ought to be humble men; it is dangerous to encourage a proud conceited young man, who is already lifted up and appears to magnify himself above others; no, he must be nothing in his own eyes, or not conceited, but willing to submit to better judgments, wherein he differs from others. What fearful work have some conceited young men made in the churches, and what dishonour brought to the good ways of God.

3. One of a good report of them that are without, that the name of God be not evil spoken of.

4. One that there is good ground to believe, doth not take up the ministry for "filthy lucre sake," 1 Pet. v. 2. Or for profit, as he doth it not for applause; though if wholly taken off of all worldly business by a church, he ought to be maintained, as God hath ordained; but not until then ought he to throw off his calling, or not till he hath a good and warrantable call so to do.

5. One sound in the faith, holding all the essentials of true Christianity, and a man of good understanding in the mysteries of the faith, or else how shall he feed others with knowledge and understanding?

6. He ought to be of a peaceable, quiet, and condescending spirit, and a holy and good life and conversation.

Question. What cause or reason are they to encourage gifts, or to train up teachers in the church.

1. Answer. Because what ministerial gifts Christ hath given to any man, he gave them to the profit of his church, and good of sinners.

2. Because the labourers are but few, and yet the harvest is great; and if upon that account, we are to pray to the Lord of the harvest, to send labourers into the harvest, much more when he hath sent them, we ought to call them forth, and encourage them to preach.

3. Because if otherwise, what will become of the churches in future times, when the labourers we have now are called home? though God can find labourers it is true, yet ought not we to use the means he directs us to use?

4. Because all that have received ministerial gifts, are but stewards of those gifts, and God will call them to give an account, about their improving them in the great day.

Objection. Those that are called may be weak at first, and so it may not be honourable to employ them.

Objections answered, about encouraging the gifts of the church.

1. Answer. They should be employed privately at first only in the church.

2. Christ hath out of the mouths of babes and sucklings perfected his praise.

3. Many now perhaps that are able ministers, were at first very weak;

and had not they been encouraged, what a wrong might it have been to the church of God, and, as the proverb is, use makes perfect.

Objection. But they are tradesmen, husbaudmen, and may such preach, are they ministers?

I. Answer. Was not Moses a shepherd, though brought up in Pharaoh's court, yet before called, he kept the sheep of Jethro, his father-in-law, Exod. iii. 1. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush. And was not the prophet David also a shepherd, before he was called; and Amos an herdsman; and were not some of the apostles fishermen, Matthew a toll-gatherer, and Paul a tent-maker, and wrought at his trade after called to be an apostle: nay, it is thought, our blessed Saviour himself was a carpenter; "is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary?"

Our annotators conclude he might work at that trade until he was thirty years old, Mark vi. 3, 4; for he began not his ministry until he was about that age: and, say they, it is not probable that he lived all those years in idleness: no doubt they cried, the carpenter is a preaching; and this might cause our Lord, in the very next verse to say, a prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

You that contemn tradesmen's preaching, may be would (had you lived in those days) contemned the ministry of our blessed Lord, and that of his disciples; take heed what you do.

Objection. The churches may not be capable to provide a sufficient maintenance for them; it is well if they can provide well for their respective pastors.

I. Answer. The maintenance of gospel ministers, is laid down as fully in the New Testament, as any one duty: but as you heard, the ministry consists of two parts.

1. Such who preach only by virtue of their gifts.

2. Such who are wholly set apart, and ordained to preach, watch over, and take the care of a particular flock; now these being discharged from all secular business, and must not entangle themselves with the affairs of this life, 2 Tim. ii. 4, must be provided for, if the church be able; but such who are only gifted brethren, may follow their callings, and ought not to expect a maintenance, expect a church need all their time, and being able to provide for them, do take them off of their trades, then they must provide for them also.

I Fear one thing that greatly hinders the flourishing of our churches, and obstructs some men who are gifted, from exercising their gifts, is that great neglect of the present pastors. Should we be called, say some, to that office, we and our families may be exposed to want, or to many straits, as we see others now are: Oh what provision did God make for his ministers under the law, and to be sure he would have his gospel ministers as well provided for. Such churches who are rich and do it not, are under great evil. "Who goes a warfare at his own charges? who plauteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock: if we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?" 1 Cor. ix. 7. Are not you more obliged to us, than we to you? As if our apostle should say, what is it we receive from you, in worth or value to what you receive from us? If you have our gold, shall we be denied your copper? there is a far greater disparity between spiritual and carnal things. "Do you not know, that they that minister about holy things, live of the temple, &c.; even so hath the Lord ordained, that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Again saith our apostle, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that taught him, in all good things." Shall poor ministers, who labour to feed our souls, not have bread, and any good things, to feed, nourish, and refresh their bodies, with their wives and children; God forbid: certainly, they little prize either their souls, or soul-food, that show no love to Christ, or his ministers.

Though it is an abominable evil to undertake the ministry for filthy lucre, yet it is equally as great a sin and shame, not freely and plentifully to minister to them who are discharged from all trades and callings, to provide for themselves: O how have the widows and children of some ministers suffered, through the neglect of this duty: it is not enough that you hand out to your ministers just enough to them to keep them alive, but that they may be able to give, and provide for their children.

Object. But some young men, who have entered on the ministry, have brought great dishonour on the name of God and religion, partly for want of parts and abilities to preach, and partly by their scandalous lives.

I. Answer. So have others, who are learned, many of them also being ignorant, or wanted both grace and gifts; both these ways you speak of have brought great reproach on the name of God, if not among us, yet among others.

2. Must not sincere and able persons be encouraged, because hypocrites get into the ministry, to the dishonour of God.

3. The fault may perhaps lay in the churches, who suffer such to preach whom Christ hath not given ministerial gifts unto: Indeed, some of late as well as formerly, run before they are sent, or preach before approved of by any true regular church, or are allowed to preach: such ought to be silenced, and it is a shame to them that countenance such; and for Christ's sake let churches, and pastors of churches, see well to this, and labour to prevent this evil for time to come, that so none may be allowed to preach publicly but such who are of spotless lives (though they may be unjustly reproached) and able to preach, to the honour and credit of religion: it is not every one that thinks he has a gift that is to be allowed to preach, or called to the ministry, "and how shall they preach, except they are sent?" Rom. x. 15.

Some preachers not sent of God, nor ought to be encouraged

Object. But some are very young, that are called out to the ministry.

1. Answer. Wisdom is not always with the aged.

2. Christ called John when young, Samuel when young, and Timothy when a youth; "Let no man despise thy youth."

3. Commonly those ministers who entered when young on the ministry, have proved most honourable and eminent in the ministry.

Thirdly, Who are wise and faithful stewards of Jesus Christ.

1. Answer. Such who dearly love their blessed Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, who serve him because they love him; not by constraint, but of a ready mind; not for filthy lucre, but in love to Christ's person, and his name, truth, and people; "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me, feed my sheep," John xxi. 16. Christ would employ none to feed his lambs, but such that love him and them.

Who are wise and faithful stewards of Christ.

2. Such that serve Christ in all humility; a proud person is no ways fit for this sacred work and office: He that is wise, and will be faithful, is nothing in his own eyes; "To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph. iii. 8.

A servant is a name of subjection, it is a shame for such to be as lords over God's heritage, or seek for the pre-eminence above their place and station; a faithful steward of Christ esteems it a greater honour to be Christ's servant, than to be an earthly prince. Indeed, it is a contradiction to say, such a one is a proud Christian; for he cannot be a true Christian, much less a true minister, that is not humble, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," &c. Matt. xi. 29.

3. A wise and faithful steward of Christ is sincere, he serves him with a perfect heart. David had many infirmities that God overlooked, because his heart was upright in the sight of God.

4. A faithful steward of Christ is universal in his obedience, he will feed his Master's household with all that food his master hath provided or appointed for them; he will not come under a promise to please men, to keep back any one truth or ordinance of Christ, or forbear to preach it, lest it offend some that do not see it to be their duty; "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God," Acts xx. 20—27. Again, he saith, "Do I seek to please men for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ," Gal. i. 10; that is a faithful servant. Let such who promise not to preach up some one ordinance or another to please men, from hence see their fault and be ashamed.

6. A faithful servant or steward feeds the whole household, therefore must have them every meal altogether if possible. He must give every one meat in due season, that is, every Lord's day; therefore he is not to have two households to feed, whom it is morally impossible to feed or give their meat too in due season, and how is a faithful steward of Christ's household grieved, when he perceives many of the family are missing when he gives forth the bread of life to the household? This makes him to complain to his Master, to see such and such places empty.

7. A faithful steward of Christ seeks the honour of his Master in all he doth; not his own glory, nor his own interest; no, but the true interest and glory of Christ; and thus our Lord did, "I seek not my own glory, but the glory of him that sent me." All his wisdom, parts, knowledge, &c., is able to do, he ascribes to Christ alone, and acknowledges, he can do nothing without the Lord Jesus, nor will he add to, nor diminish from, or alter anything which his Lord commands.

See the parable of hiring servants into the

vineyard
opened.

8. A faithful steward rejoiceth to see love and union in Christ's family, all drawing together, "Like the horses in Pharaoh's chariot," and every one doing their duties, and in bearing their burdens, so that there is an equality.

9. He that is a faithful steward, sees to take care of the weak babes, or little children that are in his Master's family, and, like his Lord, he "gathers his Lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom," Isa. xl. 10, 10. He strives to support the weak, and strengthen the feeble minded.

10. He is constant and unwearied in his work; he faints not, though he meets with many difficulties, reproaches, and abuses from some in the family, as well as from others, "We therefore labour and suffer reproach," &c. He will not decline in his work in a day of persecution, nor withhold corn from his people, though it exposeth him to the loss of his liberty, nay, to the loss of his life.

Why pas-
tors of
churches are
called rulers.

Lastly, he that is a wise and faithful steward of Christ, labours to have his accounts to give up to his blessed Lord, that he may be accepted of him when he comes again.

Read Dr.
Goodwin's
last folio on
discipline.

Question. Why is a steward, or pastor of a church, called a ruler?

Ans. First negatively. Not that the whole government of the church is committed to him; he is not to rule without the brotherhood. "If he will not hear the church," Matt. xviii. 17; it is not said, if he will not hear the pastor.

1. But in the affirmative, he is invested with authority or power, as the chief ruler in the church, though there be helps of government, and for any to plead for an absolute or sole power of rule and government, to be in a pastor, that tends to expose the church and members thereof to tyranny, or to the will of the pastor, and so a worse government in its nature, than many civil constitutions among men. In a particular church rightly constituted, is the fixed seat and subject of all ordinances of public worship, and hath the seat of all officers, or organical members, that serve for the use of the whole; and that these with their officers, have the seat of that government that is judicially to bind or loose the soul. The government of Christ's household is ordained or appointed by himself, and not left to men to order and govern it as they think good.

Dr. Good-
win's discip.
page 3.

2. A ruler is to govern by the law, and the constitution of the land, city, or corporation, where he is placed, and so an elder must govern according to the gospel constitution, or laws and rules left by Jesus Christ.

3. Some rulers, or chief magistrates, can pass no act, law, or sentence, without the people, either to acquit, or condemn, (according to the constitution of the government) it must be with, and by their assent and consent. So the steward or pastor of Christ's household, can pass no act, to receive in, or cast out, &c., without the assent and consent of the church.

4. A ruler, that rules well, is worthy of due honour. So ought a faithful ruler of Christ's household to have due or "double honour," 1 Tim. v. 17; yet know, there are some great disparities, between some earthly rulers and Christ's stewards, or pastors of churches, for they are not lords, &c.

5. A ruler ought to be a man endowed with much wisdom and humility. So ought a pastor or steward of Christ's household.

6. In most constitutions, there is one chief ruler who is to be obeyed, &c. So Christ hath made the steward of his house a chief ruler, and commands all the family to obey him. "Obey them that are over you," Heb. xiii. 17.

Hath made rulers of his household. Note from hence,

Doctrine. That a church of Christ is his household.

1. I shall hint a few things to show, why a church is compared to a household.

2. Show, what a house or household it is.

1. In a household are persons of different ages, different tempers, strength, &c. So in a church there are little children, or babes in Christ, and also young men and fathers, some strong, and others weak, and some of a mild spirit, and others froward, which renders it the more hard and difficult for the steward of his house to please them all, and rightly to demean himself as a wise and faithful person in his place and office.

The church
is Christ's
household.

2. What is done in a particular family ought not to be published abroad by any of the household, and if any do it, it is a shame and reproach to them. So it is a shame and reproach to any member to publish to any out of the church, what is done therein.

Church mat-
ters not to
be spread
abroad.

3. Every family is under the government of him who is the chief ruler, and all ought to be in subjection according to his good government. So ought all members of a particular church, to adhere to the good government of Christ's steward, or pastor of his church.

4. It is a great honour to a household, when it is well governed, all knowing their work and places, and living in love together. So nothing is more honourable or lovely, to see a church well governed, all adhering to the majority, and government of it, striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, living together in love, and condescension to each other.

5. The whole household ought to be together at times of family duty, and also at meals if possible. So ought every member to be together in public worship of the church, and when the steward gives forth the spiritual food of the word in due season, to every one.

6. The steward of the household is to see good order kept up in the family; and so ought the steward of Christ's household, to see and labour that good order and discipline be kept up therein, according to the rules his Lord hath appointed.

2. What a house or household is it?

1. Answer. It is a spiritual household. "Ye also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood," 1 Pet. ii. 5.

2. It is a great and noble household. 1. It is called the household of God, therefore a noble house, "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." As the universal church is God's household, so is every particular society, or congregation of Christians. 2. God himself is the chief householder, he is the Master and owner of this household. It is by his laws it is governed they are all his children and servants who are the true and proper members of this household. 5. God himself dwells therein, "Here I will dwell for ever, for I have desired it," &c. Psal. cxxxiii. 14. 6. It is a noble and glorious house, because it is the place where "God's honour dwelleth," Psal. xxvi. 8; and an household where the "Glory and beauty of the Lord is seen," Psal. xxvii. 4.

3. It is a household beloved of God. "The Lord loves the gates of Zion, more than all the dwelling places of Jacob," Psal. lxxxvii. 4.

4. It is called, the "household of faith," Eph. ii. 9. There the true faith of the gospel, and the true worship of God, is maintained.

5. Christ's household is under a special and peculiar government from all other households whatsoever, (though others may call themselves by his name) its rules, laws, and discipline, agreeing exactly with the institutions and appointments left by Christ in the New Testament, and with the pattern of the primitive churches. This household will not admit of any human rites, or traditions whatsoever. This household will not suffer any to alter or change any of the rules of its ancient government, nor receive in the carnal seed of believers as such; but all that are admitted to be of this family, must be qualified according as their great Lord hath left directions in the gospel. True, under the law God's household consisted of all the natural seed of Abraham, or the whole house of Israel, according to the flesh, that being a national church. "But old things are now passed away, and all things are become new," 1 Cor. v. 18. According as the first gospel church was gathered, Acts ii., and constituted, so is, and ought every true spiritual and gospel community or congregation of saints now; we read, not of one infant that was admitted into any one of the apostolical primitive churches. No, none but such who, upon the profession of their faith, were baptized.

"Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing, Verily, I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods," ver. 46, 47. Or as in ver. 21, "I will make him ruler over many things."

1. This shows how exceedingly the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased with those ministers or stewards of his, who are faithful in all things, in the discharge of that great trust committed to them.

2. That Christ's faithful ministers shall receive no small honour, but be greatly exalted in the day when he appears, "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. xii. 3. All believers shall receive great glory, but ministers, who are faithful, shall excel in glory.

Christ's faithful ministers shall receive great glory at the last day.

"But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delays his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow servant, and eat and drink with the drunken," ver. 48, 49.

Doct. Note from hence, "That in the latter days there will be evil or ungodly persons, who will assume the ministry, and hardly believe that Christ will come again, and from thence be led away to live unholly lives.

It may be feared, some of this sort may get into true churches; but by smiting their fellow servant, some think our Lord refers to persecution; and so to another sort of men that call themselves his ministers, who turn persecutors of his faithful servants, or at least vilify, reproach, or render them very odious to all they can, which horrid wickedness Christ will severely punish in the great day.

"The Lord of that servant shall come when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of. And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," ver 50, 51.

Note, that some who are preachers and ungodly men, shall perish eternally; and that such who either reproach or persecute Christ's faithful ministers, shall be cast into hell.

My brethren, it ought to be well observed, how many parables our Saviour ends after this amazing nature, viz., of casting sinners into hell, to suffer God's wrath and vengeance for ever.

U S E.

1. You may gather from what hath been said, who are true and faithful ministers of Christ.

2. And also that the gospel church is congregational, and not national; for what national constitution has a steward over it, as a chief ruler? No, a steward refers to a particular household.

3. Moreover we infer, that as a minister hath received a great trust, and is a great blessing to a particular congregation, so he being a ruler, is endued with authority, and ought to be had in esteem and honour.

4. And that he, and all Christ's household servants, ought to watch, and be ready for Christ's coming.

5. That wicked preachers of all people (especially such who smite Christ's servants) are in a fearful state and condition.

6. Let every one that belongs to this household, labour to behave themselves well therein, for the eyes of God are always upon this household; "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God," &c. 1 Tim. iii. 15. Many have not learned to carry it as they ought, in the house of God, with that zeal, holiness, and observation of the laws, rules, and precepts thereof, under the care and charge of the steward, and good discipline of it.

7. We infer, that it is no small honour to dwell in this house, and be one of this household, and much greater honour and dignity to be an approved and faithful steward of the household of Christ.

8. It may reprove such who belong to this or that particular church or household of Christ Jesus, who are so left to themselves, as to violate the sacred covenant they come under to dwell in, and there to worship God, and always be fed, and under the eye of the steward and whole household; such deserve no place therein, but as disorderly persons, ought to be proceeded against, and turned out of the family.

9. Union, love, and sweet concord, is to be pressed after, and endeavoured to be promoted, by every one that dwells in this family, or are of this household, nothing tending more to the glory of a family, than their walking together in unity, discord, contentions, and divisions in any family being hateful, and to be abhorred; and such that cause divisions in this household ought to be marked and proceeded against as directions in that case are given.

Wicked
preachers
shall perish
with ven-
geance.

THE
PARABLE
OF THE
WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS.

SERMON XVIII.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom, &c.—Matt. xxv. 1,—12.

THIS is one of those prophetic parables our Lord spake; also this and the parable of the mustard seed discovers the state of the church in the latter days, or just at the time of Christ's coming.

Year of Christ's life, 33.

Parables I have formerly showed you, my brethren, are taken from earthly things, or actions of men, to illustrate some choice heavenly doctrine, or spiritual mysteries; and the first and chief thing that is to be considered, is the scope and main end thereof.

The coherence of this parable, and to what time it doth refer.

And evident it is, that our Saviour in this refers to what precedeth in the foregoing chapter, where he answered a question put forth by his disciples, "Tell us when these things shall be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Matt. xxiv. 3. This question is three-fold.

1. Concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.
2. The sign of Christ's coming.
3. And of the end of the world.

The end of the world no man knows, "no, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son himself, but the Father only," Mark xiii. 35. And hence he exhorts all to watchfulness and prayer. "Watch ye therefore, for you know neither the day nor hour," Matt. xxiv. 42. That is, neither the day nor hour when our Lord will come, nor the end of the world.

Now this coming of Christ is either personal or precursory.

(1.) His second personal coming I judge will be at the beginning of the thousand years reign, when "God will tabernacle with men," Rev. xxi. 3.

(2.) There is a precursory coming of our Lord, (as one notes) or a most glorious spiritual coming, to set up a more visible and universal kingdom in this world, which will precede his personal appearance; which I take to be the beginning of the latter-day glory, and which will be at the sounding of the "Seventh trumpet," for then Jesus Christ will begin his spiritual and more visible and glorious kingdom; or "when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ," Rev. xi. 15, 18. One design of this coming of our Lord, is to destroy the son of perdition, and utterly to overthrow Mystery Babylon. "And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming," 2 Thess. ii. 8. Now it is partly this coming of Christ (I conclude) our Lord in the first place intends, though I will not exclude his personal appearance; for I see no reason to doubt, but that the precursory coming of the Lord Jesus is to prepare things for his personal appearance; when, (as a bridegroom) he will appear to celebrate the marriage with his beloved spouse. Yet his coming upon mystery Babylon, or by his bright appearance to destroy the son of perdition, may be distinguished from the coming last mentioned, though both may be comprehended, or included by the Bridegroom's coming. And now at this time, viz., when Christ will come upon Babylon, and begin to set up his more visible kingdom and rule in and among his people, the kingdom of heaven may be compared or likened unto ten virgins.

Year of Christ's ministry.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven," &c.

Even at the ending of the fourth monarchy, or at the time of the utter downfall of the Romish power, when the stone shall smite the image upon "the feet and toes," Dan. ii. 24, compared with ver. 41. "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom," &c., not in the days when the iron legs of the Roman monarch had the power, or when Christ began

A little before the coming of Christ the church is compared to ten vir-

his spiritual or gospel church state, which was when Tiberius the emperor reigned at Rome, though some suppose this is meant by these words, "in the days of those kings;" but I conceive that the Holy Ghost refers to the government of the Romish monarch, when it came to the ten toes, being partly weak, and partly strong, signified by the "iron and clay," which will not, cannot mix together; the "Ten toes" of the image, and "Ten horns" of the beast. Rev. xvii. I conclude, refer to the same ten kings. "And in the days of those kings (which no doubt, is now this present state and time of the Roman monarchy) shall the God of heaven set up" a most glorious and more visible kingdom than ever yet he had in the world, since the resurrection of our Lord from the dead; for evident it is, that this kingdom's state must commence from the declining state of the papal power, and after the passing away of the "second woe," and upon the sounding of the "seventh angel," Rev. xi., Dan. vii. 26, 27. "The second woe is past, and behold the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ," Rev. xi. 14, 15. That is, it does begin to be his kingdom. I am persuaded that all the "seven vials appertain to the "seventh trumpet, and that not one of those vials, or "seven last plagues," are as yet poured forth, nor shall till the Mahometan power is gone, or ceases to be any further woe to the antichristian state, which certainly is near, even at the very door. So that it is evident, the chief design of our blessed Lord in this parable is,

1. To discover what a multitude of formal and foolish professors there would be in the church at the time of this his coming.

2. To stir up all Christians to holy watchfulness, lest they meet with a dismal disappointment when he comes.

I shall in the next place consider the parts of the parable here following.

1. Show you what is meant by the kingdom of heaven.
2. What is meant by the wise and foolish virgins.
3. Why called virgins.
4. Who is meant by the bridegroom.
5. What by going forth to meet him.
6. What is meant by lamps the virgins took, and what by taking their lamps, and going forth.
7. What by the oil and vessels.
8. What by the bridegroom's tarrying.
9. What by the midnight cry.
10. What by the virgins' rising and trimming their lamps.
11. What by going to buy oil.
12. What by being ready, and going in to the wedding chamber.
13. What by shutting the door.

And under the several heads I shall note some points of doctrine.

To proceed :

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened," &c., ver. 1.

The parts opened
1. What is meant here by the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is taken variously, (as I have showed;) but here no doubt by it is meant the visible church, as all expositors agree, so that we may read it thus, viz., then shall the visible church be likened to ten virgins, &c. That is, at the latter end of the world, or a little before our Lord cometh.

And from hence note,

1. Doct. The visible church in the times of the gospel, especially, may be compared to the kingdom of heaven.

In speaking to this

1. I shall show you in what respect the visible church may be compared to a kingdom.
2. Show why it is compared to the kingdom of heaven.

First, Because the church is under a kingly government, or is governed by a king, viz., our Lord Jesus Christ; the church owns no other king or head, lord and lawgiver in divine or spiritual things, but Christ alone; "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King," &c. Again it said, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty," Isa. xxxiii. 22, ver. 17. This King is the glorious Bridegroom of our souls, the government of the church is monarchial, and governed by a King clothed with absolute power and authority, whose will is his law; and yet his government is just and righteous, because he cannot will anything but what is good: "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to

save and to destroy," Jam. iv. 12. We owe no king to have command over our consciences, but Christ alone.

2. Because the visible church is a distinct state from any other kingdom and sort of government. Moses, who governed the kingdom of Israel, hath no command over Christ's spiritual kingdom, nor any other person as a viceroy, the Pope, nor any earthly potentate have any thing to do to lord it over Christ's subjects. What power hath the French king to lord it over the freeborn people of England? (we have a king of our own.) Much less what has he to do to lord it, and tyrannize over Christ's saints, who are free-born subjects of the king of heaven and earth.

3. Because every kingdom consisteth of divers sorts, degrees, and ranks of men, of different frames of spirit and dispositions; some noble, and some ignoble, some rich, and some poor, some old, and some young, some virtuous, and some wicked, some wise, and others foolish: so it is in the more refined kingdom of Jesus Christ, there may be some noble, some mighty, (though not many of that sort). "In a great house are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, some to honour, and some to dishonour," 2 Tim. ii. 20. In Christ's kingdom are fathers, young men, and little children, and some sincere Christians, and some hypocrites, or wise and foolish ones.

4. Because the same laws bind all sorts of persons, within the compass of that kingdom or its jurisdiction, there is not one law for the great ones, (or for the rich) and another for the meauer sort; and as it is thus in an earthly kingdom, it is in Christ's visible church, all are under the same laws, precepts and ordinances.

5. Moreover as ignorance of the laws of a kingdom or state exempts no man from obedience, or punishment for disobedience, because they are published, and may be known; it is not enough for any to say they did not know this or that law, statute, or ordinance; so ignorance of Christ's holy ordinance and precepts in a people that live where the gospel is preached, and his ordinances published, will exempt no man from obedience therunto.

6. In every kingdom there is a statute book, (if it be a regular constitution) wherein all the fundamental laws, statutes, and ordinances of that kingdom are written: so the word of God, or blessed gospel, is the great statute book of the church or of Christ's spiritual kingdom, in which all his laws and ordinances are recorded.

The word of God the great statute book of the church.

7. A king appoints officers in his kingdom under him, to govern and order and manage all the affairs thereof, and to do all things by his authority, and in his name; even so hath Jesus Christ set officers in his church to order and govern his spiritual kingdom under him, by his authority and in his name, and according to his blessed word, and they that submit not to his government, despise the king's authority; the officers are elders and deacons, whose work is expressly laid down in the gospel: nor do we read of any other office or officers he hath left in his church (and to abide) but only those two.

8. And as in a kingdom those who violate the laws thereof, or such who own not the laws thereof, are called to account and punished; so are or ought all such in Christ's spiritual kingdom, who submit not to the government of it, to be called to account, and without repentance to be cast out as such that will not have Christ rule over them.

Secondly, why is the church called the kingdom of heaven?

1. Because the church in its constitution, laws, and government, is not of this world, but of a sublime and heavenly constitution, the legal ministration being carnal, is called a "worldly sanctuary," Heb. ix. 1. Indeed the church state of the Jews (though of divine appointment) yet might rather be called worldly than heavenly, because it was national, and much agreeing with reason and the nature of man; it being a law requiring obedience with the promise of life, and threatening death for disobedience (those moral precepts being the same in substance with those which are written in the hearts of all men;) but the constitution of the gospel church is founded upon grace, not on nature, though some who pretend kindness to her, confound nature and grace together in Christ's spiritual kingdom, being ignorant of the nature, quality, and righteousness of this kingdom.

The gospel church more spiritual than the legal was.

2. All the laws (I mean all pure gospel precepts) in a special manner are from heaven, (as our Lord asked the Jews, concerning the baptism of John, whether from heaven, or of men?) The blessed Jesus positively saith he received his doctrine from his Father, and as the "Father gave him commandment," John xii. 50. And hence he is said also to "speak from heaven," Heb. xii. 23.

3. The church may be called the kingdom of heaven, because the same king that reigns in heaven, reigns in this, and goverus it; he is also always present with his people

in his kingdom below: moreover, the saints are ruled, and do subject to him, so that though Christ is king over all the earth, yet they are believers only who are the subjects of his special spiritual kingdom; he has power over all, but his church is only the kingdom of grace, where Christ by his Spirit and influences thereof, and according to his own laws, rules and reigns.

4. Because the doctrine, faith, order, rule, and government lead to heaven, promoting an holy and heavenly life, and to prepare us for heaven.

5. Because the saints are the subjects of heaven, heirs of heaven, and their names are written in heaven; moreover "Their conversation is said to be in heaven," Phil. iii. 20. They live heavenly lives, and are influenced by heavenly principles, chiefly mind things above.

6. Because the church is a figure of heaven, or it resembles heaven, and ought to imitate heaven in unity, love, holiness, and also in singing God's praises, with united hearts and voices, as the saints and angels do, and shall for ever in heaven. And hence likewise ministers in the church are called stars; they are as stars to give light, and adorn these heavens: and if any of these stars fall, they are said to fall from heaven.

7. Because here is the glory of heaven begun, and look (saith one) as the same sun which fills the stars with glory, yet the same beings touch the earth, even so the same glory which shines in heaven, shines in the church here: hence we are said to be "called into his eternal glory," 1 Pet. v. 10. And also are "set down in heavenly places in Christ," Eph. i. 3.

U S E.

Infer. 1. 1. We may infer from hence, that it is no small privilege to be admitted members of the visible church; what, called out of the world, and not to be of this world, what a blessing is this!

Infer. 2. 2. Moreover, it shows what honour God hath put upon his church below, in calling it the kingdom of heaven.

Reproof. 3. This therefore may reprove such who strive to confound the church and the world together. Sirs, you know not what you do, you may as well endeavour to bring heaven and earth together. The church is a select separated people, and as distinct from the world, as heaven is from the earth, and hath in it different laws to govern it: and so are the subjects, men and women, that are born from above, being of heavenly spirits, tempers, and dispositions.

1. Exhort. 4. Take heed you do not defile these heavens; they that pollute the church pollute or defile heaven. O let us live as men in heaven: also know that the angels of heaven attend our assemblies, and observe how we walk and behave ourselves. But which is much more, our heavenly king hath his throne here, he sits amongst us, and beholds our lives, spirits, and conversations.

2. Exhort. 5. Let sinners take heed of reproaching the church of God, for such "blaspheme God, his tabernacle, and those that dwell in heaven," Rev. xiii. 6. As you read some are said to do. Moreover, let all seek the good, peace, and glory of this kingdom, promote the spiritual trade, riches, and the enlargement of it.

Terror. 6. Terror; woe to them that would pull down this kingdom, or spoil the beauty and glory thereof, or cut off the provision of it, or seek to raze it.

Inform. 7. Likewise this may inform such how vain and fruitless all their labour and attempts will be; can they shake heaven? this kingdom (as to its state Heb. xii. 26, 27, 28. and constitution) cannot be shaken nor undermined, also God will undo all that afflict her in the latter day.

8. Pray for the latter days' glory of this kingdom, it shall be great, "And kings of the earth shall bring their glory unto it."

Caution. Caution. Take heed you raise not tumults, nor cause divisions in this spiritual and heavenly kingdom; they that seek her good, and love her, shall prosper; but Ps. cxxii. 6. such who show a bitter spirit against her, or disturb her quiet, God will destroy for ever, unless they repent. Take heed you do not stain her glory, nor do that which may weaken this kingdom, and grieve this king.

"Shall be likened to ten virgins."

Of these this kingdom doth consist, namely of virgins, and these virgins are the members of the invisible church.

Quest. Why are they called virgins?

Ans. Negatively, virgins do not refer to the female sex only, but to males also, "These are they that have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins," Rev. xiv. 4.

1. Virgins are chaste and not defiled. So the members of the true visible church are not defiled with idolatry, not popish, nor any other superstitions, they hate spiritual fornication. Idolatry is often in the scripture called whoredom, adultery, and fornication. Sirs, many churches consist not of virgins, but of such who are defiled with the fornications of the great whore. Hence in Israel such who kept themselves pure from idolatry, were called the virgin daughter of Sion.

2. Virgins are commonly the younger sort, and are of yielding or complying temper, will bow and be entreated by a lover they like and approve of. So these like young plants bow and bend to the word and entreatings of Christ. Old trees cannot be bowed, so many old sinners cannot be persuaded to bow to Christ, they will not yield to espouse him.

3. Virgins (perhaps) are often courted and tempted to uncleanness, or to unchastity, but they yield not. So Satan tempts the saints, and wicked men tempt and entice them to sin, and to idolatry, but they that are wise yield not, they abhor all such motions of the devil and his instruments.

4. Virgins are often espoused; so believers are espoused to Jesus Christ. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 2; they forsake all other lovers, and cleave to the Lord Jesus in all sincere and cordial affections; they die to the inordinate love of this world, and the law, being "become dead to that, that they may be married to Jesus Christ," Rom. vii. 4.

5. Virgins delight to be clean and neatly dressed, (unless they be foolish and slothful ones) who are often ashamed of their foul linen; but others will have their linen white and without spot: so wise virgins, or sincere Christians, love to be clothed in linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of Christ, called the righteousness of the saints, because it is that which was wrought for, and is put upon them that are virgins, or true believers; and also they love to be clothed with the garment of inward holiness or sanctification, and hate the garment spotted by the flesh.

See the marriage supper opened.

6. Virgins love also to be richly adorned: so true believers love to be adorned with all the graces of the Spirit; particularly with a "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," 1 Pet. iii. 4.

7. A virgin espoused (if wise) hath cordial affection or dear love to her bridegroom (or him that hath espoused her) so sincere believers most dearly love Jesus Christ the Bridegroom of their souls; but foolish ones, though they have espoused Jesus Christ by a visible profession, love other things more than him.

8. Virgins love and take delight in the company of each other; so true Christians delight to converse with each other: "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in thy word," Psal. cxix. 74. And again he saith, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee," Psal. cxix. 63.

9. Virgins are commonly beautiful, or comely; so all wise and sincere believers are beautiful and comely in Christ's sight, being richly adorned, and having the image of God upon them; and hence they, like beautiful virgins, are exposed by Satan to manifold temptations, to corrupt themselves (by false worship and other enticements also,) "I am black but comely," Cant. i. 6; black by reproaches and persecution, and by their own inward corruptions, but in Christ very beautiful and comely, having doves' eyes, a most chaste and single eye; set upon Christ, and delighting in Christ alone.

10. Sincere believers may be compared to chaste virgins, because they hate the hire of an harlot; "They give gifts to all whores," Ezek. xvi. 16, 33. But though the devil offers all the world to entice true Christians to forsake Jesus Christ, and cleave to idolatry, they abhor the hire. What have some virgins suffered before they would submit to unchaste embraces? and pray what have some Christians endured before they would cleave to the idolatry of the heathen; or to the idolatries and superstitions of the church of Rome! Even to the most cruel deaths that bloody tyrants could invent; so that neither the pleasure nor profit of sin, could or can entice the true children of God to defile themselves; and though it is true, God hath sometimes suffered some of them to fall in an hour of temptation, as David, Peter, &c., yet like chaste virgins they commonly (unless fearfully ensnared) withstand all temptations of sin and Satan, as Joseph did.

A virgin hates the hire of an harlot.

11. A virgin, if beset or waylaid, she will cry out, (and indeed so she must or else not be guiltless, but it will be deemed a consenting;) so a poor believer when beset by sin or Satan, doth and must cry out to God, as Paul did, and will not yield or consent, so much as to evil thoughts, and so are guiltless; for there is no defilement or charge of sin without the parties' consent, or the yielding of the will;

A virgin if beset will cry out.

“The evil I would not do, that do I,” Rom. vii. 15. Evil thoughts may not be charged as sin, that are only Satan’s suggestions, if they are abhorred, and the soul cries out: “For this I besought the Lord thrice,” &c., 2 Cor. xii. 8.

12. Virgins are careful to avoid all debauched and scandalous company: it is the counsel of wisdom, not to come near the harlot’s house,” Prov. viii. 5; so believers should take heed to avoid the company of the wicked. “Who can touch pitch and not be defiled?” Who can worship in a false way once, and not be defiled thereby? Or keep company with swearers, drunkards, or profane persons, and not get himself a blot? Dinah was defiled by wandering abroad, or getting amongst the uncircumcised: “Abstain from all appearance of evil,” 1 Thess. v. 22. With the froward we soon learn frowardness.

13. A virgin will not put on an harlot’s dress; we read of the attire of an harlot, this an honest woman abhorreth: so Christians will avoid all superstitious rites, traditions, and ceremonies of the false church; they reject all popish relics and superstitions, which seem to be the attire of an harlot.

14. It is the character of a chaste virgin, that she be seen and not heard: a comely silence is an excellent virtue in damsels: “An harlot’s voice is loud,” &c., Prov. vii. 10, 11. As some persons, my brethren, hang all their riches on their backs, so some professors’ religion is all in their tongues and airy notions. An empty vessel (if you strike it) sounds more than that which is full: so an empty professor commonly makes a greater noise than a pious Christian; empty professors boast many times of their assurance, when a true believer is full of complaints and doubtings. “In the multitude of words there wants not sin,” Prov. x. 19; but a fool by his silence is counted wise. Sirs, frothy and light discourse, discovers a vain and frothy heart; hence David resolved to keep his tongue as with a bridle, while the wicked were with him. “A wise man spares his words,” Prov. xvii. 27.

15. Virgins are apt on every turn to blush, they are shame-faced, but a “whore’s face is impudent,” Pro. vii. 13. God complains of some that sinned “and were not ashamed, neither did they blush.” A true believer at every occasion is ready to fear he hath spoken or done amiss, and the blood is as it were ready to come into his face he is ready to blush and to be ashamed before the Lord; his conscience is tender, and presently checks or smites him.

16. Virgins desire to have manifestations of the love of them who have espoused them; so doth every believer: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine,” Cant. i. 2. The Son of God might be said to kiss his elect, his spouse, (1.) When he took our nature into union with his divine Person. And (2.) When he discovers to us, that he loved us from everlasting, by effectual calling. (3.) When he applies his robe of righteousness to us in free justification. (4.) Also when he stamps his own image upon us in regeneration, and sanctification. (5.) When he seals his love to the soul by his promises, or in an ordinance. For he gives us evidences and manifestations of his love in all those respects.

We are also bid to kiss the Son.

1. This we may be said to do when we own and worship him; we read of some that had not kissed Baal, that is, they had not owned him to be a god: such refuse to kiss the Son, who own him not to be God over all, or that deny his Deity. (2.) We kiss the Son when we worship him; there is a kiss of adoration: “They say to them, let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves,” Hos. xiii. 2; that is, let them give adoration to them, they that honour the Son as they honour the Father, may be said to kiss the Son. Kisses are a demonstration of honour and reverence; as when a man kisses the king’s hand, the king honours him. Thus Christ confers love and honour on those persons who are admitted to kiss him. (3.) When we believe in Christ, or touch him by faith, we may be said to kiss the Son; we embrace, cleave to him as our Saviour, and the Bridegroom of our souls. (4.) When we love the Lord Jesus with a superlative love, the highest love, we may be said to kiss the Son; and thus all the wise virgins show their love to Christ, and own him as their Saviour, and chief Beloved of their souls. (5.) Moreover, there is a kiss of reconciliation; the Father kissed his returning prodigal, to denote he was reconciled to him: when we are reconciled to God and to his ways and people, and are united to Christ, we may be said to kiss the Son.

16. Virgins are commonly strong in their affections; the lamentation of a virgin is put for the debt of sorrow. O what love has a true believer to Christ! (David’s soul was broken with longings after God,) and as their joy is unspeakable when they have his presence, so their sorrow is extensive when he is absent.

See the parable of the prodigal opened, and book.

The kisses Christ gives his spouse. Who may be said to kiss the Son.

17. A virgin is the object of a prince's affection; so are believers the object of Christ's affection and delight. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse," &c. "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse, how much better is thy love than wine," Cant. iv. 9, 18.

Lastly, virgins used to go forth in the night (in those eastern countries) to meet the bridegroom, and attend on him into the marriage-chamber: so believers in the latter days (this prophetic parable shows) should in a dark time go forth with great expectation to meet Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of their souls, as you will hear more hereafter.

The custom of the eastern countries about meeting the bridegroom.

"And went forth to meet the Bridegroom."

1. I shall show who this Bridegroom is, and why so called.

2. What may be meant by the virgins going forth to meet him.

I. This Bridegroom all understand is our Lord Jesus. And though I have in opening the parable of the marriage feast set forth the excellency of his person, (and also in the opening the parable of the pearl of great price,) yet I shall here show why he is called a Bridegroom.

Doct. Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of all believers.

I shall show,

1. How fitly he may be called a Bridegroom.

2. Show that he excels all bridegrooms.

I. A bridegroom all know is one that proposeth to marry, and not live a single life, how happy soever he might be, did he resolve never to change his condition. My brethren, the Son of God, notwithstanding all that glory he had with the Father from eternity, he being his only-begotten Son, lying in his bosom, and was the joy and delight of his Father's heart, and being clothed with all the personal excellencies of the eternal Father, yet resolved to dispose of himself in the marriage: and by calling himself a Bridegroom he declared to men and angels, that he hath a spouse (who as his bride) he resolved should live with him in glory for ever and ever.

Why Christ is compared to a Bridegroom.

See the parable of the marriage supper opened, 3rd Book.

II. And in obedience, as a wise Son he consulted with his Father about this important affair, and would not proceed one step without his Father's hearty agreement and consent. Hence it is said, "The counsel of peace was between them both," Zech. vi. 13. As it was a counsel of peace, it signifies the persons beloved were fallen under God's displeasure; and though multitudes of the angels were so fallen as well as mankind, yet he passed by the first, and fixed his heart and thoughts on a remnant of the lost offspring of fallen mankind, who were chosen and given to him by the Father from everlasting; now this marriage being determined by the whole Trinity, and who the spouse should be that the Second Person should marry; when the fulness of time was come, the Father sent him into the world on this glorious and gracious design; hence he said, "I proceeded and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me," John viii. 42.

The Father consented that his Son should espouse fallen sinners.

III. A man that designs to marry, maketh choice of the person he purposeth to espouse. So Jesus Christ with all cordial affections made choice of God's elect seed amongst the fallen lump of mankind, whom he designed to redeem and betroth to himself for ever: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham," Heb. ii. 16.

IV. When a man hath fixed upon the object he designs to marry, he contrives the proper way and method, in order to the accomplishment of his design and purpose; so the Son of God consulted with the Father, what was best and fittest to be done, that he might bring to pass and actually accomplish this his glorious design, the result of which was,

1. That the Son of God enters first into a holy compact or covenant with the Father, and so became a covenanting party or common Head, Representative, and Surety for all God's elect who were his intended spouse.

What was agreed upon that the Son of God must do in order to espouse and marry God's elect.

2. That he must marry (or take in'o union with his divine person the nature of his elect, or) fallen mankind, and so be incarnate, in the flesh, in the womb of a virgin; for if he was not flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, he could not be a proper Mediator between God and man, neither could he be a fit and proper Bridegroom to espouse and marry us, but, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same," Heb. ii. 14.

3. That in taking on him our nature he became our kinsman, and so had the right of redemption fell upon him, and thereby also was obliged to espouse us unto himself, (or all that were given to him by the Father.) And,

4. That in that nature he must work out a perfect and complete righteousness, which the sacred law of God required, and because the intended spouse was fallen under God's high pleasure for treason and rebellion, (in violating the sacred law of heaven) and was also condemned to die, (and none but he alone could satisfy for her horrid crimes) he foresaw it was absolutely necessary that concerning the flesh he must be put to death for her, or in her stead and room, to all which he heartily agreed, and obliged himself to the Father in the said covenant to do, and readily took that long journey from heaven to earth, to be clothed with our nature, and in garments dipped in blood, so became a suitor, to woo and entreat the sinner's love and affections.

Stop here, and wonder, O my soul! O what a journey did the Son of God take upon him! and what glory did he leave, and into what a doleful land of darkness and horror did he come, and what great abasement, ignominy, shame and spitting upon, expose himself unto! and what a cursed death did he die, that he might become the Bridegroom of our souls!

V. A man that hath fixed his love on a person (he hath thoughts to espouse) propounds questions to her, among which this is one, i. e., whether she be not pre-engaged? and if she be (through folly in a wicked way to her utter undoing) he strives to break off such a sinful and unlawful contract. Now the Son of God well knew that sinners whom he designed to espouse, were entangled in love in a wicked way, and to their utter ruin, with many lovers, viz., with this sensual world and their own horrid lusts, and that many of them also were fallen in love with their own righteousness: which unjust contract he strives to break, and disentangle each soul from all those soul-undoing lovers, and this he intimated when he said, "Unless a man deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." Matt. xvi. 24. Nay, moreover, that such that espouse him must hate all things for his sake, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26. That is, Christ must have the preference, or have the sinner's chiefest love, and affections of his heart; the lesser love in scripture is called a hatred, Leah was said to be hated, because Gen. xxix. 31. Jacob loved Rachel above her.

VI. A man that designs to become a bridegroom, discovers his intentions to the person, and makes offers of his love to her, so the Son of God discovers to sinners his great love, and also makes most gracious offers of his endeared love unto them.

1. He discovers the earliness of it to them; the Father gave him, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love," Jer. xxxi. 3. 2. By his entering into that covenant (I mentioned) with the Father for them. 3. By taking our nature into union with his divine person. 4. By his undergoing all those hard things for our sakes, as reproaches, spitting on, plucking off the hair, and by being made a curse for us, and in dying the ignominious death of the cross. 5. By coming to the sinner's door, standing long, and knocking there. 6. By sending his servants (his ministers) as his spokesmen, to entreat and beseech them to grant him their love and affections. 7. By his own importunate invitations, saying, "behold me, behold me,"—"O come to the waters," &c.,—"Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden," Matt. xi. 28. And multitudes of the like gracious invitations. 8. By the many promises he hath made to them that receive and embrace him in the arms of their faith.

VII. A faithful lover respecteth the person of his intended bride, than more than her wealth, beauty, or any thing whatsoever. Brethren, Jesus Christ sees nothing in sinners to move his affections; for they have neither beauty, wealth, honour, nor good conditions, being in themselves filthy, deformed, lying polluted in their blood, and enemies to him.

VIII. A lover uses all due means and the strongest arguments he can, to engage the affections of the person he loves, so Jesus Christ uses most strong and powerful arguments to obtain the sinner's love and affections, and 1. What can be greater, than the worth, dignity, and glory of his person? "I and my Father are one." "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star," Rev. xxii. 16. "The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. 2. He mentioneth also the greatness, strength, and sincerity of his love. 3. His wonderful riches, being the heir of all things. 4. His shedding of his blood. 5. The greatness of his beauty. 6. His admirable wisdom. 7. The greatness of his power. 8. The sweetness, meekness, and humbleness of his spirit. 9. Also the necessity sinners have of him. 10. And the great benefits all that receive him shall partake of by him. "He that hath the Son hath life," 1 John v. 12. 11. He sheds his love abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost. Yea, 12. He circumcises their hearts to love him.

Sinners were pre-engaged to many cursed lovers when Christ comes to woo them.

Christ discovered very early his love to sinners that were given to him. Rev. iii. 20.

What arguments Christ useth to obtain sinners love and affections,

morning star," Rev. xxii. 16. "The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3.

Heb. i. 2. See the parable the marriage supper, John iii. 35.

the great benefits all that receive him shall partake of by him. "He that hath the Son hath life," 1 John v. 12.

Rom. v. 5.

IX. A lover, when he hath obtained the full consent of the person beloved, espouseth and marries her, so Jesus Christ having obtained the full consent of sinners, *Hos. ii. 20.* espouseth, betroths, and marries them to himself, "For I am married to you saith the Lord," *Jer. iii. 14.* The Lord is thine husband.

X. The Bridegroom hath the bride, she is his only. "I am my beloved's, and he is mine." "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." Believers are his many ways. (1.) By virtue of election, or by his and his Father's choice. (2.) His by the solemn covenant between the Father and himself, by which covenant they were given to him. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me," *John xvii. 6.* (3.) And his we are also by the right of redemption, he bought and purchased them. (4.) His by virtue of conquest; he hath overcome them, and all their enemies who had power over them, and kept them in bondage and slavery. (5.) His by the holy resignation of themselves to him. They renounce all other lovers, and cleave to Jesus Christ.

How many ways Christ may lay claim to believers.

XI. The bridegroom (if a prince or a noble person) settles a rich dowry upon his bride, so Jesus Christ settles upon every believer a vast dowry, or bestows on them, a vast inheritance; for he makes them joint heirs with himself, and makes over a crown and kingdom to them.

Christ settles a rich dowry upon his spouse.

XII. A bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride; so doth the Lord Jesus Christ. "As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," *Isa. lxii. 4, 5.*

He rejoiceth over his bride.

XIII. A bridegroom marrying his bride (if she was in debt, and in danger of an arrest) she is thereby discharged from all fear and danger, for her husband is accountable for all she owed, so by the Lord Jesus marrying poor sinners, (they being before far in debt, owing ten thousand talents) they are thereby freed, and discharged of all danger and fear of being arrested by divine justice, and sent to the eternal prison of hell and divine wrath.

Sinners marrying Christ, they are discharged from fear of any arrest.

XIV. The person that a prince espouseth and marries, (though she was never so mean and ignoble before, is thereby raised to great honour, having his name put upon her, and is become a queen, and hath also his own retinue, or a noble guard, to wait upon her; so all believers Christ marries, (who were mean, ignoble, and base-born,) are thereby raised to great honour, and are called by Christ's name, and have the holy angels to be their retinue, to guard and wait upon them. "They minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation," *Heb. i. 14.*

XV. A bridegroom sympathizeth with his bride in all her afflictions, if he be a wise, sincere, and faithful person. So doth the Lord Jesus. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old," *Isa. lxiii. 9.*

XVI. A bridegroom makes great preparations for the marriage-day, and on that day both are very gloriously adorned. My brethren, though believers are espoused and secretly married to Jesus Christ, yet there is a day appointed for the public solemnization of their marriage, when the bride will have made herself ready; and in that day the king will appear in his glory, and shine brighter than the sun in his strength, in all his amazing grandeur, and "At his right hand shall stand the queen in gold of Ophir," *Psal. xlv. 9,* and hence it is said, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory." *Col. iii. 3, 4.* And indeed (as I conceive,) this is partly the day to which this parable refers; for though the bridegroom's coming may refer to his more glorious appearance in the last days; yet, (as was hinted,) it may likewise refer to his personal coming.

17. The bridegroom at the marriage-day, hath many virgins to attend him, or wait upon him; it was so amongst the Jews. So many virgins shall go forth with their lamps to meet Jesus Christ, and wait upon him at his glorious appearance; but more of that hereafter.

Secondly, Jesus Christ excels all other bridegrooms in many respects.

1. What noble and high-born prince ever set his heart upon such a mean, low, base, and ignoble person, as Jesus Christ ever did? He loved a leper; set his heart upon such that were very poor, naked, and loathsome creatures; even such that were condemned and cursed by the law, and full of sores and filthy ulcers also.

2. Jesus Christ became poor to make his bride rich. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich," *2 Cor. viii. 9.*

3. Christ, the spiritual Bridegroom, laid down his life, or shed his own most precious blood to redeem his intended bride, in which he excels all bridegrooms that ever were. Some have died for love, (it is true,) because they could not obtain the object beloved; but Jesus Christ

died to obtain our love; he could never enjoy his spouse, unless he died in her stead.

4. This Bridegroom confers beauty on his bride; he makes her comely, who naturally was filthy and very deformed, which no other bridegroom ever did, nor can do. "And thou wast exceeding beautiful. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty, for it was perfect through my comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord God," Ezek. xvi. 13, 14.

5. Bridegrooms among men, do not usually clothe and adorn their brides, or the persons they court, at their own proper charge; but Jesus Christ puts on his bride, the glorious wedding-robe whom he found naked or covered only with filthy rags, and also the garment he puts upon her, is of "wrought gold, she shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work," &c., Psal. xlv. 13.

6. Many other bridegrooms cool in a short time in their love and affections; but Jesus Christ never decays or cools in his love to his beloved bride, but his love is ever the same, and a love that passeth knowledge; the height, length, depth, and breadth thereof is infinite.

7. Other bridegrooms are sometimes absent from their brides, and evils befall them, which they neither know nor are able to prevent. But Jesus Christ is always with believers, and nothing can befall them without his knowledge, and that which will not be for their good he will prevent. "Lo I am with you always to the end of the world," Matt. xviii. 28. "The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain," Psal. lxxvi. 10.

8. Other bridegrooms and husbands die, and oftentimes leave their wives widows, but Christ never dies. "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I live for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and death," Rev. i. 18.

9. Death breaks that union that is between earthly husbands and their wives, and they live but a short time together, (though it be sixty years, it is comparatively but a moment,) but Christ and his spouse shall live together for ever; death cannot dissolve this marriage knot; in all which respects, and many more, it appears that Jesus Christ far excels all other bridegrooms on earth, or that ever lived.

APPLICATION.

I. It may be improved by way of admiration. Strange, doth the Creator court the creature! an abused prince fall in love with a rebellious and traitorous subject!

Wonder at the condescension of the Son of God! doth he assume our nature, and become man, that he may be a proper and fit Bridegroom of our souls, and undergo so many indignities and heart-breaking sorrows, to make us so near unto him, as to be his dear bride and spouse, and lie in his bosom for ever; this will be matter of our admiration to all eternity.

2. O sinners, will you not fall in love with Jesus Christ? Can you refuse such an offer? If you do, how will you look him in the face in the great day? He is a coming, his day is near. "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," &c., and do you make no preparation to meet him?

3. What say you who are the virgins? I fear you are asleep, however let all tremble. It seems there are many foolish virgins in the church at the time when Christ comes. You may hate idolatry and all false worship, and yet be but foolish virgins. My brethren, is it not high time to rouse out of sleep, and look out, and prepare, when the Bridegroom is just at the door? let us all arise, get upon the watch, and look out.

SERMON XIX.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins, which took their lamps," &c.
—Matt. xxv. 1.

Lamps signify a visible profession of the gospel, and the true worship of God.

You have heard the kingdom of heaven signifieth here the visible church, and by the virgins are meant professors of the true religion, and members of the church, and by the Bridegroom is meant the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall now proceed. "And took their lamps."

1. I shall show you what these lamps are.

2. Show to what custom our Saviour here doth refer.

Commonly by lamps here, is understood a visible owning of Christ, or the profession of faith, which all the members of the visible church should take and hold fast, viz., continue

in the practice of all the ordinances of the gospel, and so maintain the public worship of God, and the profession of this faith; all these virgins were found, they all took their lamps. Yet a reverend author saith, "Lamps signify the readiness of the churches to meet Jesus Christ." And according to another author (who wrote upon this parable), "the taking their lamps is meant the furnishing themselves with what might be of use to lead them in their way at such a time."

Mr. Shepherd on the ten virgins, p. 39.
Mr. Stonnan.

All (it is true,) ought to be ready, but five of them were not ready; yet all took their lamps; therefore lamps (I humbly conceive,) cannot refer to a readiness to meet Christ, though none can be ready to meet him, who take not their lamps, or hold not fast the profession of their faith. It is the trimming our lamps, and having them lighted, and burning clearly, and also having oil in our vessels, that renders us to be ready to meet the Bridegroom.

And as to what the other author saith, I answer, What can be of greater use to lead us (more visibly and externally,) in our way, in order to meet the Lord Jesus Christ, "than the holding fast the form of sound words," or a constant maintaining and keeping up the public worship of God, and profession of our faith?

All the virgins took their lamps; viz., they had all the lamps of a visible and external profession, and were deemed true worshippers of God. But,

For the further clearing of this, I shall show you how fitly a visible profession of the gospel may be compared to a lamp.

I. A lamp is provided to contain oil, that it may give light to ourselves and others in the night. So a Christian should have grace, that his lamp of profession may give light to himself and to others.

Why a visible or an external profession of a lamp is compared to a lamp.

II. A lamp may be empty of oil, or have but a very little in it. So a man may have (or make) a profession of religion, and have no true grace (or only a little common grace,) in his heart; for it was only that which made the lamps of the foolish virgins to blaze a short time, for had they had the true and proper oil, their lamps had not gone out; because to true believers more grace is promised, and all their needs shall continually be supplied, according to "the riches of glory that is in Christ, or according to that abundant grace that is in him," Phil. i. 19.

III. A lamp must be supplied with oil from another vessel. So a believer's lamp of profession must be supplied with spiritual oil, and that from a two-fold vessel, (or else their profession will soon go out, and give no light in this dark world.) (1.) Primarily and mediately from Jesus Christ, who is the fountain-vessel of all grace. (2.) More immediately (and in a secondary manner,) a believer's lamp of profession must be supplied from within, I mean his own heart. It is said, ver. 4, "The wise took oil in their vessels;" that is, (as I conceive) they had true spiritual oil, (or true faith, true grace) in their own hearts; and he that hath only a lamp of profession, and not oil in his vessel, will find his lamp not burn, and give light but a little time: but the wise not only profess, but also possess Jesus Christ in their souls.

IV. Lamps may have much oil put into them at first; but that may not be sufficient, they must be recruited, more must be put in; nay, they must be often supplied with more fresh oil from some vessel or another. So a true believer may receive a good measure of grace, when he was first converted, he received the grace of faith, the grace of love, hope, patience, humility, &c. But notwithstanding this, yet he needs more grace, or an increase, an addition, or further, and fresh supplies of grace in his heart, to furnish his lamp of profession, to make it burn continually, clearly, and not go out.

V. It is oil which makes a lamp to burn, and to give light to him that hath it, and to others also, or otherwise the bare empty lamp signifies just nothing: so it is true grace in daily exercise that makes a professor in his conversation to give light, and to shine in holiness, by which his profession tends to his own profit, and to the benefit of others. A bare profession signifies just nothing without true grace and holiness. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven," Matt. v. 16.

VI. Lamps must be daily trimmed, or else they will burn very dimly, and give but little light, the trimming a lamp (or candle), is to prevent what hinders (or obstructs) its burning; (we sometimes say, there is a thief in candle) the lamp or candle must be snuffed, or dead ashes, or something or another may hinder its burning clearly, so as to give a good light. Even so must the lamp of profession be carefully trimmed, or everything be removed that may prevent, hinder, or obstruct a Christian profession from giving a clear light. Sin is like a thief in the candle, it will waste it, and spoil or hinder a man's profession from shining, or the corruptions of the heart, the lusts of the flesh,

A lamp trimmed gives a clear light.

and inordinate love of the world, are like unto dead ashes, that hinder the lamp of profession from burning clear and bright. Therefore sin and corruptions through the Spirit must be mortified. Brethren, we must top or snuff the lamps of profession, or take away the dead ashes of unbelief, pride, carnality, and formality, or else our lamps will burn very dim, and be ready to go out—and indeed the lamp of hypocrites, though they for a time seem to blaze or shine, yet they go in a little time quite out, which is occasioned,

1. By reason they had not the right oil, it was counterfeit grace, or not the right lamp-oil, or the true faith of God's elect.

2. It comes to pass also for want of trimming their lamps, they neglect their hearts, and are remiss in their lives, and suffer corruption, deadness, and carnality, to prevail in them; for though it was but common grace that made their lamps to give any light, yet had they trimmed them, or took more care of their outward conversations, their profession might have given more light, and have burned longer also.

VII. The going out of the lamp in a dark night is a very dismal and dangerous thing, especially when a person hath the greatest need of it; so it is a dismal thing for a professor to have the lamp of profession to go out in the dark time of temptation, or in a time of dark providences, or perhaps just before the Bridegroom's coming.

Secondly, To what custom doth our Saviour here refer, or by taking lamps alludeth unto?

1. Answ. No doubt our Lord hereby alludes to the custom of the Jews and other people in those eastern countries, who held their nuptial or marriage feasts in the night, from whence this parable is taken. The custom was this, viz.:—Young men and virgins in the night went forth to meet the bridegroom, as he was coming to the marriage chamber; among the Grotius. Jews, it was with lamps, and among the Romans with torches. Among the Jews all that were invited were bid to bring their burning lamps with them, and by the bright shining, or clear light of their lamps, the glory of the marriage solemnities was much greater, the light of those lamps shining by them; and such who had not lamps lighted and burning, were not admitted into the wedding-chamber.

2. Our Saviour also may allude to lamps here, because a lamp or a candle is a proper light for us in the night; and hence David saith, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet," Psal. cxix. 105; not only a light as of the sun by day, or in prosperity, but as a lamp in the night of adversity, or under dismal and dark dispensations, or amazing providences, and times of temptation.

3. A lamp burning with clear light, may denote a true believer's readiness for to meet the Bridegroom in the marriage-chamber; the righteousness of the saints in Sion "is compared to a lamp that burneth, and to this our Lord alludeth in another place: "Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately," Luke xii. 33, 36. That is, be every way ready. The Bridegroom being come to the marriage-chamber amongst the Jews, it seems on a sudden knocked, to let the virgins of the bride-chamber in; but none, as I said, were admitted but such who had their lamps lighted and clearly burning. So none shall be admitted into the marriage-chamber by Jesus Christ, but such who are ready, having not only lamps, but oil in their vessels, and who in grace and holiness shine in their conversation.

Some in our days pretend to have oil in their vessels (i. e.), saving grace in their hearts, who have not right-made lamps, that is, they have not the true profession of the Christian faith; they boast of the power of godliness, but condemn the true form, or have not kept Rom. vi. 17. that form of doctrine that was once delivered by Christ and his apostles.

It is also called the "form of sound words, and also the form of godliness." These men "have a form of their own" devising, 2 Tim. i. 13, iii. 5, but neither have the true constitution of a gospel church, nor the doctrine and discipline thereof, but pretend to walk by the light which is within them (and in all men), which cannot either discover the true Christ, the true faith, nor the true church: for neither of these are known but by the gospel, (or the sacred word of God)—it is good and commendable to have lamps, nay, absolutely necessary, and such that are also fashioned by the merring pattern, though without oil that lamp will avail no man anything, we must have both the form and the power of godliness.

"And went forth." &c.

1. Their going forth doth doubtless imply that all these virgins looked upon themselves to be chosen and invited persons, (or such that were called to attend the bridegroom on the marriage day) i. e., they all thought themselves to be saints and godly Christians, though some of them were mistaken.

2. Their going forth may denote their great expectation of being received and kindly en-

tertained by Jesus Christ, when he comes; this certainly must needs be meant hereby: who would go forth to meet the bridegroom as virgins of the marriage-chamber. (according to the custom of the people in those eastern nations) that did not conclude they were some of those select and chosen ones, to attend the bridegroom?

3. It may also signify that desire and longing which they seemed to have, to see and behold the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

4. Their going forth be sure denotes that visible profession they made of Jesus Christ, owning his worship and ordinances, which our Lord hath appointed to remain in the church until he comes, as baptism and the Lord's supper: "Let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach." To this also the Holy Ghost alludes in the sacred song, "Go thou forth by the footsteps of the flock," Cant. i. 7.

5. This going forth to meet the bridegroom in the wise virgins, may denote their great love and affections to the Lord Jesus Christ, and their longings to see him, as when Isaac went forth to meet Rebecca; and Joseph went forth to meet his father Jacob, Gen. xlii. 20; it is for full enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

6. It may also denote that great confidence that was in all these professors and church members. My Brethren, there are a number of persons that may have great confidence, both living and dying, and yet at last may be disappointed. Nay, and Christ (as one observes) can hardly beat them off from their hope and confidence. "I tell you, I know you not—I profess I know ye not." The wise virgins knew not there were so many foolish ones among them, they took them to be true Christians. O what need have we to try and examine ourselves, and see whether Christ be in us or not, or whether we have oil in our vessels or not. Some think they are in a good estate, because they are hearers of the word; but alas, these did not only hear, but obeyed Christ in all his external ordinances, and were members of his church, and held communion with the saints, and went out into a visible profession, with expectation to meet the Bridegroom.

Doctr. That Jesus Christ at his second coming, cometh, or will come, as a Bridegroom to his people, to marry his spouse, and then will publicly hold his marriage solemnity.

Those expositors, who in speaking to this parable, make it their chief business to open the soul's espousal to Christ, I humbly think, greatly mistake the scope and design of our Lord; for that I think is not so much intended here, as it is to put us in mind of his coming to the marriage chamber at the last day, and to be ready for it: as to the espousing of Christ, which I have spoken to that in opening the parable of the marriage supper, to which I shall refer my reader. I shall not therefore insist upon matters of that nature here.

See the parable of the marriage supper opened.

Now in speaking to this proposition,

1. I shall prove the truth thereof.

2. Show what a day of solemnity that day will be. 3. Apply it.

I have showed already that Christ is the bridegroom here meant; and the present time, my brethren, is the wooing time, or the day of our espousal to the Lord Jesus Christ; and it is said, a virgin espoused is a man's wife, and from hence the church is called the Lamb's wife, who shall be presented a chaste virgin unto Christ, which shows the public marriage day is not yet come, though ministers (as Christ's spokesmen) are said to espouse sinners to him, and they are also said now to be married to him. "Let us be glad, and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready," Rev. xix. 7. This time refers to the day of Christ's second coming. But,

2 Cor. vi. 2.
Rom. vii. 4.

Secondly, to show you what a glorious solemnity that marriage day will be.

I. It will be a day of clearing up, or resolving of all doubts, and for ever scattering of all tears. May be many godly Christians now do much question the truth and sincerity of their faith in, and love to, the Lord Jesus Christ; but then it will be fully known they did truly believe in him, and sincerely love him, and they shall never have any more doubts about it.

What a kind of day the marriage day will be,

II. This marriage day will be the day of the manifestation of the greatness of the love of Christ to his spouse, and unto every believer; I mean they shall more clearly and sensibly know the greatness of his love to every one of their precious souls in that day; "and to know that I have loved thee," Rev. iii. 9. True, by his word and providences, Christ makes this partly known now, but not so fully as he will in that day, and not make it manifest to themselves only, but others shall in that day know it also, who perhaps thought that Christ loved them not, because he so sorely afflicted them whilst in this world.

III. It will be a day without clouds; all darkness shall then for ever be vanquished,

and all tears wiped away from the faces of all God's children; it will be the day of joy and gladness of Christ's heart, Cant. iii. 11, and of the hearts of all believers; (crowns were wont to be worn on the marriage day of a prince): so Christ then will not only have his crowns on his head, but his spouse and beloved bride shall be crowned also; yea, every believer shall in that day have a crown of glory on his head; Christ will rejoice over his bride, and she shall rejoice with him with unspeakable joy, their hearts shall rejoice; "But I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you," John xv. 22. No day like this marriage day, and good reason there will be for it.

IV. It will be a day of great glory and splendour, which may appear by considering these things following.

1. Jesus Christ will appear then like a glorious king in all his royalties, such a king before did no created being ever behold; (though in a figure Peter, James, and John had a small representation of his glory in the holy mount in the transfiguration). My brethren, some have been amazed to behold the glory of an earthly prince on his marriage-day, and no doubt but the marriage of King Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter (which might be a type of this solemnity) exceeded all that ever was on earth. But O what will be the glory of this day, when the Son of God will have on all his rich and glorious wedding robes, and appear in the glory of the Father, and when his spouse the queen shall also be brought unto the king, in raiment of needle-work, and stand before him clothed with wrought gold of Ophir," Psal. xlv. 9. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4. The heavenly Queen will on that day shine in rich heavenly pearls, jewels, and diamonds.

2. In respect of that glorious attendance or retinue, which Jesus Christ and his bride shall have to wait upon them; viz., all the mighty and glorious angels, whose glory be sure will be very great, and no doubt but their glory (though they are spirits) shall be manifested to the saints. Sirs, poor believers now lie among the pots; but what saith the Lord? "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall your wings be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," Psal. lxxviii. 13.

V. The glory and happiness of the saints in that day will be wonderful, in respect of the sight that will be then seen.

(1.) The admirable glory of the Father, which will appear in the person of Jesus Christ, for otherwise no created being could behold; for they shall see God. I do not say the 1 John iii. 1, 2. essence of God, for such who affirm that (I humbly conceive they know not what they say; not in Christ's person as a proper medium we shall see the Father. And,

(2.) We shall behold Christ as he is, now glorified in heaven.

(3.) We shall also see all the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, blessed martyrs and ministers, and all the saints of Jesus Christ, that ever lived; O what a sight that will be.

VI. It will be a glorious solemnity, in respect of that heavenly melody; O what songs will they be, that the heavenly hosts of saints and angels shall sing; no mortal (be sure) could hear it; it will be so ravishing, when all the saints shall join with the angels, and sing in sweet comfort.

VII. In respect of those rivers of celestial pleasures, which will abide for evermore; they will be pure, sweet, and soul-satisfying pleasure, without any sting, cloying or surfeiting; all the choicest (and lawful) delights and pleasures of this world are, my brethren, but a shadow of those heavenly pleasures: "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. Thou wilt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures," Psal. xvi. 11; Psal. xxxvi. 8.

Rivers denote the quantity or abundance of them: thy pleasures, thy joys they are the joys of our Lord, that signifies the quality of them.

VIII. In respect of that wonderful knowledge believers shall attain unto: "When that which is perfect is come, then shall that which is in part be done away. But then we shall know as we are known," 1 Cor. xiii. 10. 12.

Whilst, brethren, we are here in this body, we know as children, see as children, but then we shall arrive to perfection in knowledge; we shall know fully, or in great and wonderful manner, though not in the same degree of the fulness and perfection whereby God knows us, for that is impossible, how large soever the vessel be, for God is infinite and we (though glorified) are but finite creatures. However, we shall have a wonderful knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, and of the secrets of God, of his decrees and purposes, which here we understand and look darkly unto: and also shall know more fully the nature of God's redeeming love, Christ's redeeming love, and his espousing love. Moreover, we shall have a full knowledge of one another, and of all the saints, whom we

never saw before, though we hear much of them. Certainly one great part of the glory of that day will consist in that amazing knowledge we shall arrive at. My brethren, we shall know then what heaven is: ah what a little do we now understand of that glorious place, which is called paradise, and the throne of God.

IX. I might speak of the power, rule, and authority, which the saints shall have in that day, and how kings shall bow down before them, and men and devils be judged by them; the saints (with Christ) shall judge the world.

APPLICATION.

1. Infer. We may from hence see what fools the men of the world are, who slight all the joys above, and condemn the glory of this happy day; they are more pleased with toys and rattles, than with true riches, glory and satisfying delights and pleasures of heaven; they value the shadow above the substance, they would be seemingly happy for one day, and choose that rather, than be really and eternally happy, or happy indeed; if there was, sirs, no punishment of loss, to lose God, Christ, and everlasting joys and consolations, what is such a loss?

2. Be exhorted you that are professors and children of God, to prepare to meet the Bridgroom of your souls. Exhort.

FOR MOTIVES.

1. Consider, the design and scope of this parable, is (as I said) to excite us all to a due preparation, or to be ready for the marriage day. Motives to prepare to meet the Bridgroom.

2. Consider that you are espoused, who are true believers, by Jesus Christ; you are the person whom the king in that day will publicly marry, and embrace in his arms, and crown with glory, and set down in his throne. O make ready, hast to the wedding chamber. Rev. iii. 21.

3. You are gone forth by your visible profession to meet the Bridgroom, you are gone out of yourselves, trust not in yourselves, and be gone out of Babylon, and out of all false worship; you are therefore called virgins, this is really so, or but in appearance only. O how sad will it be, if be not in reality; let this motive stir us all up to a due preparation for the marriage day.

4. Consider that now the Bridgroom's coming is very near; now the slumbering time of the virgins is upon us, though near gone, and all things long towards the time of the end. Some years ago what a cry was heard, behold the Bridgroom cometh, and with what expectation did many in this nation go forth to meet him, not thinking he would yet tarry: this is that time in which he is said to tarry, but it is near expired. Though I look for a dark hour just before the day-break.

5. Consider the end and design of the whole of the Christian religion, is to enjoy the lovely Bridgroom. Brethren, the end I say, of all our religion, faith, and expectation is lost as to us, if you and I are not prepared and absolutely ready to meet Jesus Christ. Why did Christ die? why is the gospel preached? why is grace given? why are prayers made? why is holy watchfulness pressed upon us? why is grace to be exercised? why are trials and afflictions patiently borne, but that we might glorify God and Jesus Christ here, and be ready or fully prepared to meet him, be embraced by him, and glorified with him for evermore? Is our hope in this life? God forbid; for then we are of all men most miserable. Is not the end of our faith the salvation of our souls? The design of the whole of all religion is to fit and prepare us for the Bridgroom's coming.

6. None but they only that were ready, went into the wedding-chamber, the door was shut against all others; or rather it will be shut, and how vain then will all their religion be, who are unprepared! what will the foolish virgins do at that day? Many professors do but deceive themselves and others, who think they are going to heaven, when they are indeed going to hell.

7. It is, my brethren, a great disparagement to the Lord Jesus Christ; nay, a slighting of him, and a casting contempt upon his glorious appearance, not to be prepared for his coming, as if he was not worthy of our utmost diligence, or as if this was not matter of the highest importance.

8. Consider, that our carelessness about preparing for Christ's coming, bespeaks want of love to him: what! love the Lord Jesus, and not prepare for the marriage day? Moreover, it may bespeak the want of faith touching his appearance, and this because he seems to delay his coming. About fifty years ago what a mighty expectation was there of Christ's coming, and of the near approaching of his kingdom; (but lo, an amazing hour intervenes) and

a second war is commenced by the beast, and all this tending to the slaying the witnesses, by which great security seized upon the Lord's people, and but few now think or speak of Christ's kingdom; it is but little talked of, and doth not thus intimate a declension of love to him? "The love of many waxeth cold." Most professors pursue the world, and, I fear, serve the world, and forget their Sovereign, and as the proverb goes, out of sight, out of mind.

9. We read of great preparation, and purifications of virgins for their marriages with earthly princes; and shall not these spiritual virgins labour after soul-preparation and purification for their marriage with the Prince of heaven and earth? see Esther ii. 12. "Now when every maid's turn was come to go to the King, after she had been twelve months, for so were the days of their purification accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours." Thus these virgins were prepared and purified to be accepted by the king Ahasuerus, and shall not believers much more strive to be prepared, beautified, and perfumed with all the sweet odours of divine and rich oil of the Spirit, and precious grace, for the embraces of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of their souls, and King of heaven and earth?

II. By way of caution. Let the virgins take heed they are not mistaken touching their state, and by self-confidence, or by a feigned, and more presumptuous faith, deceive themselves, and rest in a hope that will make them ashamed, such as the foolish virgins had. A true believer's hope is such that it maketh them not ashamed: "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," Rom. v. 5; no, no, it is a hope that he that hath it, is purged and purified: "He that hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as he is pure." I John iii. 3. This hope! what hope? why hope when Christ appears to be like unto him, prepared for him, and to see him as he is. Grace, whether it be the grace of faith, hope, or love, is of a soul-transforming and heart-purifying nature; grace hath in it a sanctifying quality.

III. Trial, my brethren, what need is there that we try and examine ourselves as to our graces and safeness of our condition, and about that due preparation called for. And in order to this, let me hint some of my fears. Sirs, the present state of professors makes it appear doubtful, whether many have true faith in, and love to Christ or not.

1. For religion in the notion of it, it may be feared is got too much in the heads of many, but too little, if at all, into their hearts and lives.

2. Many also are found smiting their fellow-servants, by reproaching and vilifying them. What scandals have some ministers unjustly cast upon others, and some wicked members, false brethren, raised and spread of faithful ministers.

3. What may we think of the general decay of the power of religion and practical godliness? the power of which lies. (1.) In a contempt of this world, and in being weaned from it, or in dying to all earthly things. (2.) In self-denial, humility, and self-abasement. (3.) In holy walking with God in prayer, watchfulness, meditation, mortification, and in a great restlessness after a further likeness unto God. (4.) In preferring the good of others, and promoting Christ's public interest with the peace and unity of the churches. But now, alas, all generally seek their own things, not Christ's things, not his interest, not the good of one another, not contemning, but rather loving the world; not seeking peace, love, and union, but rather foment strife, discord, divisions, and contention in churches; no doubt but these things are bad signs that there are many foolish virgins in the churches in these days, and that the Bridegroom is near.

4. What is the reason the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ is no more talked of? Are we, my brethren, like those the psalmist speaks of; "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power, to make known to the sons of men his noble acts, and glorious majesty of his kingdom," Psal. cxlv. 11. Alas, now-a-days these things are little talked or spoken of, but professors talk of the world, of their trades, of their losses, or else of their notions, but not how to revive the cause of Christ, how to strengthen and preserve peace, love, and union, and to provoke one another unto good works; but to conclude with this proposition.

Sinners, what say you concerning Christ's coming? you hear some that have Counsel and warning to sinners. lamps, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom, shall not be suffered to go into the wedding-chamber. O then what little ground have you to expect it! if professors fall short, what will become of you that are profane? you have no oil, no lamps, nor see any beauty in Christ to desire him; certainly your case will be very sad in that day; you are married to the world, to your lusts, to your own foolish opinions of your good condition, while others are married to the law, or to their own righteousness, and others

to idolatry, to the traditions of men, and to foolish superstitions, and some others to their errors, and to abominable and damnable heresies.

O come, resolve to cleave to the Lord Jesus, embrace him, get faith in him, cry to him, and leave your cursed sins and wicked ways; for know assuredly, Christ comes, he comes: "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give unto every one according as his works shall be," Rev. xxii. 12. If you do not go forth to meet him, he will quickly meet you, but not like a bridegroom, not like a lamb, but like a lion, like an enemy to tear and devour you in his wrath.

SERMON XX.

And five were wise, and five were foolish.—Matt. xxv. 2.

FROM hence observe,

Doct. That in the church in the latter days, though there will be some wise or pious Christians, yet there will be many foolish professors, or false and hypocritical ones also.

In speaking to this point of doctrine, I shall

1. Show what is meant here by wisdom, or by being wise.
2. Show wherein the wisdom of pious Christians does consist.
3. Show wherein the folly of the foolish also consisteth.
4. Apply it.

I. Negatively, I shall show you wherein the wisdom here meant does not consist. Wherein true wisdom consisteth not.

It consisteth not in that which the men of the world call and count wisdom.

1. Not in being wise or crafty to get the world, and to grow great and rich, or in getting abundance of earthly wealth; such men I know are counted wise, but these being not rich towards God, the Lord calls fools: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Is not he a fool that labours for the wind, and pursues a shadow, who, in gaining the world, loseth his own soul?

2. True wisdom is not in studying more the knowledge of the law of our country, or laws of the land, than the knowledge of the law of God, and the knowledge of Christ and his glorious gospel; though some cry up this sort to be wise men, understanding men, they know the law, and can give as good counsel as lawyers themselves; and so they may, and yet be but grand fools, in respect of the wisdom meant in this parable; they study the law, but study not the knowledge of themselves, they know the law, but know not Jesus Christ.

3. True wisdom consisteth not in human learning, or in the knowledge of the tongues, or of human arts and sciences; it is not in them who esteem of the knowledge of these things above the knowledge of a crucified Christ, they have attained to natural, moral, and metaphysical, and all curious philosophical notions, and these men are counted by some the only wise men; and such who have not this knowledge, though endowed with true spiritual knowledge and gifts from Christ, they are slighted and contemned by them. But this wisdom is not that by which men come to know God in Christ. See what Paul saith, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Again he saith, "for after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God," 1 Cor. i. 23, 21; after that way, or according to the profound depths of God's wisdom, the world by their wisdom knew not God; no, they were so far from approving or understanding the wisdom of God in a mystery, or as it is revealed in a crucified Christ, that they count it foolishness; that wisdom that God counts foolishness is magnified, and esteemed the chief wisdom, and the wisdom of God accounted by them foolishness.

4. Nor doth this wisdom consist in bare head or mere speculative knowledge, though it be in divine things; "Men may understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge," 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2; that is whatsoever is notional or speculative, whether divine or human, and yet have not one dram of saving wisdom. Knowledge puffs up, &c., such are conceited, and wise in their own eyes, and therefore fools, and not wise men.

5. This wisdom lies not, or consisteth not merely in a wise and prudent behaviour, or in a man's wise and discreet management of himself, and of all his worldly affairs; for though much folly may be in those who prudently manage their earthly business and con-

cerns, yet such who with prudence order such matters, may utterly neglect their souls, or seek not, regard not the things of another world. In a word, the wisdom our Lord refers to, is not worldly wisdom, or the wisdom that is from beneath.

2ndly. In the affirmative.

What it is to be wise indeed.

1. This wisdom consisteth in the true fear of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," Prov. ix. 10; the beginning of knowledge, "But fools despise wisdom and instruction," Prov. i. 7. And again Solomon saith, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, arrogancy, and the evil way," &c., Prov. viii. 13.

No man is truly wise, that is not truly godly; all sinners are fools, and are often so called.

True wisdom lies in knowing the chief good, and how to obtain and possess it.

2. This wisdom lies in the knowledge of the chiefest evil, so as to escape it, and in the knowledge of the chief good so as to obtain and possess it. Sin is the chiefest evil, and God is the chief good, and to know God truly in Christ, or with a saving knowledge, is that wisdom our Lord refers here to.

3. True wisdom consisteth in knowing what we want to make us truly happy, and to endeavour to obtain that good which will make us blessed for ever. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xviii. 3. He that hath this knowledge, i. e., that understands the principle, together with the means, and end, that universally is necessary to the possession, or enjoyment of that which renders a man blessed in soul and body for ever, is certainly a wise man. These things more generally show what is true wisdom.

A wise man knows himself and the worth of his soul.

He knows what originally made him miserable.

He knows the nature of God, and of the law of God.

I. A man that is truly wise knows himself; he knows the worth of his own soul, together with the vast capacity and comprehension of it, and what object can answer all its wants, fill all its desires, and yield it full and perfect satisfaction; which nothing can do but an interest in God himself.

II. Now in order to this, he must know what it was which made his soul miserable, nay, both soul and body, which was the loss of God, and of his blessed image by sin.

III. True wisdom consisteth in the knowlege not only of the rectitude of God's holy nature and attributes, but also in the knowledge of the law of God, which is a written impression of his image.

IV. Moreover, it consists in knowing how impossible it is for a man in his fallen state to be justified by his own righteousness, in obedience either to the law or gospel; he is wise that knows how God's wrath is appeased to him; and his justice satisfied, and hath obtained remission of sin through the blood of Christ. The foolishness of the Jews appeared in their ignorance of these things. "Being ignorant of the righteousness of God," &c. Rom. x. 3. And in this also appeared the folly of the Greeks. "Alas! they counted justification by Christ's obedience, or by a slain or crucified Christ, to be foolishness, and thereby showed themselves to be fools, the worst of fools, who thought all fools but themselves.

True wisdom consisteth in the knowledge of the way, means and ends.

V. True spiritual wisdom consisteth not in knowing the way of salvation only, but the means of it also. A man must know the means as well as the way, and the end of every great undertaking; and so in this he that knows that Christ is the way of salvation, the end, the eternal enjoyment of God, yet if he knows not the means how to obtain an interest in Christ, and to abide in the way so as to obtain the end, is a fool.

A man that wants health, or is sick, may hear of a remedy that infallibly will cure him, but if he knows not how it must be applied, may die of his sickness, notwithstanding the remedy he is told of. The means is union with Christ, faith in Christ; the Spirit must apply the remedy, viz., Christ's merits, Christ's blood; and he that makes use of this means, as he is in the way, so he shall obtain the desired end, i. e., the salvation of his soul. "He that believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. And he that thus believes, as all wise virgins do, attains to true wisdom. Pray remember Christ is the way, God is the end, and closing with Christ by faith is the means.

Matt. vii 26. See that similitude opened.

True wisdom consisteth in

VI. From hence it appears that the wisdom of the wise virgins consisteth in building alone on the true foundation; not only knowing it, but in building rightly upon it. Some build on sands, and these our Lord compares to foolish men; some build on self principles, or without a foundation, and what folly is that?

VII. True wisdom consists in a right and direct motion towards the end;

he that misseth the end, which is the glory of God, will miss of happiness, miss the end, and all endeavours and knowledge are vain and fruitless. Some aim at a good name, some seek applause, some follow Christ for profit, or for loaves; now all these are foolish persons; the wise only aim at God, seek the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and to enjoy him for ever.

a right and direct motion towards the great end.

But perhaps self happiness is the only end some aim at, all their care and business is to be saved, and some of this sort are ready to say, what may I not be saved, if I do not this or that? may I not be saved except I am baptized, and come into this or that church, and break bread, or though I pray not so often as some do, and hear not so many sermons, as if nothing was to be done for Christ's sake, or to glorify God, and to manifest our love to Jesus Christ, and our subjection to him as our prince as well as our Saviour.

VIII. The true wisdom of the wise virgins does consist in a timely making use of the means; they would not be contented with empty lamps, nor would they fall into a slumber before they have provided oil in their vessels, or have it to seek when the Bridegroom was come. The foolish ones missed it here; they took lamps, but no oil in their vessels, nor saw the need of it until it was too late. "Why is there a price in the hands of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it," Prov. xvii. 16. He is a wise man that takes hold of the present opportunity, or who redeems the time; such as soon as they are sick, will seek out for a physician, and another buys what he wants before the market be over, and also sows in the proper season, and not defer sowing to the time when he should reap.

True wisdom consists in a timely making use of the means.

IX. True wisdom consisteth in preferring the concerns of the soul above the body, or in a greater care how to live for ever hereafter, than how to live here for a moment, or in labouring more for the meat that perisheth not, than for that which perisheth.

X. In value grace above a visible profession, or in prizing the grace of God's word above the hearing the word of his grace; the one is for the cabinet, the other for the jewel; the one is for the gospel in word only, the other is for the gospel in its power and inward efficacy also.

XI. He that is truly wise will try his heart, try his love, and ponder his paths, understand his way, and look well to his goings, he will not take up things on trust, nor see with other men's eyes (as to matters of faith and practice). Moreover, he is for the reduction of what he knows unto the rule of practice. "Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," James i. 22. They are fools that are contented with bare hearing. Such that are wise, are greatly concerned about the state and frame of their hearts, being not satisfied only to have life, but would be lively also.

A wise man tries his heart.

Prov. xiv. 8.

Matt. vii. 24.

XII. True wisdom does consist in getting a sure title, and a proper meetness for eternal life; the wise virgins had a sure and certain title to eternal blessedness, though they were fallen (through Satan's temptations) into a slumbering frame, and also it appears they had a meetness for heaven, and entered into the wedding chamber. I do not say they had this meetness to such a degree when they fell asleep, but they were awakened, and trimmed their lamps, and so fitted for the Bridegroom's coming.

True wisdom consists in having a sure title and meetness also for eternal life.

APPLICATION.

1. We may from hence infer, there are but few truly wise. O what folly abounds in the world. Infer. 1.

2. It informs us also that the men of the world are justly to be charged with the greatest folly, in counting the godly fools; for that which wicked men think is their folly and madness, is the greatest wisdom. Inform.

Exhort. Labour after this wisdom, let this be all our care.

For motives,

1. Consider that many professors are fools in their profession; O how sad is it! men count them fools because they are professors, and God calls them fools because they are no more but professors.

2. Consider this spiritual wisdom is the only true wisdom, and none but the saints, none (as I told you) are wise, but believers, or godly persons.

3. This is the way to honour, "The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools," Prov. iii. 35. That wisdom which raises some men's name and honour in the world, is foolishness with God; but godly men Christ honours, and the Father will honour them also. Exhortation.

4. These persons God will commend for ever for that wisdom he gave : when all others shall be confounded for their folly and madness.

But to proceed,

“ And five were foolish.” That is five were no more than professors, or not sincere Christians ; they had no more than a name, or lamps, and no oil in their vessels ; they were graceless wretches ; the church, it appears, hath good and bad in it, hypocrites, as well as true believers.

Doct. Hypocrites are foolish persons, or false professors are fools.

1. I shall show you wherein the folly of these professors does consist. 2. Apply it.

Wherein the folly of the foolish virgins consisteth. 1. The folly of these professors, called here foolish virgins, consisteth in their attaining to some degrees of the knowledge of the way of salvation, and yet have no interest in the blessed Saviour, and so prefer an empty or bare profession without the power of it, or in getting lamps but no oil, and so prefer the name of Christ above the nature of Christ ; this discovers they are fools.

2. In that they had the means but never used it, a price in their hands, but no heart to improve it ; not to use the proper means to attain any great thing, or to rest wholly in the means, are like folly, or grand foolishness ; but all these acts of folly, are these professors or foolish virgins guilty of ; they might be under the proper means, viz., the preaching of the word, but used it not, they made use of false means, i. e., they went to buy oil of the wise virgins, they went to him that sold oil, but was not timely, but when it was too late, and no doubt rested wholly in a long time upon the bare use of the external means, as the preaching of the word and outward ordinances.

3. To sleep in harvest, or come to the market when it is over, certainly argues great folly in such persons ; to know that winter will come, and yet make no provision for it, discovers the man void of wisdom ; to foresee the evil, and yet take no due care to prevent it, is great folly. “ A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself ; but the simple (i. e.,) pass on, and are punished,” Prov. xxii. 3. And according to the nature of the evil foreseen, or forewarned of, when endeavours are not used to avoid it, such is the degree of the folly ; now what is a greater evil than the loss of God, Christ, and the immortal soul ? but these evils they might have foreseen, and of which they had warning, yet persisted on in the neglect of laying hold of Christ, or in seeking timely faith in him, and so to be prepared for his coming.

4. Their folly consisteth in running the greatest hazard, and yet think themselves safe, though told they are running into a lion's den. What greater madness can there be, than not to see nor believe most dismal danger (though told of it a thousand times) until it is too late, and there is no remedy ; none can help them ; in this their folly consisteth.

5. Is it not great folly to refuse to cut off a corrupt and rotten member, when told death will inevitably ensue, or their life must go if it be not done ? or for a person to refuse a bitter portion, and rather choose to die than to take it, this shows the person is either not sensible or else a great fool. Now these professors refused to pull out a right-eye sin, and refused to have a right-hand sin cut off, though they were assured by Christ himself if they thus refuse to do, their whole soul and body should be cast into hell. These persons rather choose to be damned for their sins, than to suffer the pain of the mortification of their sins, therefore were fools.

6. Their folly consisteth in believing the father of lies, and in trusting in their own hearts, when nothing is more deceitful ; Satan no doubt persuaded them their hearts and states were good, and they saw not how they were deceived, until the bridegroom came. Is it not folly to think to reap, and never sow ? or sow tares, and yet hope to reap wheat ? or to expect to get the victory and never fight, or to win the prize and never run ? or to delay that work which will take up all our days on earth, to one hour or moment a little before death ? It discovers the greatest folly any can be guilty of ; but this folly appears in these persons, and therefore might be well called foolish persons.

7. To value the good opinion, and have the approbation of men, above the love of Christ and the approbation of God, is folly with a witness ; but this these foolish virgins do ; they desire to be called saints, though they are sinners, and strive to keep up in the good opinion of men, but never laboured above all things to be accepted of God, and therefore are fools.

8. Their folly consisteth in losing the love, both of God and the world ; nay, and in ex-

posing themselves to the wrath of God and man, for because they are professors of religion, and free from idolatry, and will not worship with the world, or be defiled with popish superstitions, they are hated of men, and perhaps suffer hard things; for a man may give his body to be burned, and have no true love to God; and because they are hypocrites, or no more than bare possessors, God hates them, so that they may be said to lose earth and heaven too, and therefore are called foolish virgins.

APPLICATION.

I. We may from hence infer, that the visible church is made up of a mixture; the net of the gospel takes good and bad. 1 Inference.

II. We infer also that hypocrisy is hard to be discovered; for had the foolish virgins been known to the church, be sure they had not so long continued in it; but doubtless the wise virgins knew them not, but took them for true Christians; nay, (as one observes) could hypocrites be discerned, they should not be received, because matter fit to ruin a church, are not fit to make a church. 2 Inference.

III. We infer that it is no wonder there is so much trouble in churches, such contention, strife, and quarrelling, and many disorderly walkers (for though it is true, through temptation, it may sometimes be occasioned by such that are sincere) yet commonly no doubt it riseth from the rubbish, I mean, hypocrites that get in among them; and from hence it is there is so much work on the days of discipline, and also by reason of this sort religion and the church of Christ is exposed to reproach. Mr. Shepherd, on this parable, p. 119.

IV. Also from hence it appears that no church is pure or free from chaff or hypocritical members; nay, and in the latter day it appears the church does abound with false professors; "five were wise, and five were foolish." I will not say there are as many foolish as are wise, (though some think it may be so from these expressions) yet certainly it signifies that there are or will be many corrupt and false-hearted ones in the churches in these latter days. 3 Inference.

Quest. From whence doth it come to pass that so many unsound persons get into the churches? 4 Inference.

1. Answ. Certainly, it ariseth from the subtilty of Satan, who by his cunning wiles deceives poor mortals, together by the reason of that great deceit or deceivableness that is in the heart.

2. From the malice of Satan, who is an enemy to purity, who being an unclean spirit himself, if he could, would make heaven itself unclean, but that being beyond his power or policy; hence he strives to pollute the visible church, and stain the beauty and glory thereof.

3. It may arise from the carelessness of the church and ministers thereof, in not being so strict and careful as they ought about examining all persons, whom they receive as members among them: and this also should be a mighty caution to them to watch, and be very diligent and careful in this matter. "While men slept, the enemy sowed tares."

4. It also may arise from the carelessness of these foolish ones themselves, in not trying, searching, and thoroughly examining their own hearts; for certainly many think who are hypocrites, their state is good, and they are true believers; moreover, common grace, common operations of the Spirit, much resemble true and saving operations.

V. From hence let all professors and church members be exhorted to have a jealous eye over their own hearts, lest they are deceived and be undone for ever. Exhortation.

But to proceed,

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them," ver. 4.

Pray well observe the first verse of this chapter.

"They took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

That is, all of them, but the foolish took no oil with them; that is (as I noted) in their vessels, i. e., they had no true grace in their hearts. This going forth some think refers to the time of the witnesses finishing their testimony. We know that there was a wonderful expectation of the coming of the Bridegroom about fifty years ago, in this street of the great city, where (as I conceive the witnesses about those times arrived to the top of their testimony) and then might be said to go forth, in expectation of Christ's sudden coming to set up his more visible and glorious kingdom.

"Took no oil," &c.

Certainly, they going forth in the night, or in a day-time, had some kind of oil in their lamps that gave some light, though it was not of the right sort; for else how could they say as they do afterwards, "Our lamps are gone out?"

Doth not that imply their lamps had been lighted and did burn for a time? therefore by their taking no oil must be meant no saving grace, or they went forth without having obtained like precious faith, or the faith of God's elect; they were graceless persons, and had not the Spirit of God in its saving graces and operations in their souls. For by oil I understand is meant the Spirit of God, which is often compared to oil: "Therefore God thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows," Psal. xlv. 7; this is that anointing which we have received in Christ, and that abideth in us, or that unction from the Holy One, 1 John ii. 27, by which we know all things necessary to salvation.

Mr. John Mureof on this parable, p. 14, 15.
Page 104.
Mr. Shepherd on this parable, p. 168.

Secondly, by the oil here also most expositors understand is meant saving grace: thus one expresseth himself; by oil I understand (saith he) the saving grace of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, true justifying faith, repentance, never to be repented of, and love out of a pure heart. And by taking no oil I understand (saith he) the true saving grace of God in the heart. Another worthy writer also saith, (having confuted the foolish notions of the blind papists) but by oil is meant the Spirit of Christ, and the graces of it, peculiar to all the elect.

Now the Spirit and graces of the Spirit may be, and is, compared to oil from the nature or quality of it. Grace is compared to leaven from some of the qualities of leaven; to the wind, to water, to fire, upon the consideration of the nature of those things; and so here the Spirit and saving grace is compared to oil, from the qualities of nature thereof, though in respect of one or two of its properties chiefly in this place.

1. Oil is of a softening, and a mollifying and healing nature; and so is the Spirit and grace of God.

2. Oil is contrary to scorpions, and expels poison; so is grace also contrary to Satan, that old serpent, and it also expels the poison of sin and Satan's temptations.

3. Oil will not mingle or incorporate with other liquid things, but it will be always uppermost: so grace, whether considered in the spring (from hence it proceeds,) or in respect of the subject of it, and its own quality; it will not mingle with any other thing, it will not mix with a man's own righteousness; it will not mingle or mix with works, much less will it mingle with sin, or the inordinate love of the world; neither will free-grace mix with free-will. Take grace for the favour of God, the rich bounty and good will of God, it will not mingle with any of these things, or take it (as principally meant here,) for the fruits of the Spirit, or effects of God's special grace and love; it will mix with nothing that is contrary to its own nature: Moreover, grace will reign, predominate, or be uppermost where it is received.

4. Oil is of a reviving nature, and opens obstructions, causing a man to breathe freely. So grace revives the soul, and removes all obstructions of deadness and unbelief, and causeth a believer to breathe forth his desires freely unto God.

5. Oil is of a feeding and fattening nature, as well as beautifying; it causeth the face to shine. So grace feeds, nay, fattens the soul, and makes the soul shine in holiness and good works.

6. And lastly. And more directly, (as intended here,) it is oil that makes the lamp to burn, that feeds it, and continues its light. So the grace of God in the heart of a believer makes his life, profession, and conversation to burn, and give much light, and also as more grace is given, so the believer's lamp is continued burning.

7. If the lamp be not fed with oil, with proper lamp oil, it will soon go out. So for want of true grace in the heart, the lamp of the foolish virgins went quite out; and were not true believers supplied day by day with more grace, their lamps would go out also. There must be oil in the vessel as well as in the lamp; and so there must be grace in our hearts as well as gracious acts and holiness in our lives, or in the lamp of profession, and in our conversation.

Pray observe, both the wise and foolish virgins had their lamps; both professed the true faith, owned the doctrine of the gospel; both went forth together into a visible profession; both were church members; both were taken for true Christians; both went to meet the Bridegroom.

From hence note.

Doct. That false professors or foolish virgins may go a great way in a profession of religion, and be taken for true believers.

In speaking to this proposition,

1. I shall briefly show you how far the foolish virgins may go.

2. Show wherein the wise outdo them, or differ from them. 3. Apply it.

My brethren, having, in opening the parable of the sower, showed you how far the stony and thorny-ground hearers may go. I shall be very brief in speaking to it here.—
But,

I. They may hear the word, and seemingly retain it, those persons signified by the highway-side, heard the word; but Satan caught it presently out of their hearts. But the foolish virgins do more, they for some time seem to keep the word, it takes some rooting in these.

How far the foolish virgins may go in a profession of religion.

II. They may for a time appear very zealous, and forward, in hearing the word preached; this sort of professors followed our Saviour from place to place, nay, took shipping to go after him; but it was not (as our Lord told them) "because they saw the miracles which he did," John vi. 26. Not from a love to his person, nor to his word, but because they eat of the loaves, and were filled.

III. They may seem to delight to hear the word, and to know the ways of God. "And delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness. They take delight in approaching to God," Isa. lviii. 2. These foolish professors in Israel they knew the will of God, and inquired after the Lord. "They come unto thee as thy people come, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them," Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. Nay, the word seemed sweet and pleasant to them. "Thou art to them as a very lovely song of one that bath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument," &c. Who would think these were not sincere persons?

IV. They may receive the word. So the stony and thorny-ground hearers are said to do. They heard the word, and anon they received it; they received the word into their heads, and were somewhat enlightened by it. They may believe. "Simon also believed," &c., Acts viii. 13. "Many believed on his name, when they saw the miracles he did; but Jesus did not commit himself to them," John ii. 23, 24. So in John viii. 30, they may have the faith of credence, a presumptuous faith, a historical faith, a temporary faith; nay may have the faith of miracles, and cast out devils, and yet not have grace, no charity, no true love to God, nor true faith in Jesus Christ.

V. They may leave all gross acts of sin, and reform their ways as to their outward conversation, and so escape the corruptions of the world, through that knowledge which they have attained of Jesus Christ. Herod, when he heard John the Baptist, reformed many things.

VI. They may be "enlightened, and also taste of the heavenly gift," Heb. vi. 4; those high attainments the apostle mentions in Heb. vi. 4—6, are no other than the operations of the Holy Ghost, which foolish virgins, or hypocritical professors, may attain unto.

1. They may be enlightened or instructed in the clear doctrine of the gospel, or be illuminated with some kind of supernatural light and knowledge, by partaking of the common operations of the Spirit.

2. As to be under the sense of the evil of sin, in respect of the guilt thereof; and see that sin is against the nature of God, and hateful to him, but never come themselves to hate and abhor it, in respect of the defiling nature of it.

3. They may also be so far enlightened as to know God is man's chief good; for if heathens came to discern this, much more this sort that had the common illuminations of the Spirit.

4. They may be enlightened so far, as to know all the essentials of the true Christian religion.

5. To know the true Christ, and the church in his nature, constitution, government, and discipline thereof.

VII. They may also taste of the heavenly gift. (1.) The doctrine and ordinances of the gospel are an heavenly gift, and of this gift they may taste. (2.) The extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost are called the gift of God: "Because thou hast thought the gift of God may be purchased with money," Acts viii. 20. This heavenly gift false or foolish professors may taste of: "In thy name we have cast out devils. And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity," 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2; that is, true love to God: which shows it was possible a man might have such a faith, and yet have no true grace, or not have the grace of faith. (3.) The gospel dispensation in general is an heavenly gift, of which dispensation these have a taste of.

VIII. They may partake of the Holy Ghost; so it is expressed, "And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," &c. This, as Dr. Owen shows, is (in effect) the same thing mentioned before (though in different words expressed) they may partake of the common operations, and common gifts of the Spirit, which keep their lamps for some time burning.

IX. They may taste of the good word of God.

1. The good word of God intends the gospel, which word they give credit unto, and so with some kind of faith tasted it, and so are said to believe, or by and by "to receive the word with joy," as the stony-ground hearers are said to do, Matt. xiii. 20.

2. They may taste some sweetness in the word of God, particularly in the doctrine and promises thereof; but a bare tasting may be where there is not a true spiritual feeding on that doctrine, and on those blessed promises of the word of God; nay, they may partake of such great gifts of the Holy Ghost, as to become eminent preachers of the gospel, but whatsoever taste the foolish virgins have of the good word of God, they never digested it, so as to be fed, and nourished thereby.

X. They may taste of the powers of the world to come.

Two things let me note here.

1. What is meant by the world to come.

2. What by tasting the powers thereof.

(1.) Some here by the world to come assert is only meant the gospel church state, or spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. Dr. Owen seems to be of this opinion; and if this be meant by the world to come, then their partaking of the miraculous operations of the Spirit, was their tasting of the powers thereof.

(2.) But by the world to come I rather think the apostle alludes to the glory of the kingdom of Christ, (when he appears the second time) which will be that new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," 1 Pet. iii. 13, Rev. xx. 1.

(3.) As to their "tasting of the world to come," it may be this, *i. e.*

1. They believe the truth and certainty of the glory of the world to come; they give full credit to the truth of that future state, in respect to the resurrection and eternal judgment, and to the mighty power that will attend both; they believe the revelation of those things concerning the world to come, and so are said to have a taste of them.

Moreover, they may taste some fancied sweetness in hope of the joys of the world to come, and be under the restraining power of the Spirit, through dread of the punishment of the world to come.

XI. From hence it appears that the foolish virgins may be baptized, break bread, and so have external communion with the wise in the church of God; for nothing is more clear than this, viz., that they were visible church members, nay, they may obey all external ordinances of the gospel, or precepts of Jesus Christ.

XII. They may desire grace; "Give us of your oil:" they desire it, and ask it, but not of him, (or not in a right manner) who hath it to give.

XIII. They may pray, nay, be much in prayer; for thus did the Pharisees, and desire others to pray for them. For so did Pharaoh, and may have also much seeming zeal for a time, and contribute to the poor saints, though not from a principle of love.

XIV. In a word (to close with this) they may be under a great visible change, being formerly profane and ungodly persons, they may be reformed, and to appearance become other men, even great and notable professors of religion; and all may take them for saints, and very little difference may appear between them and true Christians. Moreover, they talk of Christ's coming, and go out to meet him with the wise.

Secondly, I shall show you wherein the wise virgins outdo them, or differ from them.

1. The wise hear the word, and hear it not with joy only, but understand it also; that is, they have a true experimental knowledge of the divine power of it upon their hearts. Their hearts are thoroughly changed by the efficacy and effectual workings of the Spirit; so that regeneration passeth upon all their souls, they are not only other men, but new men; they do not only assent to the truth of the word, or receive it into their understanding, but with a full consent of their will close with Christ, and yield obedience to him from the heart.

2. They are not under the common, but special illumination of the Holy Ghost; their convictions are not legal but evangelical; they are not convinced of the guilt, but also of the filth of sin; their convictions are not chiefly of scandalous sins, but it reaches their hearts and secret sins also, and not only actual sins, but the evil of original sin likewise; and not only as sin is against them, but also as it is against God, and hath wounded the Lord Jesus Christ; these things are the chief cause of their grief and sorrow: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," Psal. li. 4. It causeth them (from hence) to loathe themselves; yea, "to abhor themselves, and to repent in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 6. Common convictions rise from the sense of God's wrath, but special convictions flow from the sense of God's love in Jesus Christ; they seeing a free

pardon of all their sins through Christ's blood offered to them, this melts them into tears of sorrow, mixed with joy.

3. They are not only convinced of sin, (and particularly of the sin of unbelief) but of righteousness also.

II. They have not only a taste of the good word of God, but feed also upon it; their taste and eating ariseth from spiritual hunger, or from a true sense of want; they have a craving appetite, and nothing but God in Christ can satisfy their souls; they digest the word, they feed upon it, or live upon Christ by faith, and to them the word is "sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb," Psal. cxix. 97; that which they eat, is turned into good nourishment, it being mixed with faith, it strengthens, revives, and comforts them.

III. The wise virgins do not receive the Holy Ghost only in the gifts of it also, they have true faith, unfeigned love to Christ, and hope that maketh not ashamed, and also attain to humility, temperance, patience, and brotherly kindness.

IV. The wise virgins have all those things that accompany salvation, or such things that accompany a saved state. (1.) The Holy Spirit, as the great new covenant promise. (2.) Union with Christ. (3.) A new heart, or the image of God created anew in them; they are justified, adopted, and sanctified. (4.) They have a dear love to the saints, and as they are the members of Christ's mystical body, they minister to them, which is more, or a higher attainment than any of the foolish virgins arrive at.

V. The wise virgins are sincere Christians, really in heart before God what they appear to be before men; they act from right principles and from right motives; the love of God and the love of Christ stirs them up to follow him, to cleave to him, and to obey him in whatsoever he commands them; also they act to a right end, that God may be glorified, and Jesus Christ may be exalted.

SERMON XXI.

While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.—Matt. xxv. 5.

SOME think this slumbering and sleeping of the virgins refers to the "sleep of death; they all slept, that is, (say they) they all died. But certainly they are greatly mistaken who are of this opinion.

1. Because when they were awakened, the foolish virgins were bid to go and buy oil, which will not be said unto any at the day of the resurrection.

2. Because all the virgins are said to rise out of this slumber and sleep at one and the same time, and trimmed their lamps; but no hypocrite or unbelievers shall rise from the dead, when all that sleep in Jesus shall be raised, which will be at the very time when Christ comes; "The dead in Christ shall rise first," 1 Thess. iv. 16.

3. Because they rose out of this sleep some time before the Bridegroom came; the foolish virgins after they were awakened, went to buy oil; "But while they went to buy, the bridegroom came." ver. 10.

Before I speak to the slumbering and sleeping of the virgins, I shall speak to the "Bridegroom's tarrying."

1. Some think our Lord refers to that long time between the ascension of our Saviour, and his second coming, and how long that will be we know not, though most believe not more than two thousand years.

2. Others think he refers to that time which is between the time of the soul's espousal to Christ, or conversion, and the marriage day.

3. Others perhaps upon better grounds conclude, it refers to that distance of time, that will be between some remarkable signs and expectation of Christ's appearance and his actual coming, and I rather adhere to this.

Certainly, These words refer to a time when all the virgins shall be full of expectation of Christ's coming; nay, and when many would be very confident of it, by means of some providences, signs, and appearances, which I take was about fifty years ago; do but call to mind what an hour the church was then under, and what wonderful expectation was amongst the people of God in these nations, and in other nations and kingdoms also? Oh what preaching and writing about the coming and kingdom of our Lord, was there then, and what mighty things were upon the wheels, of which I gave you some brief hints before!

To what time the tarrying of the Bridegroom doth refer.

Archer,
Brightman,
Tillinghorst,
Dr. Holmes,
and many
more.

But lo after this time the Bridegroom tarries; he then came not, but all those brave men saw they were mistaken, and a dark cloud (not expected) comes upon the Lord's people both here and in other kingdoms and nations; and this seeming delay, I conceive, was partly the cause of all the virgins falling asleep, or into a sleepy and slumbering condition, which drowsy frame of spirit we are still under, and shall I fear be for some time.

But know assuredly, that though the Lord Jesus seems to tarry (or tarries past that time his people longed for him) yet he will not tarry one hour longer than the appointed time. "For yet a little while he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." The least moment shall not exceed the fixed time, that is determined: "For the vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come and not tarry," Hab. ii. 3.

Yet from those words, whilst the Bridegroom tarried, we may note,

1. That Christ comes not at that time, when many of his own people looked for him, and this we have seen clearly fulfilled.

2. That he will come when he is not expected; "In such an hour "ye think not, the Son of Man cometh," Matt. xxiv. 44; and that also some shall be left to such temptation, as to say my Lord delayeth his coming, but such who say thus in their hearts, our Saviour calls evil servants, ver. 48.

3. Moreover know, that when our Lord comes, he comes suddenly, even as a thief in the night; and it will be very surprising, like a cry at midnight, when many will be asleep, or very secure. And are not many at this present time ready to say in their hearts, the day is afar off, and perhaps one reason of it may be from the boldness of some good men, who have unadvisedly spoken of the accomplishment of those things, which are to precede his personal appearance, as the passing away of the second wo, and the utter downfall of mystical Babylon, by the sounding of the seventh angel, "when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ," Rev. xi. 14, 15. The seventh trumpet must sound, before one of the seven vials are poured forth; and by the pouring forth of all the seven vials will the utter ruin of the beast and mystery Babylon be accomplished. For as a worthy writer hath noted, the seventh trumpet cannot declare the ruin of antichrist, unless the seven vials be poured out under it, and the seventh trumpet soundeth soon after the slaying of the witnesses, which I hope is past: I cannot with some others be yet of another mind, but that they have a few years since been slain, and are now upon their feet, and that we are in that cloud (though perhaps it may be yet darker) in which they shall ascend: doubtless they that think that several of the vials were poured out under the sixth trumpet, were grandly mistaken, and were dark as to that part of the sacred vision.

But those good men, who too boldly formerly, and of late time fixed upon this and that time or year, having been mistaken, hath, as I hinted, caused many to be secure, and others to turn scoffers, and say, as St. Peter intimates; "Where is the promise of his coming? Though the Lord is not slack concerning his promise," &c., I Pet. iii. 2. It greatly becometh us to consider of the great danger, which attends some people by means of those great disappointments they have seen, and by means our Lord seems as they think to tarry; the longer the night is the more oil we shall need, and greater patience must be exercised.

Quest. Why doth our Lord Christ seem to tarry?

Why Christ
tarnies. I Ausw. It may seem to us in respect of the length of the time between Christ's first and second coming, and also because the primitive Christians thought his coming would have been very soon, even in their days: whereas there are more than sixteen hundred years since that run out, and yet they waited for his coming from heaven, and thought the time very near; though Paul laboured to inform them better, as you may see 2 Thess. ii. 1—3.

II. He may seem to us to tarry, by reason our days are short, and we reckon not as God doth, to whom a thousand years are but as one day, but it chiefly riseth from our ignorance of those mystical numbers left in God's word about the end of the wonders, and also of those many things that must and shall precede Christ's second glorious appearance, which were we informed in and about, we should not say our Lord tarries, or delays his coming.

III. It may also arise by reason of our impatience, or want of a due and quiet exercise thereof; he that believeth maketh not haste: also by reason of those disappointments some have laid us under, their times being not the time "the Father hath put in his own

power," Act i. 7. Certainly the curiosity of some men in late days deserve rebuke with them of old, who said, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" ver. 6. To whom the Lord answered, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons," &c. It is (as if he should say) reserved for some in after times: but I refer not here to the day nor year of Christ's personal coming, but to the beginning of Christ's kingdom, upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

IV. Christ may seem to tarry out of pity and compassion to poor sinners, his elect must be all called or brought in; he is not willing that any of them should perish, nor can they perish; therefore he for their sakes seems to tarry, for many of them amongst the Gentiles shall not be called, nor can they have the gospel preached to Isa. lx. 3, 4, 8, 22. them, until Babylon is overthrown: for then will be the time, when multitudes in many nations and dark regions of the earth shall flow in to Jesus Christ, then, and not till then, shall the fulness of the Gentiles come in, and until that is done, blindness will remain upon the poor Jews, as Paul clearly showeth; but then they shall be that nation, that God hath foretold shall be born at once; "And so all Israel shall be saved," Rom. xi. 20. And this brings me to the next reason.

V. Because all things which God hath spoken in his holy word, (as antecedent to his coming) must be accomplished. (1.) The image power must be utterly broken "into pieces, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing floor," Dan. ii. 35, 44. (2.) And to this end the stone must smite the image upon the feet, which I daily wait to see. (3.) "The gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all the world, and then cometh the end," Matt. xxiv. 14; but not until then. (4.) "The little stone must become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth," Dan. ii. 35, 44. (5.) The Jews shall be converted before Christ comes. Whether the Jews shall be called before the coming of Christ, or not, is a doubt to some, but none to me; because when Christ comes his bride is completely ready, not one member of Christ's mystical body shall be wanting.

VI. Therefore he seems to tarry, that all his elect may be brought home. The bride must have her full time allowed her in order to be ready; shall Christ be married to an imperfect bride? There shall not, my brethren, be one member of his mystical body in that day wanting or uncalled, or not actually united to the glorious head. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready," Rev. xix. 7. It may be also in mercy to them who are already called, that they may be in an actual fitness for his coming, and also to try their faith and patience.

VII. It may be that so the harvest and vintage of the earth may be fully ripe; "Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe," Rev. xiv. 18. The children of Israel could not possess the land of Canaan, until the sins of the Amorites were fully ripe. Moreover, by Christ's tarrying and offering to the world so long a time, through the exercise of his patience, he will leave the world without excuse; for God came not upon the old world, before he gave warning; nor will he come to destroy this present world with fire, without giving them sufficient warning of it.

VIII. And lastly, our Lord may seem to tarry, to put all men, especially his own people, upon a constant and continual watch: "What I say to one, I say unto all, watch." We have time given us to get upon our watch tower, and enquire what of the night?

APPLICATION.

Sinners, take heed you are not found among the scoffers that the apostle speaks of; "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. Beware of harbouring any atheistical or unbelieving thoughts, and of growing bold in wickedness, because Christ seems to tarry or defer his coming; it is, you hear, for holy and wise ends: the old world would not believe what Noah told them, but were fearless of any such flood; "They builded, planted, married, and were given in marriage, until the flood came and took them away." They found the word of God spoken by his servant was true, though it was deferred an hundred and twenty years, though they believed him not, but reproached him. Many, it may be, believe not, (because they see all things remain as they were from the beginning) hence think that Christ will never come, and so this world never have an end; and the world to come never begin, but it will not be long before they will see themselves deceived.

2. What a dismal state will they be in, who are found not ready when the Lord Jesus

cometh, better they had never been born. O look out, what signs have we of the last days upon us; how are many "eating and drinking, and smiting their fellow servants?" Such who pretend they are Christ's servants, his ministers, and yet live an abominable course of wickedness, and have been, (and long again to be) persecutors of their fellow servants, and say in their hearts, the Lord delays his coming: how many gluttonous, and drunken, and whoring preachers are in these days?

But to proceed.

"They all slumbered and slept."

What is meant by the virgins slumbering and sleeping. This slumbering and sleeping I showed you is not the sleep of death: by slumbering, &c., therefore I understand is meant a want of that due watchfulness which is required in all the disciples of Jesus Christ; they all fall into a drowsy and secure frame of spirit. To slumber is when a man is drowsy and ready to take a nap (as we commonly say.) But sleep is a binding up the senses; but pray note, the wise virgins do never so sleep, but their hearts are awake, they therefore sleep not as others do.

Doct. The wise virgins as well as the foolish are subject or liable to spiritual slumber and sleep: or, the saints may fall into a slumbering state.

1. I shall show from whence this cometh to pass.

2. Show you the signs of a sleepy frame of heart.

3. Discover the danger that attends such a state and condition:

What causeth the virgins to sleep and slumber. 1. Sleep or spiritual drowsiness riseth from those gross vapours which seize on and clog the soul; I mean in-bred corruption, or that body of sin and death; as gross vapours in the body incline to natural sleep: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matt. xxvi. 41. The spirit sanctified by divine grace stirs up to constancy in duty, but the flesh, the sensitive part, is apt and prone to temptation and remissness, and is soon weary; and this part is too apt to overpower the soul in its spiritual activity and liveliness; besides, Satan hath great influences upon the fleshly part.

2. Slothfulness, or a careless and dull frame, hath a great tendency to produce sleep, as Solomon saith, "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep," Prov. xix. 15. When a man refuseth to labour or is idle, gross vapours gather and becloud the senses, and hold us as prisoners for awhile; and so it is with the soul, when a Christian is idle or of a slothful disposition, the spiritual senses are soon darkened or beclouded, and the soul (for some time) is as it were a prisoner.

3. Wearisomeness; Solomon saith, "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet;" that is, when he is tired out or weary at his work. Some Christians are too apt to be weary and to faint in their minds, especially when they see little comes in, while they labour, they hear, read, and pray, but profit little, gather hardly any strength or comfort, and so are ready to faint and be weary, and to drop asleep or fall into a drowsy and indifferent frame of heart.

4. A dark and cloudy day, (we find by experience) is very ready to put us into a drowsy frame: so a dark time or dispensation of God's providence under which we may be exercised, is very apt to cause us to fall into spiritual drowsiness, if not to fall asleep; we may perceive this is so in the case of the disciples of our Lord, upon his crucifixion; it was in such a dark and cloudy day that they were ready all to fall asleep. And from hence one said, "I go a fishing," they were ready to give up all their hope, and cease being fishers of men any more, but thought to go to their old trade.

5. An apprehension that it is a great while to-day. Though a man waits for the morning, yet if he thinks it is not midnight, he lays himself down again to sleep; so a Christian that apprehends it will be a great while before Christ will come, or death will come, tends to cause sleep, or inclines him to give way to slumber through the temptations of Satan. What need I (saith he) to be so much concerned? my state is good, and I shall have time enough to set in order what is yet wanting, and provide for the coming of Jesus Christ; such that apprehend the night almost gone, and the day approacheth, ought to rise and look out, but I perceive no such thing. I may have many days on earth, and it will be hard to hold the pace I have hitherto run; I may slack or abate a little in that heat and zeal I have showed.

6. Moreover, when a man apprehends no danger, or hath no fear seizing on him of approaching evil, when he is in bed, or inclined to drowsiness, he from thence is apt to give way to it; he fears no thieves breaking in upon him, nor hears the cry of fire, nor of amazing providences. Thus many poor Christians seem secure, and are not sensible they are both beset with thieves, nor perceive the danger and dismal hour they are in, though some talk of amazing judgments and providences very near, but they see no cause to believe or fear any such things, and so give way to a slothful and sleepy frame of spirit, pursuing the world, and

loving their ease. Jacob's sleep departed from him, for fear his sheep should come to harm, Gen. xxxi. 40. Some men know not what rich treasure they are entrusted with, and so fear not the enemy of their souls.

7. Some distempers or diseases which^d seize upon the body, causeth an unusual sleepiness, so that all the means made use of, can hardly prevent the sleeping and dozing of such persons.

So, my brethren, a spiritual lethargy, a cold earthly distemper, seizeth on too many professors, by which means their spiritual senses seem much gone, and excessive drowsiness overtaketh them to such a degree, that nothing can awaken them; no, neither the word of God, the reproofs of his ministers, the threatening judgments that draw near, nor the secret rebukes and checks of their own consciences, though they may perceive their love to Christ, to religion, to the church, to ministers, and to the people of God, is much abated.

8. Surfeiting and drunkenness causeth immoderate sleep, or an excessive use of the creature. What a sleepy frame was Lot in by means of drinking too much wine, and how sad was the effects of it! Our Lord intimates that by surfeiting and Luke xii. 45, drunkenness, many professors in the last days would fall asleep, and put the day of his coming afar off. Some are drunk with riches, others with earthly pleasures, and others with errors, and so are giddy-headed, and by such means drop asleep: "They stagger, but not with strong drink," Isa. xxix. 9, 10; God hath left them to delusions, and poured upon them the spirit of deep sleep. How doth our Saviour give us warning against all excesses. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares," Lnke xxi. 34.

9. Experience shows, that a sleepy company a man may be among, tends to cause him to fall asleep also. So loose, carnal, and sleepy professors, with whom a lively Christian may walk, and daily converse, is too subject to have ill effects upon him: with the froward we learn frowardness.

10. Long watching tends to produce inordinate sleeping. These virgins had watched long, looking and waiting for the Bridegroom, but he tarrying, or not coming when they expected he would, they all fell asleep, or into a slumbering frame of heart, to which I might add, the withdrawing of the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit; if the Spirit be grieved, and withholds his quickening operations, how soon do poor Christians fall asleep!

Secondly, I shall give you some signs of a sleepy and slumbering frame of heart.

The signs of a sleepy frame of spirit.

1. When a man cannot hear, though one calls aloud unto him, it may be a sign he is asleep.

So when a Christian cannot hear the voice of the word, or not discern God's voice, or that it is Christ that calls him, it may be a sign that he is asleep, or in a sleepy frame. Thus it was with Samuel: "Samuel was laid down to sleep, and the Lord called, Samuel: and he ran to Eli, and said, here am I," 1 Sam. iii. 3, 4. The Lord called him again, but he knew not that it was the Lord that called him. So many do not know or discern the voice of God (when they hear the word) from the voice of the poor minister; certainly such who hear the word as if it was only the word of man, and not the word of God, are asleep; or if they cannot discern the word is spoken to them, but rather think it concerns such or such persons, and that they are not concerned in it, it may be a sign they are in a sleepy, or in an insensible frame of heart. Or if they cannot hear the voice of the Spirit, nor of their own consciences, nor the voice that is in the rod, slumber hath taken hold of them.

2. Dreaming is a sign a person is asleep. Some weep in their sleep who have cause to rejoice, and others laugh who have cause (perhaps) to cry; and some dream they eat, and dream they drink, when it is no such thing. So many professors think their state is very good, but alas they are asleep, and do but dream. Some mourn and are ready to conclude that their condition is very bad, when it may be very good: they do but dream, it is a sign they are in a sleepy or insensible condition. Also others doubt not but that they are believers; they presume Christ is theirs, having great confidence, and doubt not; sin troubles them not; they ask not for pardon, but it is but a dream: "He that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord," Jer. xxiii. 28. The doctrine some preach, and others believe, is but a dream, and none of the word of God: it is "As when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but when he awaketh, his soul is empty," &c., Isa. xxix. 8.

3. Men who are asleep neither know their state or dangers, but are secure in a storm, as Jonas, who was fallen asleep when the ship was ready to sink to the bottom. So such professors who know not their present state and condition, know not whether Christ be theirs or not, or that Christ is in them or not, or whether they are true believers or not, certainly are asleep, or insensible; perhaps they are ready to drop down to hell, but doubt not but they are true believers; the foolish virgins who fell asleep, knew not the danger they were in.

4. Such that are asleep know not what is done to them, as Adam when he was in that, deep sleep, as also Sampson when he was asleep; many professors know not what God is doing in them, for with them, with them, nor against them in the way of his providences; this argues they are asleep.

5. A person that is asleep forgets his business, or the work he was about, or ought to be exercised in; so a secure professor, or one spiritually asleep forgets the Lord, his works, his will, and what he ought to do also. Take a believer awake, and then he can remember the Lord, his covenant and his works, and what it is the Lord commands him to do.

6. A person asleep fears no evil, until it comes upon him; so a sleepy professor foresees no evil, fears no danger, like the old world in the days of Noah, and the people of Sodom, until the flood came upon one, and fire and brimstone from heaven upon the other. Job speaks of some that "their houses are free from fear," Job xxi. 9.

7. In sleep the senses are not exercised, the eyes sees not, the ear hears not, the mouth tasteth not; so a person spiritually asleep is very insensible; his spiritual senses are stupified, and motion also ceaseth.

The difference between the sleeping of a hypocrite and a true Christian.

But spiritual slumber greatly differs from deep sleep.

1. Hypocrites are asleep, but a true Christian though he is said to sleep, yet it is but a slumber comparatively to the sleeping of the other; true Christians may lose the sense of God's love, yet they dread to sin against him.

2. A wicked man lays himself down to sleep, but though a true Christian sleeps and slumbers, yet he strives against it, he loves not sleep, though it overcomes him, yet he strives to shake off his drowsy frame.

3. A true believer is soon awakened; that means will awaken him, that will not, cannot awaken a wicked man; for nothing less than almighty power can do it, (for they sleep the sleep of death); indeed the foolish virgins were never thoroughly awakened, but only so far as to be convinced that their state was bad, and that their lamps were gone out.

4. Such that are in a deep sleep, all their senses are bound up, or they are utterly insensible; and thus it is with hypocrites and wicked men, their hearts are asleep; but as I said, (and as the spouse said) though a true believer sleeps, yet his heart is awake.

5. Slumbering denotes an indisposition of the soul, or a short cessation of action; a godly man may be under deadness, and omit his duty for a short time, through the weakness of the flesh, and Satan's temptations; but an hypocrite is utterly destitute of any principle of activity, to perform any true spiritual acts of obedience unto God.

But to proceed.

Thirdly, I shall show you the danger of a sleepy state, or frame of heart.

1. Such cannot see how to escape danger, or are out of a present capacity to prevent the evils that may be near or just coming upon them.

2. They that are asleep lie open to the enemy; a weak person may destroy a strong man, a great champion, when he is asleep, as Jael slew Sisera when he was asleep, by driving a nail through his temples. O then what need have we to keep ourselves awake, who have powerful enemies, that watch an opportunity to destroy us. We may soon lose our strength (though not our lives) as Sampson did, if we once fall asleep, Jude iv. 21.

3. Our sleeping time is that season Satan waits for, for if he can but catch us napping, he will fall upon us and wound us be sure. It is well he cannot murder our souls, it is not whom he would, but whom he may, that he devours.

4. It was while men slept the devil sowed his evil seed; great part of the wrong and mischief the churches and our souls sustain, is by means of our giving too much wat sleeping and slumbering.

5. Our danger is very great by means of our slumbering, by reason Satan never sleeps, he is always awake, and is a very vigilant enemy; nay, and know also, this world is full of devils, who go to and fro to see who they can find off their watch.

6. Such that are in a sleepy and slumbering condition are in danger to be sore amazed and dreadfully affrightened, when awakened, by a sudden outcry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh!" How was the jailor amazed, when by an earthquake he was awakened out of

sleep: and so the foolish virgins at the midnight cry will be greatly terrified.

7. They that sleep in harvest, lose their gathering time; and so are in danger of losing their souls for ever, besides the day of death, or the day of Christ's coming, will come upon them unawares.

APPLICATION.

I. Let us bewail and lament over the present generation of professors, and Lament.
mourn over ourselves. O into what a drowsy and sleepy age are we fallen! are not all the virgins now asleep, or in a slumbering frame of heart, and yet know not but the midnight cry is very near? Remember Christ's words, "What, can ye not watch with me one hour?"

II. Yet this may inform us of a vast difference there is between the sleeping Inform.
of the wise and foolish virgins.

1. The wise sleep and slumber in a good state; they are converted persons; they have oil in their vessels, though their lamps want trimming: but the foolish sleep in a fearful state; they have no grace, no oil in their vessels.

2. The wise made good use of their time, the proper season to provide themselves; but the foolish will not seek oil until it is too late.

3. The wise through Satan's temptations fell into a sleepy and slumbering frame, but their great work was done; but the foolish fell asleep before any of their work was begun.

4. The sleeping of the wise is dishonourable unto Christ, and hurtful to themselves, it is the wounding of their souls; but the sleeping of the foolish will be to the utter and eternal undoing of their souls.

III. Exhort. O be exhorted to arouse, let us cast off sleep from our eyes; Exhortation.
you that are believers, awake. For,

MOTIVES.

1. Consider, what pains God took to awake you and I out of our former sleep, that sleep of spiritual death: did he not send his Son from heaven to awaken us, and sent his word and Spirit to this end also; was it not the effects of infinite love, wisdom, and power! O let us then strive to be in a wakeful frame.

2. Our enemy is upon us, as it was said to Sampson, so it may be said to every one of us.

3. Consider, Jesus Christ is come to visit us, to feed and feast us; lo, he is now at our doors and knocks, and shall any of us say, I sleep, as the spouse did, so may he withdraw and be gone, and we may perhaps seek him, but find him not.

4. You are the children of the day. "They that sleep, sleep in the night," 1 Thess. v. 7. You profess yourselves to be awake, and freed from the gross ignorance of the children of darkness, you see the evil of the inordinate love of this world; are you overcome with surfeiting and drunkenness, and with the cares of this life?

5. What great things do we look for? Is not the thought of this enough to stir us up to watchfulness? And are we not also bid "to watch and pray always, that we may escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man?" Luke xxi. 36.

6. Consider, how many will be found asleep, and unprepared when the Lord comes; nay, how many foolish virgins there will be in those latter days, who fall asleep without oil in their lamps, and whose lamps also go out.

IV. Admiration. Let us wonder at the patience, forbearance, and long-suf- Admiration.
fering of God! O how good and gracious is he in that he comes not forth in his wrath, to take vengeance upon sinners, though he is, and hath been so longed provoked! see what sparing mercy he shows to the world for his elect's sake; had he not left us a very small remnant, we had been made as Sodom, before this day; there are also many yet not called, but when once all his elect are brought in, he will stay not one moment longer.

V. It may be of use also by way of caution; the Bridegroom seems to Caution.
tarry after the time some have spoken of, for doing his great and wonderful works: let none prefix times any more, till the vision speaks more plainly, since all that have presumed so to do, have been mistaken. The time of the end of the wonders is not fully known; the time is set, but perhaps not yet revealed to any; though it is no doubt very near, and God may give to some more light into those things, than many others have at present; and let none condemn those who search into the sacred oracles, and say, when will be the end of wonders? For this very thing was prophesied of, (i. e.,) that one saint shall thus say unto another saint, but the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end," Dan. xii. 9.

VI. We may take an encouragement in this, Christ will come, believe this Encourage.
doubt not of this; "Behold I come quickly," &c., Rev. xxii. 12. He comes, he comes,

and that too suddenly, and will surprise the world, but that day shall not come upon believers as a thief, a blessed day it will be to them.

Terror. VII. Terror; but woe to the wicked, to all hypocrites and unbelievers, for he will "come in flaming fire to take vengeance on all that know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c., 2 Thess. i. 8. And woe to such that say in their hearts, the Lord delays his coming, "he will cut them in sunder, and appoint them their portion with hypocrites, and unbelievers, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxiv. 50, 51.

VIII. Let us all make provision for Christ's coming.

1. Get oil in your vessels; let us see we have sincere love to Jesus Christ.
2. Let us trim our lamps, and awake out of sleep to do this.
3. Let our lights be clearly burning.
4. Every one be full of great expectation.
5. And beware of the evils of these latter days, in which dangerous principles and corrupt practices do abound; and many having their hearts set inordinately upon the things of the world.

SERMON XXII.

And at midnight there was a cry made, behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.—Matt. xxv. 6.

In these words we have these several parts.

1. An act done; there was a cry made.
2. The matter of the cry; "the bridegroom cometh."
3. The time when, viz., "at midnight."
4. Attendance and notice required; "Behold," &c.
- Take notice of it, it is a matter of the highest moment.
5. Counsel, or a call, "Go ye out to meet him."
6. The subjects required thus to go forth [ye] ye wise and foolish virgins, or all that make a profession of the gospel.

Doct. That a little before Christ's second coming, notice will be given of it, or there shall be an alarm of his near approaching or glorious appearance.

In speaking to this proposition, I shall

1. By way of premise lay down two or three explanatory propositions.
2. Show what may be meant by this cry, and what a kind of cry it will be.
3. Why Christ will give warning of his coming.
4. Show why called a midnight cry.

Explanatory propositions. Propos. 1. That though Christ by his word gives warning, and shows fully that he will come again the second time, yet he will some other way alarm his people, or give notice of his near approaching: then shall appear the sign of the Son of man.

Propos. 2. That there will be some short distance of time between the midnight cry, and our Lord's visible personal appearance. And this city is the harbinger or forerunner of his coming, to give warning to the virgins to trim their lamps, and to be ready.

Propos. 3. That this cry will awaken all, both the wise and the foolish, or sincere Christians and hypocrites.

Secondly. Show what may be meant by this cry.

1. It may (as I conceive) refer to some mighty impression upon the hearts of all professors, especially upon the spirits of faithful ministers, of Christ's sudden coming; for who are capable at midnight to wake a city, or give warning, but the Watchman? Ministers are called watchmen: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman—If therefore thou givest warning," &c. Ezek. iii. 17. "I have set watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem," Isa. lxii. 6. And these watchmen tell what of the night it is: "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" &c. Isa. xxi. 11.

2. Possibly it may be some amazing dispensation of God's providence to rouse all secure professors. Perhaps the earthquake mentioned, Rev. xi. It will doubtless be some remarkable event, that precedes the coming of our Lord.

3. May be it will be that providence that makes way for the fall of Babylon, and the universal preaching of the gospel: I presume none yet know directly what it will be.

Thirdly. Why Christ gives warning of his coming in some remarkable manner?

I. Because of the sublime majesty and glory of his person; shall an earthly king notice his near approaching or coming to his people from the awfulness of his person; and shall not Jesus Christ do it much more? The appearance of our Lord will be most glorious, and therefore long warning is given of it in the word and by his ministers, but at last more loud warning, signified by a cry.

II. Because such wonderful things depend, as the effect of his coming the second time; it is matter, my brethren, of the highest moment or concernment.

1. As the raising of the dead, for just at his personal appearance, all that sleep in Jesus shall be raised, and all believers that are alive, shall be changed in a moment, or twinkling of an eye, and their bodies shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body.

2. The passing away, dissolving or burning up the heavens and the earth that now are, so this will be one of the effects of his coming; but the day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the things that are therein shall be burned up," 2. Pet. iii. 10.

3. The utter and final overthrow of Satan's kingdom, and the settling and establishment of the kingdom of our Lord in its highest glory.

4. The final cessation of the ministration of the gospel, or offers and means of grace to the world; then it will be said, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still, and he that is holy be holy still," Rev. xxii. 11. Such that are filthy and unjust shall even so remain, and they that are righteous shall arrive to no further degree of inherent holiness.

5. The glorious manifestation of the children of God, and the celebration of the marriage of the lamb—and many other amazing things.

III. Jesus Christ will give warning by such a cry, because of that slumbering and sleepy state of the virgins just before; but this cry will awaken them with a witness; it may be a voice of some Boanerges, or a son of thunder.

IV. To leave all formal and hypocritical professors without excuse; for should not the Lord give warning a little time before his coming, (since just at his appearance he will come as a thief very suddenly); the wicked might pretend that he dealt severely with them, they having not had warning of his coming, and it may be that his own elect ones may be every way actually fitted and prepared for that day.

Fourthly. Why it is called a midnight cry.

1. It may be so called, because midnight is a time of great darkness; so this cry will be in such an hour when the people will be in a cloud of thick darkness, and not know what time of the night it is until they hear this cry.

2. Midnight is a time when all generally are asleep, and very secure; and perhaps it may be called the midnight cry, because just at that time all the people of God will be in a secure state, or almost all asleep.

3. Because at midnight every thing seems to be still, and no noise in the street, neither doth fear possess the mind of people; they are in their beds, and seem to be in safety.

4. It may be called the midnight cry in respect of the effects of it, for like as a dismal cry at midnight is very amazing, people being (as it were) frightened out of their sleep; so this cry will have much like effects upon the sleepy virgins.

5. Christ may call it a cry at midnight, to excite and stir us all up to watch, and not to sleep or be secure in a night of darkness, or in a dark and gloomy season.

APPLICATION.

1. See the great love and goodness of God to his saints; he will awaken them, that they may prepare themselves, and be ready for Christ's coming.

2. This may teach us who live in these latter days, to take heed that we fall not asleep, and to consider how much better it is to be awakened if we are fallen into a drowsy frame by a sweet still voice, than to stay till the midnight cry is heard; for is it not terrible to be awakened with the cry of fire, fire, fire? O what tremblings of heart doth attend such a cry in the street at midnight?

3. Consider also how near this cry may be, nay, is it not begun already? though it will rise higher, or be much louder; for no doubt but it will be a very loud cry, inasmuch as it does awaken the very foolish virgins, who no doubt will be fast asleep till then, and also it will be an amazing cry, though to wise and sincere professors a very gracious and merciful cry.

4. When you hear at any time a cry at midnight, think of this cry, and enquire also what time of the night it is now; I mean, observe well the signs of the times.

5. This no doubt is that time, when the sinners in Sion will be afraid, and fearfulness surprise the heart of the hypocrites; fear then will seize them.

“Go ye out to meet him.”

Note from hence, that the design of God in causing this cry, is to call professors up to prepare to meet the Bridegroom.

“Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.”

Observe, that as these words show they had been all asleep, so it shows that they were not awakened until this cry was heard; but this voice will quicken them. Believers may be drowsy, and their faith may be low, and their love be much decayed, and their lights burn also very dim, and ready to go out. O how apt and liable are the saints to lose their life, strength, and vigour, or that heat of zeal which sometime they had.

Note also, a child of God may have his lamp to trim, when he hath the greatest need of it; or that he may be under the greatest decay, when he should have obtained the greatest growth in grace, in faith, and holiness; he may have faith, but it is weak, and not in exercise, or though he believes, yet he may not have the joy of faith. Moreover, observe, that though believers' lamps may want trimming, yet they are not gone out; they do burn, though they give not a clear light.

Quest. What is meant by trimming of their lamps?

Ans. It may signify their supplying their lamps with oil; this expositors conclude is one thing which is hereby intended. In trimming the lamp (saith one) there is usually a supply of oil, if it want it, as when it hath burned long it must be supplied: the oil being spent, it will not live except it be supplied. So the wise virgins trimming their lamps, is their fetching more grace by fresh acts of faith and prayer to that fulness of grace that is in Jesus Christ, perceiving their oil almost all spent.

2. It may also denote the stirring up of the grace which remaineth in their lamps: “Stir up the gift that is in thee,” &c. 2 Tim i. 6. That so their conversation may shine in grace and holiness.

3. The trimming the lamp is also the raising the wick, it being burned low. A poor believer may be in such a declining condition, that his graces and spirit also may be low, and therefore must be raised by a more lively exercise of faith in Jesus Christ.

4. Moreover, the trimming of the lamp denotes the cleansing of it, and the taking off the dead ashes that hinders the light, or prevents its burning so clearly as otherwise it would. Now what is this, but the putting away of all iniquity by faith and unfeigned repentance: our conversation or lamp of profession is subject to gather filth, and the dead ashes of corruption hinders oft-times the shinings of our lives, to the glory of God. Unbelief, deadness, earthliness, and self-confidence, are like to a thief in the candle, or dead ashes in the wick of a lamp, and therefore must be snuffed by mortification, lest the Spirit of God be grieved and depart from us, as to his quickening and comforting influences.

APPLICATION.

Let these things, this cry, stir us all up to this duty, i. e., to trim our lamps: are not we in a slumbering frame of heart, and do not our lamps need trimming? besides, is not the Bridegroom ready to appear?

MOTIVES.

1. Consider, though the midnight cry may not yet be heard, yet God uses means to awaken you; he hath stirred me up to cry unto you, and call aloud to you to this end: O pray that God would restore your souls, quicken you in his ways, Ps. xxiii. 3.

2. Consider, that until our lamps are better trimmed, they will not burn clear, that others may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

3. Until then we may not enjoy the light of joy, peace, and comfort in our own souls, nor be of that use and benefit unto others, nor beautify our holy profession.

4. Until then we shall not be fit nor be prepared for death, nor for the coming of the Lord. Besides, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand, therefore we should “Cast off all the unfruitful works of darkness, and put on the armour of light,” Rom. xiii. 12, 13.

But I shall proceed to another proposition.

Doct. That though a sincere Christian may fall into a sleepy frame of heart, yet he shall awake, and shall not sleep the sleep of death: or, the day of Christ shall not find them asleep. I shall

1. Premise one or two things touching the happiness of a true believer's state, though in a sleepy frame.

2. Show from whence it is (or comes to pass) that he shall awake.

A true believer's state is always good and safe.

1. Because he is a child of God, a son of God, and he cannot lose that relation, and from hence an heir of heaven. "If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

A believer is always in a good state, they may be in an ill frame.

2. A true believer (it follows from hence) is always in a state of union with Christ, though he may not know it, and the bonds of this union cannot be broke; it is an indissoluble union.

3. He is ever in a justified state, and all his sins (as to vindictive justice) are forgiven for ever, there being "No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom viii. 1; them that he justifies he also glorifies.

II. From hence it also follows, that no true believer can finally and totally fall away; though the foolish virgins sleep and finally perish, yet the wise, whatsoever sleep or slumber they fall into, yet can never perish.

No true believer can finally fall and perish.

Yet believers may fall foully, and lose the sense of God's love, and be deserted, and be almost ready utterly to despair and give up their hope. For thus it was with Heman: also Job saith, that "His hope was perished," Psal lxxxviii. A godly man, my brethren, may sin away his joy, peace, and comfort; and all lively acts of faith may cease.

He may also for a short time through Satan's temptations falter in his profession, and neglect his duty, so that his lamp may grow very dim, hardly burn at all.

Nay, and when Christ comes to give them a gracious visit, they may be (as the spouse was) asleep: "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse," Cant. v. 1. But what an ill frame was she in! "I sleep, but my heart waketh, it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, open to me, my sister, my spouse," &c., nay, and gracious persons may let Christ wait long before they arise to open to him. "For my head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Christ waits long, knocks hard, and calls aloud at their door, and yet they arise not, no not until he is withdrawn and is gone. "I rose to open to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone; I sought him, but I found him not," ver. 5.

They may, moreover, sleep and not awake, until some amazing providence comes upon them, which is here signified by the midnight cry.

Secondly, I shall show you from whence it is, or cometh to pass, that believers may, and sometimes do, fall into such a sleepy frame.

1. Certainly, it riseth from that corrupt part that is in them, I mean the body of sin.

From whence it comes to pass that believers fall into a sleepy frame.

2. From Satan's temptations. "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Cant. v. 3. They perceive their state is good, and their work is done, and so the devil gets advantages against them, to neglect their indispensable duties.

3. It may also be occasioned by means of the snares and allurements of this world. O how ready are we to have our hearts too much run out to earthly things. "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's."

4. It may likewise come upon them, as you heard, through the Bridegroom's tarrying, or by reason of their long watching; but having spoken to this already, I shall say no more to it now.

Thirdly, why shall true believers awake out of their sleepy and slumbering frame?

Ans. 1. Because they have a principle of spiritual life in them; whilst life is in a man, though he be asleep, there is ground enough to believe he will awake; but if a man falls asleep and his life is gone, there is no hope of his being awakened. The Spirit of God remains in believers for ever, they have a principle of eternal life in them.

Why believers shall be wakened out of sleep.

2. Because "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. iv. 18. Though their path may sometimes seem dark, yet that darkness shall vanish, his leaf shall not wither; he shall be green, and flourishing in his profession; though it may seem to fade for a short time.

3. Because of the nature of that union they have with Jesus Christ; "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. Union with Christ is as a spring that feeds or fills their vessels and lamps with fresh oil, as the branches receive sap from the root, by which means they grow, flourish, and bring forth fruit.

4. Because of that great love of God to them, the love God hath to them will not suffer them to sleep long before he in a gracious manner awakens them; besides his promise is,

that he will return again and revive them: "They shall revive as the corn," Hos. xiv. 7. "He will revive the hearts of the humble, and the spirits of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. Such that we love, we will not suffer to sleep in a dangerous hour, to their utter ruin, if we can awake them; now the love of God to his saints, exceeds our love to any dear friend, and he is able to awaken and quicken his people.

5. Because their Head never sleeps; "He that keepeth Israel doth neither sleep nor slumber." In this consisteth the safety of believers, and from hence the soul shall be awakened both from a dead frame in respect of spirits and their bodies also at the last day.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. This discovers the great difference that there is between the state of the wise and foolish virgins.

2. Let believers be exhorted to holy watchfulness.

1. Because otherwise the word of God and the means of grace may be ineffectual to you, and you may lose much sweet comfort by Christ's gracious visits, and be brought under many fears and doubts about your state.

2. Though your state is good, yet you may not be actually ready to meet the Bridegroom.

3. Consider what love you had to Christ when you first believed. "I remember the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness," Jer. ii. 2. &c. Nothing is more offensive and grievous to Jesus Christ, than to see his people cool in their love to him. "Yet nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works," Rev. ii. 4, 5, &c. Take holy Paul's advice: "But call to remembrance the former days, in which after you were illuminated, you suffered a great fight of afflictions," Heb. x. 32.

4. Consider that Christ's love is ever the same; he never grows cold in his affections to his spouse, and dear saints, nor hath he given to us any cause to decline in our love to him: "Have I been a barren wilderness to Israel, or a land of darkness?" Jer. ii. 31.

Take two or three directions.

Direction to a wakeful frame. 1. Strengthen that which remains that is ready to die; do not lose the little faith, love, zeal, and resolution you have, but labour after an addition of every grace.

2. Be restless in your spirits until you find Christ again, if he be withdrawn: tell him you are sick of love; let it appear that you are troubled and do mourn in his absence. Thus it was with David; "Thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled;" labour after poverty of spirit.

3. Labour to die to the things of this life; take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness, get loose in your affections to all perishing things; beware of the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches; know ye not that ye are pilgrims on earth, and are travelling to another country?

4. Be much in prayer, and watch therein. "Pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man," Luke xxi. 36. Let us watch our hearts, watch our tongues, watch our eyes, and watch our whole conversation; our lamps also must be watched, lest they grow dim, or oil fails. "Let your loins be girt, and your lamps burning." Strive to be much in secret prayer, closet prayer, and see how your hearts are affected to that.

5. Think much upon another world, contemplate on death, and on the day of judgment, and the coming of Christ: consider how short and uncertain life is; our days are but as a shadow, or as a vapour that flies away.

6. Improve all those providences of God under which you are exercised; observe God in all his dispensations. Satan in all his temptations, and your own hearts in all their inclinations; strive to discern the voice of God from the voice of Satan, and know that God tries us for approbation, but Satan for our destruction; God sets our sins before us to humble us, but Satan to ruin us by slavish fear and unbelief.

7. Delight in the company of the wise, and wakeful Christians, and avoid conversing or keeping company with loose and carnal professors, much more with the profane and ungodly, who condemn all religion and godliness.

8. Receive reproof kindly, especially from your minister, who is commanded to rebuke some (as occasion may be) sharply. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall not break my head," saith David. If you hate him that reproves in the gate, it is a sign your hearts are not right with God; "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee," Prov. ix. 8.

9. Look every day to your lamps; the lamps of the sanctuary were to be dressed every

day ; “ He dressed them, and made them ready every morning,” Exod. xxx. 7. The care of trimming our lamps, must be our business morning and evening.

10. Take heed ye do not grieve the Holy Spirit by slighting his motions, nor by undervaluing his work and operations (which I fear they do, who affirm the state of the elect is as good before grace, before effectual calling as after); do not grieve the Spirit by adhering to Satan, and by siding in with unbelieving thoughts, nor by yielding to any sin, nor by ascribing that to yourselves which belongs to the blessed Spirit.

“ Then all those virgins arose,” &c.

Quest. What is meant by the foolish virgins arising, and trimming their lamps?

Ans. Their arising denotes, that they were more apprehensive of their danger than they were before; they were altogether so senseless as formerly they were; also it may signify that they reformed their lives, and became more seemingly devout and pious, and were oftener in their duties; may be now they pray, and hear the word with greater diligence; their consciences being awakened: note from hence,

What the rising of the virgins may denote.

Doct. An awakened conscience will put wicked men and hypocrites upon doing somewhat in reforming their ways.

But alas, they think by this means to get into a good state, as well as into a good frame. The foolish virgins do it, to get a title to heaven, the wise to get a meetness for heaven; the foolish think by repentance and reformation of life to be saved.

“ And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out,” ver. 8.

Observe, Doct. Foolish virgins, or hypocrites, may see their want of grace.

Quest. From whence is it that hypocrites may see the want of grace?

Ans. Their sense of want of grace ariseth from the inward horror of their heart, or sight and sense of their woful condition; it is not from the sense of the evil of sin, but of the misery which they fear is near.

2. It is not from the sense of the worth of grace in itself, in respect of the sanctifying virtue of it, but thinking thereby they may be saved; hypocrites may desire grace as a bridge to carry them to heaven, but it is not that they may glorify God, and render the name of Christ as sweet odour; it is indeed for their own sakes, not from love to God, but love to themselves.

3. It is rather a passive sense than an active inquiry of their hearts; when distress and want comes, fools will see their folly; like as some careless traders, who cast not up their books, but when want and poverty comes upon them, are perplexed; an arrest of conscience terrifies these foolish ones.

4. These see their wretched state, but not the sinfulness of their former neglect and remissness; it is a natural sense, not a spiritual grace, makes a man spiritually poor; but they that never had it, cannot be affected for the simple want of it; it is only from the light of common convictions, and not from saving illuminations, it flows not from those shining beams of the Sun of righteousness.

5. It is from a sense only of the want of oil in their lamps, not for the want of it in their vessels. They see the want of a holy life, but not of Christ, and a changed heart; they are more troubled for the guilt of sin than for the filth and pollution thereof; oil in the lamp commends us to men, but oil in our vessels, (i. e.) in our hearts, commends us to God. David wanted a new heart; “ Create in me a clean heart,” Psal. li. 5; and Paul cries out of the body of sin and death. An hypocrite may have an awakened conscience, but not a renewed mind.

6. It is a sense of the want of oil at last, nay, when it was too late, and now they mourn, as Solomon saith, Prov. v. 11—14, “ And thou mourn at last, when thy flesh and thy body is consumed, and say how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me; I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation,” No doubt but Esau might at last see his folly in selling his birthright for a mess of pottage, but could not then obtain the blessing, though he sought it with tears, Heb. xii. 16, 17.

Quest. From whence is it that the foolish virgins came no sooner to see their want and woful condition?

1. Ans. They a long time deceived themselves. Saul held out pretty well until Samuel died, and may be thought his state good, but afterwards he saw God was departed from him: self love is a great deceiver.

2. The good opinions the wise virgins had of them, might partly deceive them; the

approbation of godly Christians go a great way with some persons ; they indeed prefer that above the approbation of God.

3. It may be from the evil and depths of deceit that is in their own hearts ; that hath the quickest sight, the most piercing eye, may not soon penetrate into the dark corners of his own heart : “ Who (saith David) knows his errors ? ” Psal. xix. 12.

4. They might see it no sooner from their great remissness, in not searching and proving themselves. That which lies deep, or is hid, must be searched ; this wisdom the foolish virgins wanted. A true child of God thinks he can never thoroughly or sufficiently search his own heart and life, and therefore cries out, “ Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any evil way in me,” Psal. cxxxix. 28 ; though he himself was not an idle searcher : “ I communed with mine own heart, and my spirit made a diligent search,” Psal. lxxvii. 6. But this he saw was not sufficient, therefore desired the Lord also to search him, but this wisdom the foolish virgins had not.

5. No doubt it was also partly from the subtilty of Satan, all the devil’s endeavours are to keep sinners ignorant of their state and condition ; one while he persuades the poor deluded wretch his state is good, but when he sees the sinner’s eyes are a little opened, he persuades them it is too late, or there is no cure, or else directs them to false and indirect ways to obtain it. And as the devil strives to keep an unsound professor ignorant, that he may not be saved, so he endeavours to keep a sincere person ignorant of his condition, that he may hinder him of the joy of salvation, or spoil all his peace and comfort.

6. It may arise from that similitude or seeming likeness there is between a form of godliness and the power thereof, or between convictions of natural conscience and true evangelical illuminations : or between true faith and counterfeit faith, and betwixt reformation and regeneration. Similitude (saith one) is the mother of mistakes. Bristol stones seem like true pearl, and steel cut like diamonds appear like true diamonds. A limner can draw very much like the life, or him whose face it represents.

7. It may be occasioned through the ignorance and blindness of some teachers, whose ministry they may sometimes attend to lead men out to rest upon a presumptuous faith, and will not allow their hearers to try themselves by signs or characters of true grace ; such that desery all evidences of grace, or a reflex act of faith, to know how it is with them, I look upon to be preachers of pernicious doctrine ; we can never be pressed too much to sanctification, and to show our faith by our works.

8. Perhaps it may be a just and righteous judgment of God upon them, that they see not their state no sooner, they are paid off in their own coin ; since they deceived others, and were not willing to try themselves, God leaves them to spiritual blindness, and to the deceit of their own heart. “ Jerusalem would not see the things that belonged to their peace,” Luke xix. 42 ; therefore our blessed Lord said, “ Now are they hid from your eyes.”

Quest. Why are the foolish virgins said to ask oil of the wise ?

1. Answ. It may be partly to discover they are fools ; for who that are wise would go to men, to saints, or to ministers for grace ?

2. It may signify that hypocrites in their distress, know not what course to take ; they catch hold of any thing, though it be most unlikely to relieve them.

3. It may be to convince all that God will make it appear, that though some seem to be wise and knowing persons, and can perhaps dispute and argue excellently about principles of religion, yet at last that they are mere fools ; is he not a great fool that will go to his fellow-creature for the true grace of God ? or that a saint can give grace to another, or hath any to spare ?

4. Perhaps it implies this, viz., they fly to, and depend upon the prayers of the wise ; “ Give us of your oil,” that is, improve your interest with God, your faith in prayer to God for us ; but certainly there is more than this meant by the wise virgins’ answer, “ Not so,” they would not deny them of their prayers, but they denied them what they asked. “ Go to them that sell ;” pray yourselves to God, we cannot help you. Sirs, such who depend upon the prayers of others, and pray not themselves, are certainly foolish persons.

5. It denotes God leaves them to themselves, and to horrid blindness.

Quest. When will the hypocrite’s hope and profession fail him ?

Answ. When conscience is awake and terrifies him, and when he is in the greatest need ; moreover, be sure it will fail him at death, and in the day of judgment. O see the woful state of hypocrites !

SERMON XXIII.

And the foolish said, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out,—Matt. xxv. 8.

DOCT. Lamps of hypocrites will first or last go out.

1. I shall show you the cause why the lamps of these professors go out.

2. Apply it.

1. One reason why the lamps of the foolish virgins go out, because they took no oil in their vessels; the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps: but hypocrites go forth into a visible profession without true faith, or the saving grace of the Spirit in their hearts. It is positively said that the "foolish virgins took their lamps, but took no oil with them," ver. 3. A profession of religion without grace, and the saving knowledge of Christ, will come to nothing.

2. Because the oil they had in their lamps (as I told you) was only common grace, by the virtue of which they made a visible profession of religion; their consciences might be enlightened, and their affections moved with some seeming heat and zeal, but never were thoroughly converted; and thus it was with Judas and many others, who were called Christ's disciples, and followed him for a time.

3. No doubt but that they had some taste of the good word of God, and arrived to some kind of faith, but were without the indwelling of the Spirit, being neither united to Christ, nor having sincere love to him; but some sin or another was allowed and lived in, and had power over them; they were counted saints, but were not thoroughly sanctified; and though they escaped outward profaneness, yet were not inwardly purged; and from hence their lamps went out.

U S E.

1. From hence we may infer, that God will at some time or another constrain foolish professors to confess their own folly, and be self-condemned. "Our lamps are gone out." I Sam. xxiv. 17, Saul was brought to confess that "David was more righteous than he." God will make the stoutest heart to yield and give judgment against itself, and so "cause the arrogance of the proud to cease," Isa. xlii. 11.

2. We also infer that there are several sorts of hypocrites; some will not own that their lamps are without oil, but conclude their state is good, and that their lamps burn as clear as any.

Quest. By what signs or characters may such whose lamps are going out, be known?

1. Answ. When a person can hardly keep up a bare outward profession, or his outward conversation from some scandalous sin or another; some (whose hearts are not upright) may walk in appearance before men without blame, or in a holy conversation; but if a professor falters here, and his life is observed to be scandalous, he being loose, earthly, and carnal, or lives in some way of sin or another, it shows that his lamp is gone, or is going out.

2. When temptations are too strong, and given way unto, and indispensable duties are neglected, and they will not be reclaimed, though often sent to and admonished, yet, neglect of prayer, attendance upon God's public worship is persisted in, and yet they seem little concerned, but will have one excuse or another.

3. When some notions of religion are more affected than real godliness, love, and unity, and a person seems proud and conceited, and on every small occasion he is ready to throw off his communion with the church.

4. When convictions of sin, either of sins of omission or commission are not cherished, or a person grows weary of duty, or very cold and remiss in them, or resteth upon the bare performance of them, though very dully performed, and though they grow earthly and lukewarm, yet are insensible of it, and think they are "increased in goods, and have need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17.

5. When comfort is more sought and desired than strength against sin, and purity of heart; some pretend they cannot profit under any ministry that presses practical holiness; no, but only that doctrine pleaseth them, that raiseth their affections, and fills them with joy and consolation; they eye more what Christ hath (as they think) done for them, than what by his Spirit he hath wrought in them.

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you," &c., ver. 9.

Here are three things to be observed.

1. The request of the foolish virgins, what it was, and also that it was denied by the wise.
2. The reason why they denied their request, "Lest there be not enough for us, and you."
3. The advice and counsel which the wise virgins gave to the foolish, "But go rather to them that sell," &c.

Some expositors think the answer of the wise doth not contain serious advice to go to Jesus Christ, but rather that they spoke upbraidingly or ironically, according as God speaks, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee, and walk in the ways of thine own heart," &c. Eccl. xi. 9. Or, as Elijah said to Baal's priests, "He is a god, cry aloud," &c., I Kings xviii. 27.

If it be thus taken, then it follows that hypocrites in their distress meet with no pity, either from God or his people; God mocketh them when their fear cometh, nay, the Lord "laugheth at them, and he shall have them in derision," Prov. i. 26, Psal. ii. 4. This is spoken after the manner of men, to show how God will aggravate the sinner's misery on him at the last. Moreover, it is said, that "the righteous also shall see and fear and laugh at him," Psal. lii. 5.

They that take the answer thus, intimate as if the wise virgins should say, Go to your workmongers, your meritmongers, go to your dry bottles, go to your empty duties; as saith God, "Go to your idols, or to the fat of your sacrifices;" you have made lies your refuge, now go and shelter yourselves under them.

But I rather think that the wise virgins gave them serious and sober advice, and spake not ironically to them.

Quest. But why do not the wise rather reprove them (seeing their lamps were gone out) than so calmly advise them?

Ans. Because it becomes their modesty to deal gently and mildly with them, also they would not provoke them; we are commanded to follow peace with all men, also a gentle answer turns away wrath.

2. May be the wise might perceive, that they were not capable to bear rebuke, or perhaps they might express to the wise a great sense of their folly in sleeping so long, and to let their lamps go out, and so needed no sharp reproof.

3. Besides the wise virgins might not know their state, and would not censoriously judge, nor charge them.

4. Or (as one notes) may be the foolish virgins might be persons of higher rank, (in respect of their outward state or interest and esteem in the church); and this might put the wise upon a temptation not to be too tart with them, (for the soundest professors are not always the richest, nor had in the highest esteem) or the foolish might be, (saith he) men of greater parts, or seem like stars of the first magnitude.

Quest. What is the meaning of the denial the wise gave them?

1. Ans. Negatively, they did not deny them any civil kindness, nor help of their prayers, nor any seasonably advice and instruction.

2. In the affirmative, 1. Their denial might be a sober and just reprehension for their coming unto them for oil, without taking any further pains, or be at any cost for it; perhaps they would have grace, but not part with their sins. Wisdom is to be sought with the utmost diligence, nor can a man be a disciple of Christ, but he must deny himself, and he that bought the pearl of great price, sold all he had to purchase it; but these foolish persons might not like the price on which Christ offers himself; for though oil and wine is had without money and without price; yet a right-eye sin, and a right-hand sin must be parted with, and the creature's old rags must be cast off.

2. Their denial may denote (as indeed it is partly expressed) that no sincere Christians can part with any of their oil, their faith or grace, to give it unto others; no, they can give no faith, no grace, to a wife or dear children; they cannot believe for them, nor repent for them, nor will the parents being in the covenant of grace, be any saving benefit to one child; they must believe themselves, others cannot (I say) believe for them, though we may instruct poor relations and neighbours, yet we cannot give to any the saving knowledge of Christ; no, though a saint be filled with the Spirit, or is full of grace, yet he can impart none of it to any other. God only is the giver of grace; faith, as it is not of ourselves, so it is the gift of God.

3. It denotes, that sincere Christians have grace little enough for themselves, and none to spare, (as they have no power to give to others) for he that hath the most, sees he hath

but a little, he never thinks he hath enough for himself, and therefore is always desiring more; nay, all true believers see a great want of more grace, more faith, more love, more humility; though he be humble, yet he would be more humble, and therefore he cries for more grace. (1.) Because of the sense he hath of the corruptions of his own heart, and of the strength of Satan's temptations. (2.) Moreover, he knows not what times of need may come. (3.) Also the means of grace may fail, a famine of the word may overtake him, and times of greater expense, when he may be forced to live partly upon the old stock. (4.) Or he may be called to harder work, though the grace he hath may serve his present turn, or to discharge his present duties, yet he may meet with harder duties, he may be called to suffer for Christ, or to offer up his Isaac, (as Abraham was) which calls for a strong faith.

4. Their answer signifies that believers are humble persons, they are not so rich as to help their neighbours; the wise see they have nothing to spare.

5. It may denote the high regard they have for the honour of Jesus, or will not eclipse his glory, who only hath grace to give to sinners. Go to them that sell, to the fountain of grace, and not to the creature, nor to your duties; none can help you but Jesus Christ alone.

6. It may signify that the wise virgins would have the foolish see with their own eyes, and believe with their own hearts.

Some people live upon borrowing; so would the foolish virgins. Some leave it to their ministers to believe for them, they pin their faith on their sleeves; my minister is a learned man, I believe as he believes. Some also would have their parents' faith serve their turn, and give a right to them, both to the promises and to ordinances. This is indeed like going to the wise for oil.

7. Their answer may signify that great love the wise had to the souls of the foolish, they send them to Jesus Christ; and who also says to them, "Buy of me," Rev. iii. 18.

Lastly, perhaps the wise were weary of their company, and willing to be rid of them, since their lamps were gone out, and with a loathsome stink, they being of ill and unholy lives might bring a reproach upon religion and a dishonour upon Jesus Christ, being professors and church members.

"But go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves," ver. 9.

We have no oil for you; go to the Father, and to Jesus Christ the Mediator.

Quest. Why must they go to God, and to Christ Jesus, or to God in him?

1. Answ. Because no grace is to be had of any others, or anywhere else; "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights," Jam. i. 17. And the light of knowledge, grace, and all spiritual gifts in a peculiar manner are from God.

2. Because Jesus Christ hath bought or purchased the oil of gladness, and all spiritual blessings, for all who see the want of these things, and come to him believingly for them.

3. Because Jesus Christ the Mediator is the great repository of all grace, though all truth and grace is essentially in God, yet it is all communicated to the person of Christ, considered as Mediator, it is laid up in him; "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3; hid from the world, lodged in him, to be secured for believers, and not exposed to view of every eye, but are given forth as he sees good to whom, and in what measure he pleaseth; it is from his fulness that all grace is received, and as Jesus Christ is the repository of all grace, so also the outlet or conduit-pipe of it also. "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16. And this is to exalt Jesus Christ, to magnify the person of Christ, and set forth his glory, and therefore all that see a want of grace must go to him; for as Pharaoh put all the corn of the land of Egypt into the possession or hands of Joseph, and all that wanted corn, (who came to him) he sent them to Joseph. So all that need grace, wisdom, knowledge, or any spiritual good things, must go to Jesus Christ.

4. Because Jesus Christ is said to sell all things which sinners need. "Ho, every one that thirsteth come to the waters, and he that hath no money, come buy wine and milk," &c. Isa. lv. 1; compared with Rev. iii. 18. "Buy of me gold tried in the fire," &c.

Quest. But what is meant by buying oil, and why do they bid them go and buy?

Answ. For the clearing of this part of the parable, which may seem to some difficult, and opposite to the doctrine of free grace, I shall lay down for the opening of it, one or two explanatory propositions.

1. Proposit. Nothing is or can be more freely given than the grace of God, (i. e.) the spirit and graces thereof; I need not cite Scriptures to confirm this.

2. Proposit. That the buying and selling mentioned here must therefore be quite different from buying in the common acceptation, as among men.

Gen. xlix.
30. Ruth. iv.
30.

1. This appears, because in buying something is commonly laid down or given which is of intrinsic worth and value with that which is bought. But no man hath anything to give in worth or value with the graces of the Spirit; besides we have nothing that we call our own, but all we have is the Lord's. Moreover, what is in value with this blessed oil? "Who knoweth the price of wisdom? her price is far above rubies, no man knoweth the price thereof," Job xxviii. 13.

2. Because this is a buying without money, and without price, that is, without money or money's worth. This shows it is a quite different sort of buying from what is among men. Moreover, that which is had or bought without money, or price, is given freely.

3. Because he that buys anything in the common acceptation of the word, deserveth what he so buys; he giving its full worth either in money, or goods, and he may demand as his just due what he hath so bought; but no man dare say that he deserveth the least morsel of bread at the hands of God, much less the saving grace of God, nor can any man demand it of God as his due, upon the account of what he hath paid for it.

4. Because, in common buying of any commodity, the buyer who hath given a full price for it is not looked upon beholding to the seller, I have given you your full demands, saith he, I am not obliged to you, but you rather to me for my kindness in buying of you.

But O how are sinners obliged unto God for all those good things they receive of him, especially for grace and all spiritual blessing, and this indeed, because all is given freely to them as undeserving; nay, to ill-deserving creatures, also. "What do we give to God, or what receiveth he at our hands?" Job xxxv. 7.

Quest. These things being so, why are they bid to go and buy?

The reasons
why we are
said to buy.

I. Answ. It may be to show us the worth of these things, for those things that are very precious, as jewels, &c., are commonly bought, though the paper and pack-thread, with which a jewel may be bound up, is given freely, but the jewel was bought and paid for, so Christ and saving grace is of infinite worth.

II. And more directly, because in buying something is parted with by the sinner, he must part with all he hath (as I have showed the merchantman did for the pearl of great price,) but alas they are things of no worth, but contrariwise are hurtful to his soul; yet there is a necessity of parting with them.

1. By virtue of God's command, he requires all poor sinners so to do.

2. By reason of the sinner's unfitness, or moral incapacity of enjoying these spiritual things, unless he so do; for he must deny himself, that is, sinful self, religious self, and natural self also. For,

3. A dart that sticks in the flesh must be pulled out; if a man wounded therewith could be cured, if a member be corrupted and rotten, it must be cut off, and old filthy rags must be cast off, if a man would be clothed with a rich robe; sin and grace cannot reign in one and the same heart at one and the same time; a man cannot truly seek the honour of Christ, that chiefly seeks the honour of men. "How can you believe that seek honour from one another, and not that honour that comes from God only?" John v. 44.

Lot must leave Sodom, if he will escape the consuming flames; and Moses must forsake Pharaoh's court, if he will be a servant of God, and a deliverer of Israel.

III. It may be called a buying, because men commonly high prize such things, that they have bought and parted with all they had to be possessed of for it. Paul set an estimable value upon Jesus, for the sake of whom he parted with all things that were before counted gain to him; he that will not part with his sins or unrighteousness, will not part with his own righteousness to be possessed with grace, and clothed with the righteousness of Christ; which shows he little values Christ or the graces of Christ.

IV. Because that which a man buys he hath a proper right to, and propriety in, and is sure of; we call it our own, though we gave never so small a matter to have it, and also they know the time when they came to be possessed of it; no man can have Christ who is not brought for his sake to deny himself, take up his cross and follow him; if we do not forsake our old lovers, Christ will not espouse us.

V. Moreover, that which a man parts withal he hath to enjoy it, he will not soon part with; we are bid to "buy the truth, and sell it not," Prov. xxiii. 23; get it whatsoever the cost be, but never part with it; get Christ, the fear of God or true wisdom, let the terms be what they will, you will have a good bargain, and if you could have all the world, yet sell it not, part not with what you have obtained.

3. Profit. That buying which is here meant, is not a purchasing or a procuring condition, or a previous qualification for grace, or to obtain Christ and his saving benefits (as some speak of) I mean it is no federal condition on our part to be performed, viz., such a

condition which a sinner must answer, and the blessing will be withheld until he has on his part answered it, for this is a plain buying with money.

No, all federal or covenant conditions in this sense were performed by Jesus Christ our covenanting Head—yet we will, if you please, grant it a condition by way of connection; as thus, if you will have union with Christ, you must receive the Holy Spirit, or if you will put on the new man, you must put off the old man; and if you will be justified, you must believe in Christ, or if you would be saved, you must be regenerated; so if you will have the pearl, or oil in your vessels, you must part with all you have to enjoy it: but pray remember, faith to believe in Christ is as much the gift of God's grace, and Christ is his gift, whom faith receives. Moreover, we need the same power of God in a way of free grace, to cast off the old man; as we do to put on the new man; we can as soon remove a mountain, as regenerate or change our own hearts; yet this is required of all that will be saved, Lazarus must rise up out of the grave, if he lives again; sinners are commanded to arise from the dead, as Christ commanded Lazarus to come out of the grave; but yet a sinner has no more power to do it of himself, than Lazarus had to raise himself after he had been dead four days. My brethren, a new heart, faith, and regeneration are a part of the covenant, or contained in the free promise of God to poor sinners, as much as the Spirit and Jesus Christ is part of it, as promised to be given freely, and therefore a new heart, faith, and repentance, cannot be federal conditions of the said covenant of grace.

VI. In a word, this buying denotes God's infinite love and grace to all such who timely come and do buy, as any thing else whatsoever; for no man can or will part with all he hath for Christ, until the Spirit doth convince him of the infinite worth that is in him, and of that necessity of union with him, and also not until almighty power works faith, by infusing a principle of life in the soul. These poor wretches might go and ask the price of oil, but never came to God's terms; many would be saved who like not the terms contained in the gospel, and as they have no power to come up to those terms, so they seek not to God, nor improve the means (or at least wise not timely) which God directs them to.

APPLICATION.

I. From hence we infer, that that which is said to be bought by us, is freely of God's own sovereign grace given to us. And this will further appear, if we consider these things following.

1. Because what the Father, or the Son are said to sell to us, the Son bought for us, and paid a full price for it, it was purchased for all God's elect by Christ with his own money; divine justice having received full payment; but to us Christ, "his righteousness and all things are freely given," Rom. v. 19, who were unworthy of the least favour, being guilty criminals; we merited not, bought nothing with our money, but Christ bought and paid for all with his own money only; Christ purchased, and we possess, and thus buying and free given are consistent with each other. Doth the Father sell the same things twice, or require double federal conditions! and though Christ's money went for part of payment, our money doth procure the actual possession of the bargain or inheritance? God forbid any should argue after such a manner.

2. Because God freely also gives grace though he be said to sell it, and we to buy it.

(1.) This must be granted, because our buying is no gain to him. "What dost thou give to him, or what receiveth he at thy hands?" he empties our vessels, and then with his own rich and precious oil he fills them.

(2.) Because a heart and power to buy, or to receive Jesus Christ, the Spirit, and graces of the Spirit, are as much an act of Christ's love, and his free gifts to us, as grace itself, and all those blessings received; it is of his working in us that we are made willing, "for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13.

(3.) Consider, (though God is said to sell, and we to buy) what a vast difference there is between the worth of what we part with, and that which we receive of him; see what he saith, "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," Isa. lxi. 3. The oil of joy, this is the oil the foolish virgins went to buy; and see what God saith to humble souls, he hath appointed the oil of joy for mourning; but he knowing the hardness of a sinner's heart, and that they cannot mourn for sin, until he breaks them into pieces, "he pours upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication," Zech. xii. 10; and by means they are helped to look up to him whom they pierced, and then they mourn, and not till then.

2. Exhort. Be exhorted, you poor sinners, who have no grace, no oil, to go to Jesus Christ; go you that have no money, he offers it freely, whatsoever Christ saith, be sure that do, bring your empty vessels; before him, go as sinners, as having no-

Exhortation.

thing, no money, resolve to to give up all as lost for Christ, and count whatsoever you have valued formerly, as dung; this is the way to buy; and are not these easy terms? confess your ignorance, and cast off your false confidence. What fools are they who refuse to buy of one that sells on such terms, what, without money and without price, and yet will any refuse to buy of him?

Comfort and encourage. III. Here is comfort and encouragement to believers. Ye doubting and drooping saints, though you have oil, yet you may need wine, O buy wine and milk, wine to cheer you; you may have whole flagons in the covenant promises, to revive your sinking and fainting spirits; and you, babes in Christ, who want milk, Christ sells milk as well as wine; attend upon the word, lay aside all earthly business, and draw at the breasts of the promises and ordinances, you may boldly come, be supplied with whatsoever you need; if any thirst, Christ hath water of life. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Rev. x. 17.

SERMON XXIV.

But rather go to them that sell and buy for yourselves.—Matt. xxv. 9.

I HAVE opened the nature of this buying, and answered several questions; there is yet one or two more, which I purpose to resolve.

Quest. What directions are further necessary about gospel buying?

The answer shall be twofold.

1. By way of parity.

2. By way of disparity.

1. By way of parity; you that would buy of Christ, must see or be convinced of the need of that you would buy; (thus it is among men that go to the market,) those in Laodicea did not know the want of anything; they thought they were "increased in goods, and had need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17.

2. Nay, such that would buy of Christ, ought to be convinced in the highest degree of their need, or see the necessity they have of oil, wine, and milk. People may want many things, but they may do well enough without them; but some things men want, they must have, or they cannot live. So sinners must have grace, they must have Christ, the bread of life, or else they will perish for ever. Thirsty persons must have water, and something to drink, and naked people must have clothes to cover them. So sinners must have water of life, and Christ's white raiment to clothe them; they must believe. "He that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. It was mere necessity that moved Jacob to send his sons down to Egypt to buy corn, "that we may live (saith he,) and not die." You sinners that see no necessity of Christ, and of the Spirit and graces of Christ, will not buy upon gospel terms. The foolish virgins for want of oil were shut out of the marriage-chamber, and they not seeing the necessity of their want of it sooner, was the cause they went to buy when it was too late. There is a necessity of grace.

(1.) Because there is no man can be converted or regenerated without it.

(2.) None can believe, until they receive the Spirit, which is the seed of faith.

(3.) They cannot see until they have Christ's eye-salve to open their understandings; faith is the eye by which we see Christ, the feet by which we go to Christ, the hand by which we receive Christ, the mouth by which we taste how good he is.

II. He that would buy, considers as he hath not the things he wants, and as there is a necessity of them; so also he must know whither to go, to be supplied with them. So sinners must know that they have nothing of their own to supply their wants; and also must go to him that sells: they must not look within for light and righteousness, they have within no evangelical light, nor justifying righteousness. What good will natural, moral, or legal light, or righteousness do them? Even none at all, as to justification and eternal life; and this they will see at last, whatsoever their confidence may be now, through blindness and delusions of sin and Satan, and deceivers.

"Go to them that sell."

This denotes they must go out of themselves; their hearts and vessels are empty, and not one dram of oil in them naturally, but are wholly in darkness. "And if that light

which is in thee, be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Luke xi. 34, 35. Grace is only in Christ, and life also. "Whither shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life," John vi. 68.

III. You must also know the worth of grace, and how to use it, and not make a Saviour of faith, or think faith as a habit or as an act, is that which is your righteousness, or the matter that justifies your persons; no, though thereby you receive Christ and righteousness with him; yet you must know you cannot have Christ nor righteousness without faith, and therefore ought to know the worth of it, or that it is more precious than gold that perishes, nay, than gold tried in the fire. Who will buy the pearl that knows not it is a pearl of great price? Will he sell all for it unless he is convinced of the infinite worth that is in it?

IV. Such that would buy, must know the market-place, or where what he wants are sold, (as well as who sells them:) so sinners must know the spiritual market-place and market-days; they must go to the assemblies of God's people, and attend upon the word of God on those days where and when it is truly preached. Merchants resort to the exchange, and attend exchange-times. So must sinners know God's exchange-time, and get among the people of God, and learn experiences of them who are old traders, and not go where counterfeit goods are sold, or they may soon be undone by being cheated, and think they have got Christ and true faith, when they have not, but it is a false Christ, and counterfeit faith, or nothing but a common, a temporary, or a presumptuous faith.

V. They must come to the market timely, or not delay until the market is over, or the summer is ended. The foolish virgins were ruined by their folly in this case, they went not to buy until it was too late. "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Heb. iii. 7, 8.

VI. Such that would buy, would do well to go before the price of what they need be raised. My brethren, Jesus Christ seeing sinners slight and abuse his favours, contemn and make light of his word and heavenly manna, or refuse his calls and gracious tenders of grace, sometimes withholds, and keeps back the precious things of the gospel; so that they grow scarce, and are hard to come at, and he raises the price of his blessed commodities this way; nay, he threatens a famine, "Not of bread, nor of thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord," Amos viii. 11. You may not have hereafter those precious things your souls need, but it may cost you dear, even the loss of your liberties, goods, nay, perhaps the loss of your lives, or the word of God may be "so precious, that there may be no open vision," 1 Sam. iii. 1.

VII. You that would buy, must not come to cheapen only, but resolve to buy whatsoever it cost you; for Christ will not abate you anything of the old price, *i. e.*, of "denying yourselves, taking up your cross, and following him," Matt. xvi. 24, 25; and if you think the price too hard, and that it may cost you your lives; know "He that seeks to save his life, shall lose it."

VIII. You that would buy, must not consult with your friends, no, not with father or mother, son or daughter, husband nor wife; you must not ask them whether you shall buy or not, become a disciple of Christ or not, and refuse so to do unless they consent; you must not say with the man in the gospel, "Suffer me first to bid them farewell that are at my house, or suffer first to bury my father." No, or you must not consult with flesh and blood; proud flesh thinks scorn to receive all freely; no, he will pay for what he hath, he will buy with his money, or have no Christ, something (he thinks), he must do; others consult their carnal ease, their outward honour among men, but you must do as Paul did, "Not consult with flesh and blood."

Secondly, By way of disparity.

1. You must carry no money to the market with you; this perhaps some will say, is a strange way to buy.

2. You must buy, and yet you cannot, unless you die; I mean die to sin, to self, and to this world.

3. Believers, you must buy, though you see not, feel not, "believe in hope against hope," though everything seems to lie against your sense, and above your carnal reason, yet believe; though you are sinners in yourselves, yet believe in Christ you are perfect, and without spot or blemish. And sinners, though you are never so vile, yet believe in Christ for righteousness; and you saints that are in darkness, and have no light, "Yet stay yourselves upon your God," Isa. l. 10. Some could buy, if they could but find all sin dead in them, and they were more spiritual and holy or lively, and what is this but to buy when you have got some money, or something of your own?

4. Think not that you shall have oil or any spiritual blessing for the sake of anything you

must, and are commanded to part with, or that the terms of the gospel are a purchasing condition. But having spoken to that already, I shall say no more to it now.

U S E.

1. You may learn from hence the mystery of gospel buying.
 2. This may inform poor sinners of the danger they are in, by following the dark principles of human reason, and the natural and legal light that is in them.
 3. Moreover, by what means many are deceived, and perish for ever; and may learn hereby to know whether they have yet bought or not, those things their souls need.
- “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him into the marriage-chamber,” ver. 10.

In these words are four parts.

1. An account of what the foolish virgins did.—They went to buy.
2. Their disappointment.—While they went to buy, the bridegroom came.
3. The happiness of the wise.—They were ready.
4. The woful state of the foolish.—The door was shut.

Doct. Some persons go to buy or provide oil for Christ's coming, when it is too late.

In speaking to this, I shall show you,

1. What their going to buy may denote.
2. Show you at what time or times it will be too late.
3. Show why Christ will come before some are ready.

1. Their going to buy, may signify some thoughts or inclinations they had, to lay hold of Christ by faith. Some say, we go sir, but go not, they have a faint resolution, but never prosecute it; the foolish virgins made a show of going to buy.

2. It may denote their going to the market, I mean to hear the word of God, which perhaps they before had much neglected; they went to the assemblies of God's people, with some kind of resolution to get ready, or prepare for another world, above what they had done before or in former times, being awakened by the cry that was heard.

3. Their going to buy, may also denote their cheapening or asking the price of those things they wanted; like those people the prophet speaks of. “And they come to thee as the people cometh, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them,” Ezek. xxxiii. 31. The love of the world, or of some beloved lusts, hindered them from buying.

4. And it may denote also their crying to God, or their calling upon him more than they had done by prayer, for this is one way of going to buy; but perhaps they rested upon the bare performance of this and other duties. Many think hearing and praying is buying; but, my brethren, asking is one thing, and receiving is another, or else they asked amiss, or continued not, without fainting in their prayers and cries to God; for hypocrites will not always call upon God.

5. Some are always going, but never go, and may be this is signified here by these words.

Secondly, I shall show you what time, or times will it be too late to go to buy.

I. When the market-day is over, or when the summer is ended; “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved,” Jer. viii. 20, Prov. x. 5. Some sleep in harvest, so too many sleep away that time which God allows them to provide for their souls, which is their spiritual harvest-time.

Our fathers sowed the seed of the gospel by their prayers and tears about sixty years ago, and we have had a plentiful harvest, and our harvest is at present great, but I fear we by our sins are like to lose what they procured as the answer of their prayers. Our harvest may soon be ended, and the market-day of buying is gone.

Prov. vi. 8. The wise, like the ant, gather their food in the harvest, whilst the foolish, like the sluggard, is asleep; this is the sinner's day, the day of his visitation. “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 thy eyes,” Luke xix. 42. The old world had their day, and the Jews had their day, in which the gospel was preached to them; God allows men a day or season of grace, but they know not how long it may last, and when that day is gone, it will be too late, and the sinner's case then is desperate.

II. When the Spirit of God hath done striving, or will strive no more with sinners; then it will be too late, the door will then be shut. “My Spirit shall not always strive with men,” Gen. vi. 3. The Spirit strove to convince the foolish virgins of their sin and danger, and showed them their need of Christ, and of true faith in Christ, or of having oil in their vessels: but they regarded not the strivings of the Holy Ghost, but resisted his motions and operations, and the reproofs of their own consciences, and when the Spirit is grieved, and

When or at what time or times it will be too late to provide oil.

withdraws from poor sinners, and all its influences cease, then it is too late to get oil, and all endeavours then will be in vain and fruitless.

III. When God gives men up to their own hearts' lusts, or in judgment hardens their hearts, and gives them up to blindness of mind, it will be too late to repent, or to seek oil: "But my people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would have none of me, so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsel," Psal. lxxxii. 12. What blindness of mind, unbelief, and hardness of heart were the Jews left unto, and abide under the power of unto this day, for their rejecting of Christ and the gospel.

IV. When death comes and cuts the sinner off in his sins, then it is too late; such that die in their sins are lost for ever; and O how often doth death come suddenly upon many persons! they think of many days on earth, and that it is time enough, they boast themselves of to-morrow, though "they know not what a day may bring forth," Prov. xxvii. 1. Many are well to day and dead to-morrow; nothing is more uncertain than natural life, death comes upon some when they little think of it. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," and such fools were the foolish virgins.

V. When the Bridegroom comes, if men are not ready, it will be too late, for then the door will be shut. O how many will the day of Christ's coming find unprovided! He will come "as a thief in the night," i. e., very suddenly, unexpectedly, and very surprisingly upon the world, and upon many professors also.

Thirdly, Why will our Lord come upon some before they are ready?

Why will Christ come upon some before they are ready.

I. Answ. The exact time, my brethren, of Christ's coming is determined, and when that time is come, he will stay not one moment longer, whether men be prepared or not. "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry," Will the Lord put off the time of his coming (which is fixed by an unalterable decree) because some slothful servants are not ready? No sure.

II. Because when Christ comes, all his elect will be gathered in, and no sooner is that done, will he stay one day? no, not one hour; all his patience and forbearance with the world, is for his elect's sake; therefore such who are not prepared in that time, or are not converted or provided with grace, before the whole number of the elect are brought home, Christ will come upon though they are wholly unprepared, or unprovided for his coming; for all means of grace then will cease for ever.

III. Because when Christ comes the harvest will be fully ripe, all men will either be ripe for salvation or for damnation, all the wheat will be then ripe for Christ's garner, and the tares will be also ripe to be cast into the fire.

IV. Christ will come upon some who are not ready, because all had warning given, sufficient warning, and great means God used with them, and gave time enough also to get ready, which they neither regarded nor improved. But,

Consider a little further, the warning Christ gave to, and the means he used with the foolish virgins.

(1.) They had the word preached to them, and other ordinances as well as the wise. (2.) They had the beauty, glory, and excellencies of the person of the Bridegroom displayed before their eyes, and also the need they had of him. (3.) They had the Spirit to strive with them; and their consciences also awakened to discover their folly, in that they took their lamps, but no oil in their vessels. (4.) They conversed with the wise, and their advantages were not small upon that account, they might have learned more wisdom of them; and by their telling them their experiences, their foolish hearts might have received instruction. (5.) They were told of the woful state and end of all hypocritical professors. (6.) They saw how long Christ waited before he came.

V. Christ will come upon the foolish virgins before they are ready, and will yet leave them without excuse, because they heard that the Bridegroom was coming; they heard, nay, were told of his near approaching and glorious appearance, but took not timely warning to get ready. In God's ordinary providence in coming upon a people in a way of judgment, he commonly gives them warning. "Now thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do thus unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel," Amos iv. 12. This being so, we may be sure Christ will give warning before he comes at the last day. And thus he will leave not only the foolish virgins but all the world without any excuse.

God usually gives warning before he comes upon a people in a way of judgment.

VI. Because should our Lord wait longer, or stay longer before he comes, he knows that these professors would be the same, and not take warning, but adhere to the devil and to their own deceitful hearts. He foresees that no further means will make them better.

“Why should ye be stricken any more, ye will revolt more and more?” Isa. i. 5. “Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness, in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord,” Isa. xxvi. 10. This being so, it would be vain for him to wait longer upon them.

VII. Because God will glorify his justice on such who have abused his mercy, and slighted all the offers of his grace, goodness, long-suffering, patience, and forbearance; as well as glorify his grace, love, and mercy on such who are the vessels of mercy. God will be as much glorified in the destruction of the wicked, as in the salvation of the righteous. And hence his “Ministers are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish,” 2 Cor. ii. 15.

VIII. Because the wedding-day will then come, even the set time; for though none know of the day nor hour of Christ’s personal coming, yet that day is fixed, and when it is fully come he will wait no longer (as I showed you before). Will an earthly prince, that hath determined and set the very day of his marriage, and provided all things for that solemnity, and his princely bride hath made herself ready, put off the marriage-day because some slothful servants are not prepared for that day? No certainly, all will say he will never do that, much less will the Lord Jesus, since his coming is prefixed by the eternal and irrevocable decree of his Father.

APPLICATION.

Exhort. Be exhorted whoever you are that be not yet ready, to buy oil, and be prepared to part with all (and that timely too) you have, for the “Pearl of great price;” do not delay to get true faith, and a holy and sanctified heart, lay hold upon the present time, fall in with the motions of the Holy Spirit, and with the convictions of your own consciences; and you that are professors and church-members, do not rest satisfied with your kumps, having no oil in your vessels.

For Motives,

1. You hear of the great and wonderful favour and goodness of God, in giving you such repeated warnings of the danger you are in, and how inexcusable he will leave all men, and you especially at the great day.

2. That the Lord Jesus hath tarried long, and hath “spread out his hands all the day long,” is there any thing of such moment as this? doth it not concern the eternal happiness of your precious souls; O how will many cry out when it is too late, and wish they had been so wise to have considered their latter end, and not spent that time on earth about eating and drinking, and living well for a moment in the world, when there was one thing ten thousand times more needful which was neglected, by their being incumbered with many things not worth regard comparably.

3. Consider the fearful state of such whom that day, or the day of death finds Christless, and graceless. O how will they wish they could but live over those years and days again which God gave them when on earth, so as to enjoy the favour of God, and means of grace they then had! But alas! all will be in vain, such wishes will be fruitless, for perish then for ever they must; therefore “because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke, when a great ransom cannot deliver thee,” Job xxxvi. 18. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven,” Rom. i. 18, against all wicked and graceless sinners; nay, such who believe not in Christ are under wrath; all in the first Adam are “children of wrath,” Eph. ii. 3; and until they have an interest in Christ that “wrath abideth on them,” John iii. 36. But no wrath will be more dreadful than that wrath that hath been long a kindling in the heart of God, some are said to heap up wrath against the day of wrath, and the blood of Christ cannot then deliver them.

4. Consider the happiness of those who are truly wise, who shall then be received into the marriage chamber. As the sorrows of the wicked will be inconceivable, so will the joys and consolation of the godly.

SERMON XXV.

And the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage chamber. &c.—Matt. xxv. 10.

FROM hence note.

Doct. The Lord Jesus Christ will come again, or appear the second time.

In speaking to this proposition,

1. I shall prove that Christ shall or will come again.
2. Give some reasons why the Lord Christ will come again, or appear the second time.
3. Show how he shall appear.
4. Lay down a few of the signs of his coming.
5. Show how we may be said to be ready.
6. Who they are that will not be ready.
7. Show what may be meant by shutting the door.

I. First, to prove he will come again.

1. Because he hath himself assured his saints, or all his people, of this very thing, he hath promised us that he will come again. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am ye may be also," John xiv. 3. The particle *if*, in this place (as our annotators observe) denoteth no uncertainty of the thing whereof he had before assured them, but the certainty of it. As sure (as if he should say) as I go away, or to my Father, so sure know that I will come again. Now they after this saw him go away, or ascend up into heaven, so that this is a full proof of his second coming. I might add many other promises which our Saviour himself made of his coming again, before he ascended; in the 10th verse, "I will come to you."

Christ will come again because of his own promise.

2. We have the promise of God the Father also; the Father hath promised that he will send Jesus Christ again. "And he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached to you, whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things," &c., Acts iii. 20, 21. Thus we have the promise both of the Father and the Son for the coming of the Lord Jesus the second time. But because this will be further confirmed in the reasons I

The Father hath promised to send his Son from heaven.

give to show why he will come, I shall proceed to speak to the next thing.

Secondly, why will the Lord Jesus come again?

1. Answ. Because he will answer the prayers of his people; the prayers of his people will not let him rest until he comes as (I may so say) "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, give him no rest," Isa. lxii. 7. And (if you look back to the verse going before) he shows the Bridegroom would come and marry, and rejoice over his Bride, as he hath promised. The prayer of the saints is continually, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Rev. xxii. 20. Their prayers must be answered. "Shall not God hear his own elect, that cry unto him both day and night?"

Christ will come because his saints pray for his coming.

2. Our blessed Lord will come again, because his people look for him, or wait for his appearance, they expect his coming; and "the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever," Psal. ix. 18. The virgins waited for his coming, nay, went forth to meet him, and the wise with the greatest expectation imaginable, and shall they be ashamed of their hope? no sure.

(1.) Their expectation is well grounded, they build their hope and expectation upon the truth or veracity of God.

(2.) They earnestly expect Christ's coming; nay, the creatures are said thus to do. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, and not only they, but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," Rom. viii. 19. The whole creation waits and expects virtually this day, but God's people actually and believingly expect it. How the creation waits with earnest expectation, "and shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God," I think this is one of these things very hard to be understood. Though some think the apostle refers to the state of the whole creation in the time of the thousand years reign, which commenceth from the first appearance of Christ when he comes the second time, then the curse shall be taken off from all creatures, which are made slaves of by man.

(3.) The saints have long expected the coming of Christ.

(4.) His coming is and hath been the expectation of all the children of God, or the members of the whole universal church.

(5.) It is the expectation of the souls of believers who are dead; as they died in full expectation of it, so their souls cry under the altar, "How long, Lord, holy and true, ere thou avenge our blood?" Rev. vi. 10. That will not fully and for ever be until Christ comes.

3. Christ will come to perform or make good his own most gracious promise, and the

promise of the Father, for such scriptures as well as others cannot be broken. Our Lord did not only when he was upon the earth, and before he died, promise that he would come again, but also after he went to heaven. "He that testifieth these things, saith, surely, I

21st verse compared.

come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give unto every one as his works shall be," Rev. xxii. 12. Observe it well, they are some of the last words of the holy Bible; as the Old Testament ended in Malachi with the promise of

Christ's first coming, so the new ends with Christ's own promises of his second coming. The apostle Peter saith, "That in the latter days many scoffers will say, where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. iii. 4. We can show such scoffers; multitudes of clear promises is the true and faithful witness, and he hath commanded these promises to be written. "And he said write, for these words are true and faithful, I am Alpha, and Omega, the beginning and the end," &c., Rev. xxi. 5, 6.

4. Because of that general testimony that is borne to this truth, viz., to the second coming of the Lord Christ. The Father and the Son have not only borne witness to it, but also.

All the prophets bear witness to Christ's second coming.

(1.) All the holy prophets since the world began. Before the flood Enoch. "And Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied of these, saying, behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all," &c. Acts iii. 21. This must refer to our Lord's second coming, for when he first came, he came to execute judgment upon none.

All the apostles also bear witness to Christ's second coming.

(2.) All the holy apostles also have borne witness hereunto. Peter in two or three places, both in the Acts, and in his Epistles. Paul in several of his Epistles. "Waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. iii.

The Holy Spirit beareth witness to the second coming of Christ.

10. "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry," 1 Cor. i. 7. John also beareth witness to Christ's second coming. "Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him," &c. 1 Thess. ii. 19. James doth the same; "Be patient brethren to the coming of the Lord," Rev. i. 7. "Be patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth near," Jam. v. 7, 8. And Jude bears witness to it in citing Enoch (mentioned before); many truths are fully confirmed, but certainly but few like this. The Holy Spirit hath it appears also borne witness to this glorious truth, because both the prophets and apostles in these things (as well as in all others) spake as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit spoke in them, and by them; and as the Spirit beareth witness hereunto, so both the Spirit and the Bride desire Christ to come. "And the Spirit and the Bride saith, come," Rev. xxii. 17.

The angels bear witness to Christ's second coming.

Lastly, the holy angels also witness to Christ's second coming, as they bore witness that our Lord was risen from the dead. "And while they looked steadfastly towards heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven, this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall in like manner come as ye have seen him go up into heaven," Acts i. 10, 11.

Christ will come because that is his marriage day.

5. The Lord Jesus, the blessed Bridegroom, shall come again, because the Bride makes herself ready for that day, and then, and not until then, expecteth her marriage with him will be solemnized.

Christ will come to manifest his glory.

6. Christ will come that his glory may be revealed. Christ's glory is veiled now, and is not seen to men, nor saints on earth, as it will in that day. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 3.

To execute vengeance on his enemies.

7. He will come to take vengeance on all his and his peoples' enemies; this is one reason wherefore he will come again. He will then execute his wrath on them, for he will appear in that day like a lion, and come upon

princes as upon mortar.

8. The Lord Jesus will come, because all the kingdoms of the world are given unto him, and he shall reign a thousand years upon the earth with his saints," Rev. xx. 4. I see no room for any to doubt of this, though some take it for a mystical reign. A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes decree judgment. These princes are the saints no doubt; the time then will come when the saints shall fully and quietly possess the kingdom, "Yea, all the kingdoms under the whole heavens. Blessed are the poor, for they shall inherit the earth," Dan. vii. 27.

9. He will come to judge the world, they that deny Christ's second coming, may as well deny the eternal judgment, or the day of judgments. "Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearance and his kingdom," 2 Tim. iv. 1. The judgment cannot

be in heaven, for no unholy persons can enter into heaven; it must therefore be either in the air or on the earth, but it is said, "his feet shall stand in that day on the mount of Olives;" the saints also, "when raised, and those that shall be changed shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air," 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17; which clearly shows, he designs to come hither, besides all those places and promises that relate to Christ's coming, must be understood of his coming upon the earth, where he once was and suffered shame, from whence our Lord ascended; from whence he will ascend, he will descend, but he ascended from the earth, therefore he shall descend to the earth; and to deny this, is to deny his second coming.

Lastly, Christ will come again, because all shadows must fly away, he comes to put an end to shadows; "until the day break, and the shadows fly away. Turn my beloved, and be like a roe or young hart upon the mountains of Bether," Cant. ii. 17.

1. All shadowy ordinances, (1.) Baptism and the Lord's supper will cease then: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye show the Lord's death until he come," 1 Cor. xi. 26; these ordinances shall abide till then, and no longer. The apostle refers not to his extraordinary coming in Spirit, in pouring out of the Spirit, because he received a charge from Christ to administer this ordinance, and to leave it in the church to abide after Christ came in that extraordinary manner. Paul was not converted for some time after the day of Pentecost, when Christ came to his saints in Spirit, according to his promise, so in the case of baptism such were commanded in the name or authority of Christ to be baptized in water, that were baptized before with the Holy Ghost, see Acts x. 47, 48. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?—and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

2. Christ appears to vanquish all shadows and clouds of God's dark providences, then we shall see and behold things clearly, that now are not discerned by us.

3. To expel all clouds and shadows that interpose between himself and his church, and that obscure his own glorious beauty.—And

4. The shadows of death, sadness and darkness, when Christ comes shall fly away; they shall obtain "Joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing shall fly away." So much as to this.

Thirdly, "I shall hint how he shall appear, (but because I have before, and in opening another parable spoken to this,) I shall be very brief on it here.

1. He shall appear personally, it is his personal appearance I speak of here: "The same Jesus that you have seen taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts i. 10, 11. The very body, though glorified, that died, rose again, and ascended, not another body but the same.

2. He shall appear very glorious. (1.) "He shall come in the glory of the Father, and the holy angels," Matt. xvi. 27. What glory of the Father will shine forth we know not. (2.) In his own glory: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him," &c. There will be a glorious manifestation of the glory of his own Person. (3.) He shall then sit upon the throne of his glory: "that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy," 1 Pet. iv. 13. Again it is said that "he shall appear in power and great glory," Matt. xxiv. 30. But this will be to the comfort and joy of all believers. For, (4.) To sinners he will appear terrible, even in "flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God," 2 Thess. i. 8.

Fourthly, I shall give you a few of the signs of Christ's second coming.

1. The world abounding with false teachers, and the rising of false Christs, is laid down to be one sign of his coming. "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect," Matt. xxiv. 24. No days certainly like to these we see upon this respect.

The signs of Christ's coming.

2. Strange "signs in the sun, moon, and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity," &c., Luke xxi. 25. See what our Saviour further saith, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth near, even at the door.

3. Pestilence, amazing earthquakes, wars and famine in several places.

4. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of man be, eating, drinking, building, and planting, marrying, and being given in marriage; all generally will be very secure, and act as if the world was but just begun,

5. The slumbering state of the virgins is also laid down by our Lord as one sign of his coming, which certainly is upon us in these nations, and in all other nations, where Christ hath a people professing his gospel and blessed truth.

6. The passing away of the second woe, and sounding of the seventh angel, and the pouring forth of the seven vials, or the seven last plagues, and utter overthrow of Babylon will precede the coming of Christ, and be a presage thereof.

7. The preaching of the gospel to all nations: "The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the world for a witness unto them, and then cometh the end," Matt. xxiv. 14. The heathen or Pagan nations and Mahometans, must have the gospel preached to them before the coming of our Lord, and so shall the Antichristian nations also, which cannot be till the fall of mystical Babylon: and this will be the bringing in the fullness of the Gentiles.

8. The calling of the Jews will be another sign of Christ's coming; though some think they shall not be called until Christ appears.

They that were ready went in with him into the marriage chamber, &c., this brings me to the next thing.

Fifthly, I shall show, who they are that may be said to be ready, or what the bride being ready may denote or signify.

What it is to be ready for the bridegroom's coming.

1. To be ready doth denote our having not only lamps, and oil in our vessels, and so habitually ready; but our lamps being lighted and burning clearly, and so being actually ready also.

2. It may denote our being every way rightly prepared, clothed, and adorned as a bride for the Bridegroom's coming, or for the marriage-day, having on all our glorious attire, "The bride bath made herself ready, and it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints," Rev. xix. 7, 8. This certainly signifies the exercises of all our graces, and our shining forth in faith and holiness: "Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding," Luke xii. 35, 36. To have our loins girded, is to be established in the truth, and sincere and upright in heart; "Having your loins girt about with truth," Eph. vi. 11.

3. To be ready is to have all our sins mortified, or in a good measure (by the power of the Spirit) subdued, every lust having received its death wound, or having in some considerable degree overcome all the enemies of their souls; such have doubtless mourned over their former sins, deadness, lukewarmness, earthliness, and so do labour to do their first works, for they are such that overcome, "that shall sit down with Christ in his throne," Rev. iii. 21.

4. To be ready, is to have done the whole will of God, or to have with Paul "fought the good fight, to have finished our course, and kept the faith," 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8; he having done this, saith he was ready to be offered, or ready to die, and to go to receive the crown of life. "David, when he had done the will of God fell asleep." Our Lord himself until he had finished his whole work, was not ready to go to his Father; "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day," John ix. 4. A man that hath any work to do (that appertains to such a precise day) is not ready to go to bed, until he hath done it.

5. To be ready denotes a waiting posture; a person cannot be said to wait for the coming of his friend to go out with him, who is not ready.

What the bride being ready denotes.

6. For the bride to be ready may denote the whole body of the elect being called, and so the mystical body of Christ complete; for until every one is renewed and united by the Spirit to the Head, the bride is not ready.

There are four things essential to render the bride ready:

1. The bringing in or calling of the Gentiles.
2. The calling of the Jews, therefore they must be called before the marriage-day.
3. The uniting both the Jews and Gentiles in one body.
4. The raising of the bodies of all the saints; for until the bodies of all saints be raised or changed, and their souls and bodies are united together, the bride is not ready.

APPLICATION.

1. From hence we may further learn, what the reason is why Christ seems to tarry. (1.) That the wicked may fill up their measure of sinning, and so be ripe for the harvest. (2.) That the godly may "fill up their measure of suffering, that are behind for his body's sake, which is the church," Col. i. 24. (3.) That the whole church may be complete and every way ready. (4.) That all the promises and prophecies contained in the scriptures, relating to the latter days, may be fully accomplished.

2. Exhort. Take heed you do not say in your heart, My Lord delays his coming, and so lay yourself down to sleep, "or eat and drink with the drunken," Matt. xxiv. 49.

3. Let us awake out of sleep, and stir up ourselves, and speedily hasten Exhort. to attend upon Christ in the wedding chamber, or to be ready for eternity for Christ's coming, and for the judgment day. Let us see that we are like a bride dressed and every way adorned for the marriage-day. (1) The earth (as one observes) is our trimming-place for heaven. (2) It is the property of virgins to be adorned, (their greatest care is to see to that) who know the set day of their marriage, and that is very Motives to be ready. near: "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" Jer. xxxii. 1. (3) Christ hath provided changeable raiment, and divers sorts of rich and precious ornaments for his bride, and shall she not get them on? we must not think it is enough in order to be meet for Christ's coming, to have only on the robe of justification, but also the garment of sanctification: "Take away (saith the Lord) his filthy garments, and put upon him change of raiment," Zach. iii. 4; would you have only a title to heaven, and not a meetness for it also? (4.) Consider, that believers are the King's daughters, and ordinary garments and ornaments will not become them: "The King's daughter is all glorious within," Psal. xlv. 13. (5.) Would you not be a shame to your Father, and to the whole heavenly family? O then get completely ready. (6.) Consider, what a long time Christ hath given us, and how long he hath waited to have us ready. (7.) The Lord also hath given us all a strict charge to be ready; "And be ye also ready," &c., Matt. xxiv. 44. (8.) It is his expectation, he looks to see us all ready on the marriage-day, and such who are not, he will not admit to enter into the wedding-chamber. (9.) God hereby will be honoured, and it will also tend to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to our own honour likewise, since he hath been at so great charge to provide such noble and rich ornaments for us, to have them all on upon the marriage-day, that his riches and glory in his saints may shine forth. (10.) And by this means we need not fear any evil that may come upon the world, no judgments, nor be afraid to die. (11.) This also will hasten (to speak after the manner of men) the Bridegroom's coming; he only waits to have all his elect ready. (12.) Moreover, by this means we shall be put upon an earnest desire and longing for his appearance, such that are ready, may say, "come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. (13.) Consider, in what glory the Bridegroom will appear, how richly and gloriously he will be clothed and adorned, ought not there to be in some degree a proportion or suitableness between the grandeur of the queen with that of the King. (14.) Sinners hasten to be ready for hell, or to be damned, and shall not we be ready for heaven and salvation? It may be feared that we are not yet ready, and perhaps know it not; therefore be exhorted to look in the glass: you virgins look in the glass, see whether you are every way completely dressed, and all things on in a right manner; our dressing-glass is God's word, and by looking into that, and then viewing ourselves, we may see whether we are ready or not. But let us be sure to take a full sight, and not only a cast, and be gone.

Terror. This may be cause of great terror to all the foolish virgins, though Christ carries so long, yet when he comes they will not be ready.

Comfort. You believers, never fear if you are sincere Christians, Christ will not come before you are ready.

All God's elect shall be ready,

1. Because they were all chosen to salvation. First to believe, and through faith to eternal life, and not ordained to salvation without holiness, but chosen to believe: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed," Acts xiii. 48. And as they are chosen to believe, so to be holy also: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," Eph. i. 4. None (saith Mr. Loveday) are chosen but such that are ready, our being ready is not the cause of our being chosen, but our being chosen is the See Loveday on the talents. cause of our being ready.

2. Because all God's elect have a place prepared for them in heaven, John xiv. 2; shall a place be prepared for them, and they not be prepared for that, or shall there be one empty place in heaven? Certainly, God hath not prepared places for such that he never designed to prepare for those places.

3. Because all the elect are bought or purchased with a dear price; "To be redeemed from all iniquity," Tit. ii. 14. Redemption is from sin as well as from wrath, and shall Christ die to redeem one soul from sin that shall never be actually redeemed? his Spirit was as well purchased to sanctify us, as his righteousness to justify us, and shall the Holy Ghost fail in his work and office? doth the love of the Father in electing, the love of the Son in dying, exceed the love of the Spirit in renewing and sanctifying, and yet all one and the same God in essence? This cannot be.

John xvii. 24. 4. Because Christ hath prayed and desired of the Father that all he gave him, may be with him where he is, and behold his glory.

5. Because Christ shall not have an imperfect body; now all the elect are members of his mystical body, and therefore the weakest or smallest member shall not be wanting.

6. Because the covenant and promises of God are sure, and eternal life is promised to every one that believeth; nay, "He that believeth on him hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation," John v. 24; Heb. vi. 18—20. Of this they have a sure and certain hope; "And hope maketh not ashamed," &c., Rom. v. 5.

7. Because God will perform that good work he hath begun; Paul was confident of this, and what cause have any in our days to doubt of it, Phil. i. 6. He that laid the first stone, will lay the top-stone, crying, grace, grace unto it.

8. Come, my brethren, our Lord's design in his death shall not be frustrated; no, no; see what Paul saith: "As Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it—that he might sanctify, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word—that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish," Eph. v. 25—27. Every believer shall be thus presented by our Lord when he comes; shall the promises of God fail? God forbid; well, what of them? hath he not said, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory—and that we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," Col. iii. 4; 1 John iii. 1, 2.

Lamentation. Alas! poor sinners, how unprepared and unready are you for Christ's coming! what will you do, that know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? how will you stand when he appears in flames of fire, for so he will come upon all ungodly sinners and unbelievers.

SERMON XXIV.

And the door was shut.—Matt. xxv. 10.

FROM hence note,

Doct. The door of heaven will be shut against all formal professors, as well as against all profane sinners.

I shall briefly do two things.

1. Show you what may be denoted by shutting the door.
2. Show you against whom the door shall be shut.

What Christ's shutting the door denotes. 1. It is said Jesus Christ will rise up and shut the door; "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door," &c., Luke xiii. 25. This no doubt signifies the wrath of the Son of God, the wrath of the Lamb will then come, he will show his displeasure against all foolish professors in that day, by rising up himself to shut the door against persons that knock. What! O then be sure he is offended, and is enraged against such persons; and this certainly denotes, I say, the great wrath of the Lord Jesus Christ against those sinners.

2. It signifies that the day and kingdom of Christ's patience is expired and then ended for ever; the day of grace will last till all the elect are called, but then there will not be one of them wanting, and so no offers of grace to sinners any more for ever at that day. Now a great door is opened, (the Lord grant it may be an effectual one), but then it will be shut.

3. It signifies that no false professor, or no unrenewed or unsanctified person, or that no unclean thing shall or can enter into that holy place, or have an entrance into the presence of Christ and his glorified saints; though they may remain or be among them in the church militant, yet they shall have no place among them in the church triumphant.

4. My brethren, this refers to that general shutting the door; there is a particular and a general shutting the door: God oftentimes shuts the door of grace against some sinners, after they have abused his patience here in this world; (as he shut the door against the unbelieving Jews, and wrath came upon them to the uttermost): but the door here may be opened to some, though it may be shut against others: but at that day it will universally be shut, and never be opened again.

5. It denotes that after death there is no means of grace, no gospel to be preached, and that it is impossible then for any to believe or to repent, because the night is come upon sinners, in which no man can work, the Spirit being utterly withdrawn for ever, it shall strive no more with any man, John ix. 4.

Secondly. Who shall the door be shut against ?

Ans. Against all profane persons, or notorious sinners : “ Without are dogs, whoremongers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie ; that is, without the gate of heaven, such shall not be let into the holy city, for another gate will be opened for all such who lived and died in open profaneness, for they shall “ have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,” Rev. xxi. 8. Against whom the door shall be shut.

2. All unbelievers and misbelievers, or whosoever do not truly or savingly believe in Jesus Christ. For, my brethren, though some are not openly wicked, but seem to hate gross and abominable profaneness, yet being unbelieving, and making light of Christ out of love to this world, or have not a right faith in him, the door will be shut against them also : “ Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,” Rev. xxi. 8. The fearful and the unbelieving are by the Holy Ghost put together, as such that the door of heaven shall be shut against, and the door of hell be opened unto ; and against all carnal worldlings and covetous persons, or such who have made the world or their belly their god.

3. All hypocrites, or loose, proud, foolish, and vain professors. This sort are particularly here mentioned, to warn such that are members of churches in the latter days (especially) to take heed of their state and condition, lest they have the door shut against them at the great day.

4. All apostates or backsliders, who die in apostasy, together with all impostors, who have cast off the true faith, either in respect had to Christ (the immediate object of worship) or any essential principle of the gospel, or of the worship of God itself ; embracing most abominable errors and heresies ; for such “ bring upon themselves swift destruction,” 2 Pet. ii. 1. And against all apostates.

5. Even all that die without union with Christ and regeneration. “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” John iii. 5.

Lastly, the door will be shut against all that have not got on a wedding-garment ; this is signified in another parable, “ Friend, how camest thou hither, not having a wedding garment ? and he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness,” Mat. xxii. 12. And such in the church that have no true faith in Christ, have not the wedding-garment, and so the door will be shut upon them.

“ Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us ; but he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.”

These words close this parable ; it appears the foolish virgins came too late.

Afterwards, that is when the door was shut.

Note from hence,

Doct. That though the foolish virgins cry Lord, Lord, yet in that day all will be to no purpose, they shall be repulsed, because Christ knows them not ; prayers nor tears avail not any thing in that day.

In the explanation of this proposition,

1. I shall show the purport of these words ; “ Lord, Lord.”
2. Show what those words do denote, “ Open to us.”
3. Show why the foolish virgins are so importunate to have the door opened.
4. Show in what respect Christ may be said not to know them.
5. Apply it, and so conclude with this parable.

1. Their saying, Lord, Lord, may signify that hypocrites shall confess to their shame, and to the glory of God, that Jesus Christ is Lord ; they call him Lord, but cry not Abba, Father, but their confidence no doubt will then be much abated : before they did not only call Christ Lord, but also called God Father, but we hear nothing of that in their prayer now. What opening may denote.

2. This title they give to Christ, may signify that knowledge they had of the person of Christ, the glory that then our Lord will appear in, will convince all the wicked that Christ is Lord ; he may be known by the crowns on his head.

3. It may also signify that they know, and shall in that day know, it is Christ's prerogative to open the door of heaven, none but he hath the power and right to let men into heaven ; they cry not to Paul, nor to Peter, nor to the virgin Mary to open the door, but to Christ himself, who opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens. The blind papists then will no more invoke the saints, they will see their abominable idolatry

then, and be ashamed and confounded for ever, and must suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, for giving that divine adoration to saints, that belongs to God alone.

4. They perhaps called him Lord, because they thought they were his servants and disciples; and indeed they were looked upon as such, and called the servants of Christ, though in that day they will appear to be wicked and slothful, or deceitful servants; yet it is common for disobedient servants to say to their master, Lord, Lord: besides, they were not brought upon their trial yet, were not judged and condemned.

5. Our Lord no doubt by these words discovers how sad the state of all false professors will be in that day; O what bitter cries and doleful lamentations will they make, when they see the door of salvation, the door of heaven shut against them; Lord, open to us! ah Lord open to us! O what, wilt thou shut us out of thy presence? Lord have pity! But Christ shows all such prayers and tears will signify nothing to such who come too late, or delay the great work of preparation for death or to meet Jesus Christ.

6. It may signify that some shall pray to him then, and own him to be God, who would not pray to him, but denied his Deity before; they shall then cry, O thou art Jehovah, thou art God blessed for ever, now we believe, we were blasphemers, and have degraded thy glorious person; we are convinced of our sin now, and therefore on thy name blessed Jesus we call, and to thee we cry, Lord, Lord; but then it will be too late; they who have denied his godhead, and contemned his power, and defaced his glory, must perish for ever.

7. These words may denote the agony they will be in, and the earnestness of their desires for admittance; Lord, Lord, open presently; Lord save us, O shut us not out, we perish, we begin to sink, hell is ready to open her mouth and to swallow us up; O quickly open Lord, or we are lost and undone for ever.

Secondly, What do these words denote, "Open to us?" what would they have?

1. Answ. They desire that Christ would own them to be his; as the wise virgins had looked upon them to be saints or true believers, so they beg that the Lord Jesus would acknowledge them to be also, they having professed themselves to be his servants, and had obeyed his precepts, having been baptized in his name, and received into his visible church, and had often broke bread with his people, and having tasted of the heavenly gift, and borne shame and reproach for his name's sake; but alas none of this will do, their hearts not being right with God, pride, vain-glory, or self love, being at the bottom of all.

2. That they might be entertained in the marriage chamber, and have the sweet smiles of the blessed Bridegroom, and be embraced in his princely arms, and not behold his frowns and angry countenance, and be happy in heaven for ever.

3. It may denote that great sense they had of the dismal consequences of an utter denial of his favour at that day: Lord, open now, or we are eternally ruined; now before the door of grace is shut: if Christ opens not to them now to-day, there may be hope he may to-morrow, but then they will see that it is the last time of any hopes being left them for ever; if no door be opened then, it will be shut to all eternity.

4. It may denote how unwilling the wicked will be to go to hell, or what fearful horror Isa. xxxiii. 4. will seize upon them, fearfulness with a witness then shall surprise the hearts of hypocrites, such who fly not now to Christ, who hath borne God's wrath for poor sinners, must then for ever bear it themselves, and this they then shall have the full apprehension of upon their hearts, and therefore they cry, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Thirdly, What should be the reason the foolish virgins should be so bold and importunate with the Lord Jesus Christ?

Why the foolish virgins are so bold to desire the opening the door.
Answ. It may be occasioned through that ignorance and blindness that had taken hold of them, and which abode with them to the last; they were deceived, and saw not fully their desperate state, though by finding the door shut they might have great cause to conclude they were none of Christ's approved servants.

2. Perhaps their being virgins, or not being defiled with idolatry, nor guilty of gross sins, or of open profaneness, might make them somewhat bold and confident, having had fellowship with the visible church, and often (as I hinted) eat and drank in Christ's presence, and may be some of them had prophesied or preached in his name, (as some we find will say in that day.)

3. Or perhaps they may know some were admitted in, who they might think were more unlikely than themselves: Lord, hast not thou received into the wedding chamber such

and such, why we know they were men of as many great infirmities as we, they grieved thy ministers as well as we, and exposed thy name to reproach as well as we. My brethren, a sincere believer may be guilty of as many human frailties, or of unbecoming practices (in their outward lives) as some hypocrites, but their hearts are right with God in the main. David was a man that was guilty of very great enormities, but he being a "man after God's own heart," none of his sins were cast in his face, but those foul and abominable acts of wickedness in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite. Where there is sincerity of heart, God overlooks many great and grievous sins, though not without his bringing them to repentance for them, and helping them by faith to plead the blood of the cross for the pardon of them.

4. Consider and well observe the matter of their request: Lord, we beg not outward mercy of thee, nor to be indulged in any sin; but yet we find no they desired grace to change their hearts, but would enter in without a proper meetness. Alas, without a true right and title to heaven, and a suitable meetness, there will be no entering into that holy place; all that they desire now at last is but to be saved.

The foolish virgins only desire to be saved, and regard not a fitness for heaven.

5. May be their melting frame might make them hope to find mercy; they pleading with sighs, tears, and bitter cries, may think that might move the heart of a tender and bleeding Jesus, they knowing what bowels and pity he had showed to undone sinners; but they came not to him until the day of grace and his patience was gone. Christ may say, you seek me now early, but it is the hour of your calamity, "when I called, you refused;" and were you not told that you should in the day of your distress "call upon me, but I would give you no answer, and that then you should seek me, but not find me," Prov. i. 18. The Lamb-like nature or carriage of the blessed Jesus in that day towards sinners will be gone, and he will appear like a lion.

6. Consider the manner of their department, they make supplication; they do not seem to press in, or offer to force an entrance, but only stand and knock, and entreat for admittance, and plead not their deserts, but beg for mercy.—But may not our blessed Lord say, The day of your visitation you did not improve, the merits of my blood you did not apply; you desired grace to be saved, but not to glorify me, and to have communion with me. You only sought and now seek self-preservation, now you cannot sin any more as you have done, nor enjoy the things of the world you cannot longer, or have your riches and your earthly pleasures, and now you would be saved; "Go ye cursed, I know ye not."

See how reverent they seem to be, "Lord, Lord, open to us;" we confess thy authority, thy sovereignty, it lies in thy own power, if thou please thou canst save us, and deliver us from God's terrible wrath, that begins to take hold of us; but nothing will avail any sinner then, it is vain to plead for mercy when the day of mercy is gone and for ever ended.

Fourthly, What doth the Lord mean when he says, "I know ye not?"

1. I know first negatively, it doth not signify that Christ knew not who they were, or was ignorant of them; no, he is God, and knows all men, all things, all hearts, there is nothing that he knows not. "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me," Hos. v. 3. Christ knows the hypocrisy of their hearts, their states, their thoughts and their fears.

What meant by Christ saying I know ye not.

Secondly, In the affirmative. (1.) The Lord Jesus did not know them to be his sheep, "I know my sheep, and they follow me:—The Lord knows who are his," &c., John x. 27. (2.) He knows them not so as to approve of them; he will say, "I never knew you," Matt. vii. 23, that is, I never approved of you. (3.) Knowledge sometimes refers to love and affections; it is all one as if Christ should say, I love you not, you are not the objects of my affections, you are none of them that were given to me; "he that loveth God, is known of God," that is, beloved of God. (4.) Knowledge is sometimes taken for intimate communion, and they are such that never had this knowledge of Christ, nor Christ of them.

APPLICATION.

1. See the end and woful state of all formal and unsound professors, they will at the last day be all disowned by the Lord Jesus Christ. O what signifieth the approbation of men, if we have not the approbation of God, or are not known or approved of by Jesus Christ? Many go for saints on earth, who will not be found saints in the great day.

2. We may infer from hence the dismal state of all profane sinners; for if many professors who escaped the gross pollution of sin and open wickedness, and performed many duties of religion, shall be shut out of heaven at the last day, what will become of notorious and abominable transgressors, as swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, thieves, idolaters, and all carnal worl'lings?

Obj. But perhaps some may say, doth not this place show the soul is mortal? for if the soul was immortal, these persons knew they were damned, the judgment of God being passed upon them; and how is it then that they at that day are said to plead for mercy?

The foolish virgins strictly may refer to such that are alive when Christ comes.

Answ. (1.) These persons may be such that shall be found in the visible church alive in the body at the time when Christ comes, and doth not refer to such that were raised from the dead.

(2.) For such that are dead, that died not in Christ, shall not be raised when our Lord first appears, or with those that sleep in Jesus.

(3.) The state of the body in which the wicked shall be raised, having not their bodies changed and made like Christ's glorious body, will discover their state to them. besides the horrid guilt they will find in their consciences, which will lie heavy upon them.

(4.) All that die in their sins pass a particular judgment when they die, and that makes a clear discrimination of their future state.

(5.) Some think this may refer to Christ's coming at the sounding of the "seventh trumpet," and not to his personal appearance. For the day of grace to some may then end, though to others it may then begin.

(6.) But in the last place, pray (once again) remember that parables run not always on all four, but have their disparities. The scope and main design therefore of our Saviour in these words ought chiefly to be observed, which is to show that when he comes, all grief, tears, and prayers of unbelievers, and hypocrites, will be fruitless, the door will be shut against them for ever in that day, and they shall be utterly disowned; and this is to excite all the members of the visible church not to neglect the present time, but prepare for the coming of our Lord.

3. I infer it is a very dangerous thing for professors or ungodly sinners to delay to provide grace for themselves before the door is shut; some it is to be feared will not regard what is laid before them, and thus pressed upon their consciences, until they cry out when it is too late, Lord, Lord, open to us. Alas, Christ now says, Open to me, and you will not, and how just will it be in him not to open to them in that day.

4. I infer, that the Lord Jesus is not so made up of mercy, but that he is just as well as merciful, he being God, all the perfections of the Godhead are in him, and when mercy is turned into fury, who can stand before him? We read of the great day of the "Wrath of God and of the Lamb."

5. We may also infer, that the false professors, or foolish virgins are in as bad a condition as profane sinners, if not worse. Certainly, their condemnation will be very great, they "must dwell with devouring fire, and with everlasting burning;" Isa. xxxiii. 14.

6. We infer likewise, that some awakenings will not profit many persons, because they sleep in a secure graceless state too long; the foolish virgins were awakened, but Christ came upon them before they were provided with oil. Moreover, that some preparations and endeavours after grace are in vain, and that many will meet with sad disappointments at the last day who thought themselves in a good condition.

7. Also we may infer, that such that come to Christ too late for grace, will come too late to him for glory; and many will come to have the life of glory, that refused to come to have the life of grace.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh," ver. 13.

That is, neither the day nor hour of Christ's coming to us by death, nor his coming to judgment at the last day, and therefore we ought to watch and be ready.

The uncertainty of the precious day of the Lord's coming is mentioned by himself, as a motive to be ready, also the nearness of it: this was pressed by the apostles also as an argument to watchfulness, and if that was a motive to them, much more to us, to watch and be ready, since we have so many of the signs of the last days upon us; and sad it is no more enquiry is made by ministers, who are watchmen, into the prophecies relating to the fall of Babylon, and the sounding of the "seventh trumpet," and the signs of the times; because all have been mistaken in many things touching this matter, who have written of them, some despair of ever attaining to the certain knowledge of the time of the end of the wonders, and therefore will not search; as if Christ had left those mystical numbers on record for no other reason but to amuse the hearts of his people: no, certain it is that such who have wisdom, might understand and give warning to his people to be ready.

But at present I shall say no more, but thus close with this parable.

Few ministers inquire in these days about the end of the wonders.

THE
P A R A B L E
OF THE
T A L E N T S O P E N E D .

SERMON XXVII.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them all his goods.—Matt. xxv. 14, 15, &c.

1. I SHALL open the design of our Lord Christ in this parable (as I have endeavoured to do in speaking unto all other already opened.)

2. Consider and explain all the parts thereof.

3. Raise several propositions or points of doctrine from the principal matter contained therein, and distinctly prosecute them.

First, Open the scope and design of our Lord herein.

The scope of this parable.

I. It is no doubt to stir up all his servants and disciples to watchfulness.

II. to provoke them to the uttermost of their power, to improve all sorts of gifts, grace, and endowments they have received.

III. To take his disciples off from an expectation of a present, visible, glorious kingdom; for they no doubt did (for some time) expect a different kingdom at the coming of the Messiah than that which they found to be the purpose of his first coming. I must go (as if our Lord had said) a long journey into a far country to receive my kingdom, and it will be a great while before I return in all my glory, and set crowns upon your heads.

IV. His design also herein is to show that we have nothing of our own, but what we and all men have, is given unto us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. To show that as all men have received some talent or another from God, so he expecteth, and requires the careful and due improvement of them to his own glory, and that according to our improvements shall our rewards of grace be.

VI. To show that the non-improvement of the least talent God hath given us, will be the final cause of the condemnation of the sons of men. So much to the scope.

The chief parts of this parable are,

1. To show what is meant by the kingdom of heaven.

2. Who this man is that is said to go into a far country.

3. What may be meant by his servants.

4. What by his journey.

5. What may be meant by the talents.

6. What by his returning again.

7. And what by his calling them unto account.

First, “The kingdom of heaven is like,” &c., here (as our late annotators observe) the kingdom of heaven is the œconomy of God’s providence in the gospel dispensation.

“Is as a man travelling into a far country.”

By the man travelling into a far country, is meant our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Lord Treasurer, and Dispenser of all the Father hath, or doth bestow upon the children of men.

“Who called his own servants.”

By his servants some think are only meant the members of the visible church; but I see no reason to restrain the sense so, but that more generally all men may be hereby comprehended, both the godly and ungodly, or those in, and those out of the pale of the visible church.

The parts opened
See Fool’s annotations
on this
parable.

All men are
called
Christ’s
servants.

1. For all men may be called the servants of Christ, he is Lord of all, though most of the sons of men are unfaithful servants to him.

2. All men receive all things whatsoever they have, or do possess from Jesus Christ; and every thing is the fruit or effect of his purchase, or of his mediation, and they are either given in a way of mercy, or judgment: he gave all men their beings, their souls, and the faculties of their souls, their riches, their possessions, their time, their strength, and their days upon the earth.

3. Moreover all men must be accountable unto our Lord Jesus Christ; for all they have or do enjoy at the last day.

Secondly, yet more especially by the servants here may be meant, the members of the visible church, or such who are called into his house.

1. For these in an especial manner may be called his servants, they being called by his word and ministers into his service, to labour in his vineyard.

2. Because such do in an especial manner profess that he is their Lord and Master, or that they are his, and no more their own.

3. They are his by the Father's free donation, (though not all) "The Father gave them me," John xvii. 2.

4. His by purchase, "Ye are bought with a price, be ye not the servants of men," 1 Cor. vii. 23. Do not serve your lusts to please wicked men, or serve men in disobeying your great Master, who purchased you with his own blood.

5. They may be said to be his servants as being hired by him, which hiring denotes his winning their hearts over to him in love to serve him, though may be some had an eye to something else, viz., they pretend to serve him, but it is out of hyends; it is more to serve themselves than to serve Jesus Christ.

6. They that are sincere, may be called his servants by way of resignation of themselves to him, and to his service.

"Travelling into a far country."

By the journey into a far country is meant no doubt Christ's going to heaven, or being absent as to his bodily presence from his people on earth, until he comes again at the last day.

"And delivered to them his goods," &c.

1. Some would have these talents intend only common gifts, exclusive of Christ's special saving grace, but for what reason they so take them I know not.

2. Some men have had strange apprehensions about these talents; one thinks the ten commandments are meant hereby; others the five books of Moses, others the five senses.

(1.) But doubtless the talents may be considered more generally, (as the servants may intend all men.) 1. The soul and all his faculties, judgment, wit, conscience, the affections, memory, and all the powers and passions of the soul, with all natural habits, human endowments, and acquired parts, learning, knowledge, and means of knowledge, together with riches, honour, and dignity, &c., for these may all be called Christ's goods, and are as talents given by him to be improved to his glory and their own good.

(2.) Also by some of these talents may be meant those spiritual gifts, which when Christ "ascended up on high, he gave to men," Eph. iv. 8. For evident it is, the great Lord divideth his goods to his servants (as our annotators note) unequally, according to his own good pleasure and sovereignty; and that not only natural light, knowledge and abilities, but also riches and honours, &c., and spiritual gifts also: and some have more, and some less than others.

(3.) And shall we think that the chiefest of all Christ's goods are not here at all meant, I mean that great gift and talent of special and saving grace; for doth not these servants among others comprehend Christ's own beloved domestic servants, and did he not give to them this choice part of his goods, which they are to improve with all faithfulness? Why should any once suppose this gift or talent not to be here comprehended?

(4.) The holy gospel and the sacred doctrine thereof, with all seasons and gracious opportunities, spiritual illuminations, convictious and operations of the Spirit, may be also comprehended by these talents, or by some of them.

(5.) Spiritual privileges, dignities, and prerogatives, which some men in the church receive from Christ above others, may also be hereby intended; some are pastors, teachers, deacons, and are made rulers in the house of God, and are not these talents given to them to improve to the glory of Jesus Christ, and profit of his church?

(6.) The holy sacraments, and all the ordinances and discipline of the house of God are also glorious talents, with an able and painful ministry, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all are yours," 1 Cor. iii. 22, all as rich and glorious talents are given unto you.

Quest. "Are not all the talents of the same kind and species, though some had more,

What the goods are that Christ delivered to his servants.

and some less, they are called pounds, also the Lord's goods, and his money," Luke xix. 12, 13.

ANSW. The Arminians, (who seem to make great use of this parable, to confirm their corrupt notions) would have all the talents of the same nature or quality; viz., that they comprehend such grace as is sufficient, being improved to save every man and woman in the world, and that eternal life is entailed to the improvement of these talents; which error I shall detect before I close with this parable.

Talents not all of the same species.

For though the non-improvement of the one talent is the cause of his damnation, who had it given to him, yet the improvement of it could not, cannot save him.

These talents certainly are not all of the same species and kind, neither can they be supposed so to be; provided by the servants are meant all mankind, for,

Reasons to prove the talents are not all of the same species.

1. Have the Heathens, the Indians, or Pagans, the same talents as to species, with those talents Christ hath given to true Christians? Are the sun, moon, and stars, and works of creation and providence, or the natural light that is in their consciences, (or law of God in their hearts) of the same nature or kind with the gospel and glorious ministration thereof.

2. Is common grace of the same kind with special and saving grace?

3. If all the talents which are given unto all men, were of one and the same quality, it would follow then that God hath no special love to some men more than unto others, which is directly contrary to his blessed word.

Did not God love Jacob more and better than he loved Esau, and gave him talents that were of a far more excellent nature than those which he gave to Esau? And did not God love the offspring of Abraham, or the children of Israel better than all the people that then lived on the earth: and also give to them quite different, and more choice talents than he gave unto any other people under that dispensation?

Deut. vii. 6-8.

4. Doth not Paul say, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us," Rom. xii. 6. Grace differs from other spiritual gifts, and though some gifts may not differ in their quality in one respect, yet true and saving grace is a more excellent way, or far exceeds all gifts, howsoever different they may seem to be in themselves.

5. If all men have received the same talents with true believers; then all mankind have received the Holy Spirit, which our Lord Jesus Christ says "the world cannot receive," John xiv. 17. And Paul saith, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them," 1 Cor. ii. 14.

6. If the talents which Christ hath given to all men, are of one and the same nature or kind, then all men have received true grace, as well as true believers; and if so, then it will follow all people shall be saved, for I challenge all men in the world to give an instance of any one person that received true grace, who hid it, or totally neglected the improvement thereof, and so perished eternally; and if a man may receive saving grace, and yet be damned, let it not be called saving grace any more.

7. If all the talents are of one and the same kind, and salvation depends upon the improvement of these talents, then eternal life is not of the free-grace of God, nor the gift of God, but it is of man's free-will, or wrought out as the reward of man's own labour, pains, and improvements, and so he who is saved hath wherewith to glory or boast, but in our salvation all boasting is utterly excluded, Rom. iii. 27.

I must needs confess (could I believe with some men) that none of these talents do consist of saving grace, or comprehend the Holy Spirit and graces thereof, then they may be all one kind, namely natural, acquired, or common gifts, which I call one and the same as to quality, though they may differ in some respects) because carnal men and hypocrites, or such that perish, may receive them; for howsoever gifts or talents may differ, yet I distinguish them under these two heads, viz., common and special, or spiritual gifts and saving grace.

Two sorts of different kinds of talents.

But as I have newly hinted, it may seem strange that our Lord at this time, when he speaks of giving forth his treasure, his goods, his money to the sons of men, upon his ascension or going to heaven, should not mean or refer in the least to his chiefest goods or treasure in these talents, which he is said to give, and promised to give when he went away; therefore I am of the same judgment or opinion in respect to these talents, with our late annotators: Take what they say, "I see no reason (saith he) to restrain these gifts to such that flow from Christ as Mediator, but rather choose to interpret it generally of all the gifts of God, whether of providence or grace, whereas ver. 15, it is said this man divided his goods to his servants unequally, to one five, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability. It signifies only God's unequal distribution of his gifts to the children of

Pool's Annot. on Mat. xxv. 15.

men, according to his own good pleasure, which is true both concerning natural parts, as wit, understanding, judgment, memory, as concerning those the Heathen call good things, as riches, honours, and dignities, under which notion also come all acquired habits or endowments, such as learning, knowledge, moral habits, &c., which though acquired are gifts, because it is the same God who gives us power to get wealth, as Moses speaks, who gives men power also to get knowledge, Deut. viii. 18, and upon study and meditation to comprehend the nature and causes of things—or the gifts of more special Providence, or distinguishing grace," &c. They bring in special divine and distinguishing grace are here comprehended, &c.

"And after a long time the Lord of those servants comes to reckon with them," ver. 19.

By this great man's coming again to reckon with his servants, is meant our Lord's coming at the end of the world to judge all mankind, both the quick and the dead. Christ, my brethren, will come again, he will return, though the time seems long; this denoteth his descension, as his going a long journey into a far country, denoted his ascension up into heaven: "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts i. 11. That is,

1. Visibly: "Every eye shall see him," Rev. i. 7.

2. In a cloud.

3. By his own power.

4. With the like majesty.

5. With the same body, though more glorious, for he shall come in the glory of the Father with all the holy angels.

And then he will reckon with these servants, (i. e.,) he will call them all to an account about the improvement, or the non-improvement of those talents given to them. Now, since the scripture saith, all men shall be brought before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account unto him! and here is no mention made of any that he will reckon with, but these servants; I conclude, these servants include, or comprehend all mankind.

APPLICATION.

1. We infer from hence, that all good gifts, or whatsoever any have received or do possess, they received it from the Lord Jesus Christ; "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" 1 Cor. iv. 7. what of natural or spiritual abilities? it is applicable to all good things, and it is according to Christ's gift, or his giving, that one man differs from another; if one hath saving grace, saving knowledge, or understands the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, it is because that grace, that light and knowledge is given to him, which may not be given to another: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given," Matt. xiii. 11. Many have the gospel in the notion, or history of it, and they can preach it to others; talk and discourse about it, but have no saving or experimental knowledge of the mysterious power and efficacy of it upon their own hearts: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it seems good in thy sight," Matt. xi. 25, 26. How absurd is it for any to affirm, all receive like talents, as to their nature or quality, or that men may by improvement of common light, and the means of grace God affords them, gain saving or special grace; no, no, "it is not of him that willet, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," Rom. ix. 16. God gives to every one according unto his own sovereign will and pleasure.

True, God directeth men to improve all means of light, grace, and knowledge, but an heart and power to do it is as much the gift of God as the means itself, or else it is not God that makes the difference which is in one from another; nor is it of God's free grace, but of man's free will: "God opened Lydia's heart, that she attended upon what Paul preached," Acts xvi. 14.

2. We infer, that some men receive not only more than others, but also that which is far better as to its kind or quality; some have more riches, more honours, greater dignity; some receive more common light and knowledge, have larger souls, or greater capacities than others, and some have more spiritual knowledge, greater spiritual gifts, and some have more divine and special grace; it is as God is pleased to give to every man.

3. We may also infer from hence, that such who do receive not only common gifts, common light and knowledge, but also the special grace of God, they do carefully improve those talents, though not all with like care and faithfulness; for though he that received the five, and he that received the two, are said proportionably to make improvement, yet

we are not to think thereby, that all that are faithful servants, or that are true Christians, do with like diligence, care, and faithfulness acquit themselves! parables thus run not on all four, yet it cannot be denied, that any person who receives the talent of saving grace, utterly and finally neglecteth the improvement thereof, so as to be found at the last day a wicked and slothful servant; for then it would follow, that true believers may totally and finally fall away from grace, which is a grand error for any to affirm.

Neither are we to conclude from this parable, that always such who have most given to them, do make the best improvement of them; for as common experience proves the contrary, so our Saviour shows that some are faithful in the least, and others in the most.

4. We may also learn from hence, that according to the nature and quantity of those talents, Jesus Christ is pleased to bestow upon all persons, he expecteth their utmost improvement of them, where he gives much, the improvement of much.

They that have store of earthly riches, small improvement of them is not sufficient, perhaps a man of small parts, knowledge, and ability, may be more useful, or do more good than he which hath received far greater parts, or more knowledge, and abilities, and so may he that hath received but a small portion of earthly riches, he may give more to the poor saints, or to support the ministry and common interest of Christ, than some who are very rich, or that have much of the world; and this indeed to our sorrow on the one hand we have often seen, which as it is a high commendation in the one sort, so it is a great shame to the other. How did our Lord praise or commend the poor widow, who cast into the treasure two mites, even all her substance, he declared that she had done more than them all, though some of them might cast in great sums out of their vast stocks.

5. Moreover, we infer, that he (or such) that received but one talent, who did not improve that one, that one talent could not be a talent of saving grace; because no man that ever did receive a talent of saving grace, ever proved a wicked and slothful servant, and so perished for ever.

6. Object. Did not the Lord design good to him to whom he gave but one talent? and was he not capable to improve that one? if neither of these be granted, it will follow that he designed the greatest evil unto him?

1. Answ. I answer, No doubt but his Lord did design good to him, for God is good to all, he out of his common goodness imparts his blessings and good things to all men; the sun and showers that fall from heaven, and fruitful seasons, are blessings God bestows upon all mankind, and this for their good, his tender mercy is over all his works.

But there is not like good things given to all, nor are all good things that God gives designed to the same end, nor do they proceed from him as the effects of the same love; certainly there was in God a more special and peculiar love to some from everlasting than to others; and so his design in giving his Spirit, his grace, his special grace to some, was for a higher good to them, than ever he designed in giving to others; the great Turk hath vast dominions, grandeur, and riches, and God gives men of the world their portion in this life. Besides, who can frustrate God in his designs and purposes? but if God in giving the gospel to many thousands, designed absolutely to effect the salvation of them all, but the wills of some complying not, his design is frustrated, as if the will of men may contradict God's will in his absolute designs and purposes.

2. We readily grant, that he who receives but one talent, may and ought to improve it, and shall be condemned for the non improvement thereof, he not being faithful in that which was least.

6. Yet this ought always to be granted, viz., that a heart to improve each talent, which God is pleased to give to any, is wholly from God, it is given to us by him as much as the talent itself: "For he worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. God worketh not only by suasions to gain our assent, but by a special energy effecting what he would have us to do, in a victorious and efficacious manner, or powerfully inclining the wills of his elect; for otherwise they would resist all the motions of his Spirit, and all arguments or suasions would be as ineffectual, as a man may use to persuade a dead man to rise out of the grave. God taketh away the "heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh," Ezek. xi. 19, ch. xxxvi. 26, causing light to shine out of darkness, and so renewing the will, and destroying the enmity that is therein; by which it comes to pass we choose that which is good, and attend upon the word of God, and are helped to improve those talents God hath given to us. It is not (as one observes) that man may only be able to will, and able to do, but God worketh in us both to will and to do, which connotes the very act itself: thought to will is our act, as to live is our life. Lazarus lived (after

he was dead) and the life he had was his life, but Christ gave it to him in a supernatural and miraculous manner; so we will, act, and do by virtue of the same almighty Power in all things that are truly and spiritually good.

SERMON XXVIII.

Who called his servants, and delivered to them his goods, &c.—Matt. xxv. 14, 15.

We have opened divers parts of the beginning of this parable, and have showed that the talents are not all of one kind, or of the same species; what though talents given out by a lord to his servants are all of one species, all that ever wrote on parables, confess they run not always so on all four, that in every thing there must be an exact parity; for such who affirm that, will run into great errors and absurdities.

Parables of ten run not on all four.

But to proceed, from the exposition I have given you of the last day, I shall now proceed to note one or two points of doctrine, as necessarily rising therefrom.

Doct. That God doth not give to all men talents alike, neither in respect of the quality nor quantity of them.

He that shall be so bold as to deny the truth of this proposition, shows no small ignorance, because the truth thereof (as to matter of fact) the whole world may daily see most evident before their eyes, yet to put it out of doubt.

1. I shall endeavour clearly to prove this great truth.

2. Give some reasons why the Lord doth this.

I shall prove it. Pray did not God give more and better talents unto Abraham, than he gave to multitudes in his days? also,

God doth give to some men greater and more distinguishing gifts, and such that differ in kind from what others have.

Did not the Lord give him more light and knowledge in divine things, than to thousands; the generality of the world in his days had no more knowledge of God, so far as we can gather, but what the light of natural conscience by the help of the things of the visible creation, and common providences of God discovered to them. But God called him out of the idolatrous world, and in a supernatural manner revealed himself unto him, and gave himself to him to be his God, and entered into covenant with him and all his true spiritual seed, giving by free promise an assurance of Jesus Christ, who should be born

of his seed, and eternal life through the same blessed Jesus; was not this a different talent in specie, better in quality, and more in quantity, than he gave to the rest of mankind? For

1. Had not Abraham special grace given to him, or the faith of God's elect, which is a most precious thing in respect of the nature thereof?

Did not God give him a special interest in himself: "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," Gen. xv. II. Did God give himself to all the people of the world in that sense in Abraham's days? No, none dare affirm, that he did give that talent, that promise, that covenant, that grace, nor that special interest in himself, but to a few of his natural seed, even to none of them, but the elect that were among them only.

2. Did God give Christ or the knowledge of Christ, (to come and to suffer death for his elect seed) to all people then. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it (saith the Lord) and was glad," John viii. 56. He saw my coming in the flesh, and my dying for his sins on the cross, and the publication of the gospel in all nations, that in me all that believe may be blessed.

3. Did not God also give greater talents, yea, better in kind, and more in quantity, to all his natural seed, than he gave to all other nations and people of the earth. For

1. Did not God enter into a legal, external and relative covenant with Abraham's natural seed, as such, and gave them the promise of the land of Canaan, and the rite of circumcision to all his male children that sprang from his loins by Isaac, as a sign or token of that covenant upon their performance of the federal conditions proposed to them, unto which they subscribed or restipulated, and engaged to perform on their parts: for evident it is that the covenant God made with his natural or fleshly seed as such, was upon mutual restipulation, they being obliged to discharge the federal conditions, on pain of being cut off;

which shows that covenant made with them, as so considered, was not the covenant of grace, for that was only by free promise, and only made to the true seed who were heirs of the special promise, and could not be disinherited without God's violation of his word and oath to Abraham, and to all them in him who were ordained unto eternal life, as the apostle proves.

2. Did not God give to the natural seed of Abraham his holy and visible worship, and constituted them his own visible church, and gave them his laws and ordinances? Were not these things the Lord's goods, or talents given to them his servants, and were not they different in nature, kind, or quality to all whatsoever he gave to any other people of the world at that time?

III. Did not God give to Isaac more, and better talents, and quite different, or of a contrary species to those he gave to Ishmael! Did God give and confirm the covenant of grace to Ishmael, or give him his saving grace, and the promise of himself, which precious talents he gave to Isaac? or did God give to Esau the same talents in kind or specie which he gave to Jacob? the one had the blessings of the fat things of the earth, the other he gave the fat things of the covenant of grace, and of eternal glory in heaven.

The Jews or people of Israel had talents that differed in specie.

IV. And when we come to Moses' days, did not God give to the whole people of Israel, talents different in kind to any he gave to the Gentile nations? or doth not the true church state and visible worship of God, and all the laws and ordinances of God under that dispensation, differ in kind from what the Heathen world received for near two thousand years? "What people have laws and statutes so righteous as this law is?" Deut. iv. 8. "Or what nation is so great, who hath God so nigh unto him, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" ver. 7. Were these talents, given to God's servants, or no talents? and if talents, and the Lord's goods, how different were they from what any other people had! "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments to Israel,—he hath not dealt so with any nation, as for his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord," Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20.

Moreover, doth not Paul say upon this very account the Jews had the advantage of the Gentiles, viz., "Because unto them were committed the oracles of God," Rom. iii. 2.—And not only so (for we will admit the ten commandments do not differ in kind to the law or light within, or law of God written in the hearts of all mankind.) "But unto them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises," Rom. ix. 4. Sure many of these were different talents, or of another kind to those the Gentiles had.

IV. Let us come unto the New Testament times. Pray did not our Lord give talents of a quite different nature to his disciples, than any he gave to others? and were they not quite of another kind, and of a far more excellent quality than what Christ gave to such who refused to be his disciples? "It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." And yet will any affirm the talents to all men are of the same species, or kind?

2. Did not the Lord Jesus give the Holy Spirit unto those servants? or is the Holy Ghost in his blessed saving operations and influences thereof given to all men? Have all a spiritual vital principle in them, or union with Christ? are all renewed and sanctified? The Spirit and the graces of the Spirit certainly are talents given to some of Christ's servants, even to all that are his faithful servants, and are these the same in nature or quality with what is given in common to all men?

The Holy Spirit and saving grace are talents given to some.

V. To come to matter of fact in our days.

1. Hath not God given quite different talents to some nations than what he hath at this present time given to others, or to the Pagan, Mahometan, and antichristian world? Have they the gospel given to them as England hath? or is the gospel no talent given to some of God's servants? if a talent, a great talent, doth it not differ in specie to those talents God hath given to the Heathen world? O what nation hath such light of the gospel, such clear knowledge of Christ, and of gospel truths and mysteries? as also sweet and peaceable seasons of worship, as well as the gospel church, and true gospel worship and holy ordinances.

England hath talents different from most nations of the world.

2. Moreover, doth not God give better talents (excelling in their nature or quality) to some people in England and other nations, than he gives to many who dwell here? All perhaps have the gospel, but all have it not (in many parts and corners of this nation) in

that clear revelation of it, as some cities and towns have of it. Besides, where the gospel is clearly and powerfully preached, yet many have it but in word only; and indeed none but the elect have it in the power of it; for if it is by the power of the gospel coming upon men's souls, the elect are known from others; then what I say clearly follows. And that this is a great truth, see what the apostle saith. "Knowing brethren beloved, your election of God, for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in much assurance," &c., 1 Thess. i. 4, 5. By this Paul knew they were elected. Now is not that divine power God puts forth upon the souls of men a quite different thing, and a far greater blessing, than to have the gospel in word only? Multitudes have the outward word, but few have the inward power. Though many have the gospel of grace, yet but a few have the grace of the gospel as a talent given unto them.

VI. To sum up the whole, to prove all men have not talents of the same species, consider, God gives not himself, his Son, his Spirit, his saving grace, light and knowledge unto all; God gives not a new heart, pardon and justification, adoption, communion, peace, true consolation unto all: now since these are our master's goods or talents given to some which so vastly differ from all other talents whatsoever, I infer the talents are not all of one species or kind. But to proceed,

Secondly, I shall give you the reasons of this, or show you why God gives talents that differ in specie or quality to others, to some servants only.

1. Because God loves some persons better than others, shall one dare to say that God loved from eternity all men alike, or that it is only for some men's doing well that causeth him to love them better than others; the consequences of such an error all men may see are abominable.

But to prove this, that it is from his love to some that he gives better things, and blessings unto them. Pray what was the cause that Joseph gave to Benjamin a double mess? was it not because he loved him better than his other brethren? Even so God loves some with an everlasting, with a special and peculiar love. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn thee," Jer. xxxi. 3. If God loved all nations, or all persons in all nations alike, no doubt but he would bestow like talents of peculiar and special blessings upon them, or if not the same in quantity, yet the same kind or quality; why had Jacob different blessings from Esau? is it not positively said, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated?" And was it because Jacob had done something to procure the love of God? No, "For the children being not yet born, neither had done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." Not of works, that is, not for any works foreseen in Jacob, but merely because God loved him. And also why did God give those

Deut. vii. 6,
7, 8.
Eph. i. 4.

peculiar talents to the people of Israel? The Lord sheweth, it was not from anything he saw in them, but because he loved them. "He loves and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," Rom. ix. 18.

2ndly. Because as God loved some with a special love, so them he also elected, or choose to be a holy people, or "ordained to eternal life," Acts xiii. 48; this is the prime and efficient cause of all special favours and spiritual blessings any receive. "Whom he foreknew or approved of, or loved, he predestinated to be conformable to the image of his Son, and whom he predestinated them he also called," &c. Rom. viii. 26, 30. These he gives the choicest and richest treasure and talents unto.

3rdly. Because Jesus Christ died only to save some, and not all people in the world. "His name shall be called Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins," Matt. i. 21. His people, that is God's elect. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me," John xvii. 6; and it was for these he died: "I lay down my life for my sheep," John x. 15. "He purchased the church with his own blood," Acts. xx. 28. If God gave Christ, which is the greater gift for all men, then he would give the lesser gifts to all men; all should then have equal talents in kind or quality, even all things

tending to make them truly happy; this is the apostle's argument. "For if when we were sinners we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life," Rom. v. 10. That is, through his intercession, who obtains all grace, strength, and whatsoever his elect want, and this he will give much more. What God give Christ to die in the stead of all! what a gift is that! and will he not give the gospel to multitudes of them, nor give his Spirit nor faith to apply the atonement! Sirs, according to Arminian notions, Paul was out, he was mistaken; God may be reconciled to all mankind by the death of his Son, he doth give the greater, but withholds the lesser. But see how our apostle again confutes their notion. "He that spared not

Christ gives better gifts, choicer talents to some than to all, because he died for some and not for all.

his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. That is, all things "that pertain to life and godliness," 2 Pet. i. 3.

If all spiritual gifts and peculiar talents were purchased at so dear a rate for all, all shall have them, because God is just and faithful; and will Christ give his life to save such that he will not give his Spirit unto to renew them: what, give a million for an estate, and not part with ten pounds to take it up?

4. If Christ paid every sinner's debts, and bore the wrath of God for them, or in their stead and room, it would not be just and righteous in God to let them perish in hell to satisfy (if that could do it) divine justice, and yet justice fully satisfied before for all their sins, this is strange. I hope they do not deny the satisfaction Christ made, was God only reconcilable by the death of his Son, who is it then, or what is it that reconciles him? is it the creature's repentance, faith and obedience? if so, the creature hath great part of the glory of his own salvation, nor is sin so great an evil as the word of God declares, if imperfect repentance, faith and obedience can satisfy divine justice, or reconcile sinners to God; but pray is not the making the atonement one thing, and the application of it another. We do not say any sinner is actually discharged without faith or the work of the Spirit in the application of Christ's blood; but to say faith satisfies or reconciles us unto God, is very absurd, and tends to degrade or lessen the merits or satisfaction of Christ.

5. Would not the Holy Spirit work grace in all, if Christ died for all, with an intention to save all; the love of the Father in election, the love of the Son in redemption, and the love of the Holy Spirit in application and renovation, are of equal extent, being but one and the same God.

4thly. All have not talents alike, but some have not only more but better in kind or quality, because God acts only in a way of sovereignty in the distribution of his talents, even according to the good pleasure of his will. "May I not do what I will with my own?" &c., Matt. xx. 11. Shall God have less power to dispose of his favours and rich treasure than men have to distribute their favours and bounty? Must he because he will redeem mankind, redeem the fallen angels also? or because Christ died for some, must he die for all Adam's offspring? or because some have the gospel preached to them, must all have it preached to them? must a rich man because he gives five pounds a piece to a hundred widows, give as much to all widows in the whole kingdom, or else be counted unjust?

But because I have more largely opened the nature of God's sovereignty in speaking to that parable, Matt. xx. 12, &c., I shall say no more to it here.

The Spirit would apply Christ's blood to all if Christ died to save all.

See the parable opened of the householder hiring servants in his vineyard.

APPLICATION.

1. How doth this reprove them that foolishly affirm the talents are all of one kind that God gives to men, because they may be so that a lord may give to his earthly servants, as if there were no disparities in parables; besides, to argue from a parable remote especially from the scope of it, shows great weakness.

Obj. But doth not this parable say, the Lord gave to every man according to his ability?

Ans. And what of this? doth it follow from thence, that every man hath like spiritual talents, as men may have to improve external talents; this is to strain the parable beyond the scope of it also.

2. God gives to the beathen talents according to their abilities to improve; are not they able to improve their natural light and knowledge? (Some of them formerly seemed thus to do) and to such to whom God gives the ministration of the Gospel, he requires improvements according to their light and advantages. So to them that God gives special grace, he gives assistance or ability unto, to improve that grace.

Every one hath talents according to their abilities to improve them, but I know no man that is dead is able to improve any talent; and such who are spiritually dead in sins, are not able to improve any spiritual talent to God's glory, nor to his own profit, until he is quickened by Jesus Christ. Men may act like men, and improve natural and external powers, and shine in morality, but no man can improve grace nor gracious habits before grace is implanted in his heart, and let no man say that God is obliged to give all men those divine habits, or bestow his Spirit upon all, that all may have equal abilities; as Christians, as they may in some sense be said to have considered as men. But more to this hereafter, when we come to that part of the parable.

3. How doth this also tend to reprove such that attribute all to the will of man, and that all men may have eternal life by improving these talents God hath given to them

though they never believe in Christ, nor know him, nor are born again; and that affirm, grace depends upon the improvement of nature, and that God will never bestow the greater gift on such that improve not lesser gifts.

4. We may also infer, that all improvements of the talents of special grace, is as much of grace as the talent or stock itself, or that what we do, or will to do, is as much from God (or by his immediate assistance) as grace itself.

Obj. But how can God be just if he act in a way of sovereignty, and gives not to all alike?

1. Ans. Can any man be charged for bestowing his favours, his gifts, and bounty as he pleaseth!

2. God is just, because he is no man's debtor, to whom is God obliged? Moreover, to deny his sovereignty is to eclipse his glory, and cast contempt upon his holy majesty; is not his word true? and doth not that say, "He hath mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Rom. ix. 8.

3. There was no constraint laid upon God, to save any man, and do not all deserve his wrath for ever? Why will God save man, and not fallen angels? or, why us and not others.

4. All men naturally are undeserving creatures, and therefore if God should cast off all mankind, and not show mercy unto any, he would be righteous, and no man could charge him with injustice, or with doing him any wrong; suppose that thousands of men should rise in rebellion against their lawful sovereign, and conspire to dethrone, nay, murder him, and yet he should pardon some of them, and execute the rest, is he unjust in saving of a few, because he did not extend his favour and compassion unto them all.

5. God is just in his distributions of his favours to some only, and manifesting his displeasure on the rest, because there are none who perish in their sins, that improved according to their abilities the talents God gave unto them; for where is the person that ever did to the uttermost of his power live up to that light, knowledge, and abilities they received from the Lord.

6. God's doing more for some than for others, makes not the state of such he passeth by worse than it was, (they were condemned before) though it makes the state of those he shows favour unto better; for did not God out of sovereign grace pluck some out of the fire by his almighty power, every soul of man would have perished for ever.

Secondly, How should the consideration of this raise our hearts in praises unto God, for casting our lot in England, or in a land where the blessed gospel is preached; we might have been born in India or in Turkey, and trained up either in Paganism or Mahometism, or in some popish country where nothing but idolatry and hellish darkness predominates, and where the wretched people think it is their duty to give divine adoration to idols, even to a wafer cake.

But much more cause have believers to bless the Lord, who hath given them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. xiii. 11. And to work grace in their hearts, or in giving his Spirit unto them, which he hath not given to many others, though they have the gospel preached unto them; therefore I may say as our Saviour did to his disciples in the like case: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear," Matt. xiii. 16. All the spiritual good we receive is alone an act of God's sovereign love and favour to us; we cannot say it is because we did more than others, or deserve more than others, that God gives to us two talents, or five, and to others but one, it is as the great Lord pleaseth.

Thirdly, This therefore may reprove them that say, God loves all men alike; nay, that he loved Judas as much as Peter, until by his sin he incurred his displeasure. Was not Peter's sin very great in denying his master, and in swearing he did not know him? did he not deserve to be cast off for ever, as well as Judas? and was it not because of that special love God bore to the one above the other, that one hath repentance given to him, and the other had not, but died in his sin, that he might go to his own place? If Peter was upright hearted, and not the other, who gave him that heart? Is not a new, a sincere and an upright heart given of God? The hearts of all men naturally are only evil and full of hypocrisy, and did not God restrain Satan, would he not enter into every man's heart, and stir them up to commit the highest acts of wickedness?

4thly, Therefore in the last place, let us take heed who differ from others, to ascribe it wholly to the free grace of God: "for what have we which we have not received," 1 Cor. iv. 7. And if we have received it from God, let us not glory as if we had not received it of him, but as the fruits and effects of our own power and improvements, or for doing more and better than others.

SERMON XXIX.

And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one.—And then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.—Matt. xxv. 15, 16.

FROM hence note,

Doct. That the children of men, who are called Christ's servants, are traders, and they ought with their utmost diligence to improve their talents, or their Lord's money.

As I hinted, I shall—1. Lay down one or two explanatory propositions, the better to open this truth.

2. Show that all are traders, and ought to improve their talents.

3. Show that Christ's own household servants are entrusted with his most choicest treasure. I shall begin with the first of these general heads.

Proposit. That all mankind may be said to be Christ's servants, and are entrusted with some of his goods, or with one or more talents.

Some restrain the servants here only to the special servants of Christ, namely to church members.

Christ is Lord of all, all owe subjection to him.

But this I think ought not to be done, for the reasons following.

1. Because Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and all men ought to acknowledge his dominion and sovereignty over them, and to submit to his authority: "as thou hast given him power over all flesh," John xvii. 2. Even over unbelievers, as well as over believers, to judge and to condemn them that believe not, as well as to justify them that do believe in his name. All things, all persons are put under his feet, and all shall "bow the knees to him, and confess Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 10, 11. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him," Rom. x. 12.

2ndly, Because all receive (or have received) one or more talents from the Lord Jesus Christ, if not as he is Mediator, yet as he is considered Creator: will any say the heathen have not so much as received one talent, though as I hinted one talent may be in quantity either more or less; for parables are not to be strained, as some suppose, or that a talent must be so much and no more, and all talents of the same quality also.

What talent the pagan world hath received.

The Gentiles have the law written in their hearts, the very same as to the substance of it as the Jews had in tables of stone, and afterwards in a book. Christ as Creator is the "true light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world," John i. 9. What reason, understanding, knowledge or light any have, they receive it from the Word, "who was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by him," ver. 2, 3.

Is not rain, fruitful seasons, and all other good things of this world, a talent given to mankind by the blessed God: he gives the poor heathen his gold, silver, and rich gums, and precious spices, with vast kingdoms to possess? And do not all these things amount so much as unto one talent? or are not these things given to men to be improved to their Master's use? Moreover he gives this sort the talent of trade and outward commerce and traffic with Christians.

3dly, All have received one or more talents from Christ, because they shall all be called to an account by him: at the last day when he comes to judgment, will he only call professors or church members to give an account to him? "He shall judge the secrets of all men," Rom. ii. 16.

4thly, And for the non-improvement of those talents, gift or gifts men have received, he will condemn them, as this parable and other scriptures clearly show.

2. Proposit. That according to the nature or quality of that talent or talents men have received, such is and will be the nature of the improvement thereof; it cannot be improved to things of a higher or different nature to the principle stock itself.

To open what I mean, consider—1. That he that hath no more than the light of nature, by the highest improvement thereof, he can arrive but to mere natural knowledge, or to simple morality, he cannot attain thereby to the supernatural knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, though he may excel many in mere natural religion, or moral virtue, as some of the heathens of old did.

The improvement of talents of the same species with the talents themselves.

2. So he to whom God gives the riches of this world, and not spiritual riches or the talents of grace and spiritual gifts, by the improvement of their outward riches (to the

benefit of the commonwealth ; or to the profit and comfort of the poor) though they cannot obtain to true grace and eternal life, yet they may gain thereby the character of good and charitable men, and excel others in morality and human honour, and attain and keep a good conscience towards men.

3. So they that have natural gifts, and attain acquired parts, cannot arrive to true and saving grace by the improvement of such gifts and parts, though they may thereby increase in further knowledge of those things : as such that study any art or science, by improvement may grow more acute, and excel others in those arts or sciences. But, my brethren, the knowledge of the tongues, of logic, &c., or philosophical learning, cannot bring men to the saving knowledge of God and Jesus Christ : "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man that is in him ; even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit," 1 Cor. ii. 11.

That which I drive at (1) is this, viz., that the seed of true grace must be first given as a talent ; nay, every grace of the Spirit must be infused into the souls of such that are truly gracious, before they can improve true grace (or any one of the graces of the Spirit.)

(2) And that no improvements of any common talents or gifts can procure the special grace of God, or be improved to any other talent differing from their own species or qualities. And this brings me to the next thing.

4thly. That such that God hath given special gifts and saving grace unto, can only improve those gifts and precious graces to that high and most noble end for which they were given, viz., the glory of God : and to an increase of more true spiritual knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and growth in grace, and so to a further meetness for eternal life : in a word, according to the quality or nature of the principal stock or talents received at first, such is the nature or quality of the improvement made of them. Such as is the one talent, (as to its nature or kind, such is the nature of the improvement thereof, and so of the two talents, &c.

And that this is so, it clearly appears, 1. Because the effect cannot exceed the cause ; thorns cannot produce grapes, nor thistles figs : do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? Every kind begets its own nature or kind.

2. Because special grace is God's special gift ; the seed and habit of all grace is first given as a stock to trade with, and to improve, and is not obtained by man's natural industry or improvement of common gifts ; the Holy Spirit must be first received as seed sown in our hearts, before grace can grow in us : a man may plow and plow again, and manure his land long enough (if he sows it not) before any corn grow up : "The fruit of the Spirit is Gal. v. 22. love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These things are not the fruits of nature, nor the product of man's natural improvements, or any thing he can do.

Object. Do not men obtain these graces by improving the gospel, or the means of grace, &c.

1. Answ. The outward means ought to be improved ; God having appointed it in order to our obtaining grace ; but no man by the best industry he can use in the improvement of the outward means, or the preaching of the gospel can obtain saving grace ; no, that is the gift of God alone, and peculiar to himself, or his own prerogative to bestow upon whom he pleaseth ; it is only to them the gospel comes in power unto, (by the mighty working of the Spirit) that grace is wrought in the hearts of some.

Do any think God is obliged to give special grace to them that improve common grace ; or to give the greater, because they improve the lesser ? God is a free agent, and though he will, and sometimes doth bless the means, and also ties us to the improvement of it, yet he works how he pleaseth, he is not tied to it ; if grace be the simple product of our improvement with God's common blessings ; or as he blesseth the labour of the industrious husbandman, then we have somewhat to boast of or glory in ; but we have nothing to boast of or glory in, we cannot say grace is the product of our labour and industry, but simply the free gift of God.

2. Because the saving knowledge of Christ is not, cannot be revealed or attained to, but in a supernatural way by the Holy Ghost ; it is not had by the improvement of man's reason, or man's-wisdom, industry, or what outward means soever God hath or doth afford to men in common : "And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father that is in heaven." Matt. xvi. 1. By flesh and blood our Lord meaneth the reason, wisdom, learning, and industry of man, he attains not the true knowledge of Christ by learning or by tradition, or any dictates from man and improvements he himself can make, through the help of all his natural powers or

God is obliged to none of his creatures.

No attaining to the true knowledge of Christ but by revelation.

common influences of the Spirit, but by the immediate and special operations and illuminations of the Spirit; it is God who this way begets a full assent and consent and persuasion of the truth made known to us. Yet is not the word preached useless, because God makes use of it as an instrument of his power, by which ordinarily he works faith and all grace in our souls.

3. Because grace in our hearts is called the image of God, and also the forming of Christ in our souls, and a creation work, and therefore peculiar unto God himself; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them," Eph. ii. 10. Can we by our industry and any power of our own, form Christ in our souls, and create the image of God therein, who cannot form a fly or a worm? and from hence it appears it is the free gift of God, and his peculiar workmanship, let him work how he pleaseth.

And how absurd then is it for any to assert this is the product of man's own improvements of common light and means of grace.

Obj. How can these things be as you say, (i. e.,) that all improvements of talents are of the same species or nature of the principle and original stock? do not some merchants trade in toys, and get by trading gold, pearl, &c., or things of a different species?

Ans. It is a mistake, those things merchants venture to sea with, though in one respect they are, it is true, of different species to the things they gain by trading, yet in the sense I speak of, they are all of one and the same species, viz., all earthly and corruptible things, for here are generally but two sorts of talents, or things that differ in specie, (i. e.,) all are either earthly, or heavenly, common or special.

Obj. To what purpose then is it for men to attend upon the means with the greatest care and diligence, as praying, hearing? &c.,

Why we must attend upon the outward means.

1. Answ. I told you before, because this is the way God hath ordained, and commanded us to wait upon him in, and which commonly he powerfully blesseth to that great end I speak of; shall not we hear the word when required so to do? we are to "fill the water-pots full of water," John ii. 7. But that contributes nothing to the turning of that water into wine; no, that is the work of Christ alone, shall not we pray for that grace or talent, which is the gift of God; indeed could it be obtained or procured by our industry or improvements, there was not altogether that need and reason that we should cry unto God for it.

2. When God gives us his Spirit he gives us himself; we can do nothing which either can deserve or procure such a gift, or oblige God to bestow it upon us; besides a new heart, the Spirit, grace, and God to be our God, are all contained in God's absolute promises, not made upon any federal conditions or previous improvements made by us, or qualifications in us, so much as to prepare us for them. What did the thief on the cross, or Paul for the obtaining the grace they received? who can oblige God, or plead for such a talent as saving grace is, or plead for it, for the sake of any thing wretched sinners can do.

3. Is it not said, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy?" Rom. ix. 16. It is not of our good desires, good inclinations, nor our diligent hearing, praying, nor of our highest improvements, or from any foresight God had of any of these things; no, but of the mere love and mercy, and good pleasure of God. This text, as our late annotators note, wounds Pelagians under the fifth rib: God is a debtor to no man, what are all our poor, lame and imperfect endeavours?

U S E.

1. By way of reprehension to such who hold Arminian and Pelagian errors, who affirm that men by their improvements of common grace, common light, and knowledge may obtain to the true and saving grace of God; nay, that God is obliged to give that grace to them that so do, even Christ and all the blessings of Christ, and charge God with injustice if he doth not bestow him and his Son on such industrious persons.

2. It may also serve to reprove them that assert, that all the talents are of one species or kind, because the talents which an earthly Lord gives out to his servants, are or may be all of one and the same kind, as if in a parable there could be no disparity.

3. It may also tend to humble sorry mankind, and cast contempt upon him, and bring down the pride and vain glory of man's will, or cast free-will into the dust, and wholly exalt free grace.

4. It may also teach poor sinners to cry to God for an original or beginning stock of special grace from God to trade withal, who would bring glory unto God, and enjoy peace in their own souls, and also stir them up to a thankful improvement of the means God directs them unto, in order to their obtaining it; and may likewise serve to excite all true

believers to improve that blessed stock they have, and so add other two or five talents more unto those which they first received when they began to trade.

Secondly, all men are traders, and ought to trade and improve the talents they have received.

How all men
may be said
to have
talents and
be traders.

I shall open this parallel-wise.

1. A trader either trades with his own, or with another man's stock, whose servant he is. Now, my brethren, no man hath any stock or talent of his own, but all their talents which they are required to improve and trade withal, are the Lord's, "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" 1 Cor. iv. 7.

1. Hast thou a rational soul, wisdom, knowledge, and great understanding? it was given unto thee by the Lord, and that soul thou oughtest to take care of, and that wisdom, knowledge and understanding, to improve to the great end he gave them to thee, and thou must be accountable unto him in this matter.

2. Hast thou riches or much wealth? it is the Lord's money, "The silver, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord," Hag. ii. 8. And again he saith, "I will take away my corn, and my flax:" Hos. ii. 9. If these things are not improved to the end they are given, the Lord will either take them away, and blast all your endeavours, or else cut the possessors of them off, only with having their portion in this world.

3. Hast thou acquired parts, great learning? this is also thy master's goods, he gave thee those faculties by which means thou wast capable to attain to such learning, and also time to arrive at it.

4. Have you the gospel, and the ministration of the word? this is also the Lord's goods, and must be improved.

5. Have you faithful ministers still continued to you, to dispense the word of life, and open the sacred mysteries of the gospel, and to feed you with knowledge and understanding, and lead you into the way of truth? why ministers are the Lord's, and you should make the best improvement of them, and put them into the best capacity you are able, to minister unto you, and submit to them, and obey them in all things in the Lord.

6. Or have you the precious talent of time, and the opportunities of time? this you are intrusted with by the Lord.

7. Or have you health, strength, and advantages to attend upon the word and means of grace above many? all this is from the Lord, and ought to be improved as he commandeth.

8. And have you spiritual gifts and saving grace? those talents you also received of the Lord, and what better talents have any servants of Christ? he doth not give these to all, no but a very few have these rich and precious talents?

9. Are you fathers or masters, and so have authority over, and entrusted with families, children, and servants? these are talents received of the Lord. Or are some of you ministers or magistrates? Certainly you are intrusted with a great talent, and the Lord looks for a due improvement of those places of trust and dignity, for we are but stewards of whatsoever we have or are entrusted with.

Secondly, Traders ought to know the worth of those commodities put into their hands, and entrusted to trade with. So every man ought to know the worth of his own soul, the worth and preciousness of their time, the worth and preciousness of the word of God, and of the worth of grace, and of all other spiritual blessings and good things; and as we should know the great worth and excellencies of spiritual things, that are traders, so likewise we should know the little worth and value of all earthly things when compared to spirituals. Or whatsoever we call our own, the little worth of earthly riches, pleasures and honours, human learning, and all acquired parts; as also the little worth of our own duties, external privileges, and inherent righteousness, in comparison of the righteousness of Christ. If we know not this, we may soon overvalue the one, and undervalue the other; and so in our dealing

through ignorance be cheated and run out of all, even esteem of earthly things and riches above the riches of heaven, or human learning above the Spirit's teaching, and the gifts and graces thereof; or your own righteousness (which Paul esteemed but as dung) above "the righteousness of God which is by faith." Phil. iii. 8, 9. Some are unskilful traders, they have not wisdom to know how some commodities excel others; and so some spiritual traders through ignorance know not the worth of the truth, and other things they trade in, the worth of reconciliation, union, justification, pardon of sin, peace with God, and communion with the Father and the Son, and of that free access we have to God, or

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Spiritual
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to trade with the Father in and through Jesus; they know not the worth of ordinances, nor the worth and preciousness of the promises, and from hence refuse to trade with Jesus Christ for them. Should not merchants, jewellers, or goldsmiths know precious stones, gold and pearls? they else may be cheated, or refuse to buy when they might be greatly enriched, and so may poor mortals here also through ignorance be cheated, or refuse to buy of Christ "Gold tried in the fire." &c., Rev. iii. 18.

Thirdly. Traders must not be timorous or fearful in laying out their money; no more should such that are traders in a spiritual sense, they should lay their strength out, spend their time freely in God's service, and part with all they have to gain the pearl of great price.

Fourthly. Traders should know where to buy, or of whom, and who to trade with; so should spiritual traders; they must know it is of Christ they must buy, "buy of me, &c."

1. Consider, that Jesus Christ is never without all sorts of goods, and also hath great plenty of them, he hath all things we need or can need.

All things we want are in Christ.

2. He will cheat no man, and being faithful, never sells counterfeit goods; and so just, that he never fails, or breaks his word, or promises. "All the promises of God are yea, and amen in Christ Jesus," 2 Cor. i. 20.

3. Christ is also very rich; it is dangerous to trade with some persons, and bad to trust them, because they may break; but no fear of that here, for all the riches of grace and glory are his; the Father hath put all things into his hands. Do you trade for gifts? "Christ hath received gifts for men," Eph. iv. 8. Or do you trade or seek to him for grace? "He is full of grace and truth," John i. 14. Do you trade for pardon? "He will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 7. Do you trade for strength? He is our strength, "He is mighty, nay, all-mighty to save," Isa. lxiii. 1. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," Isa. xl. 29. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Do you want counsel? He is the mighty Counsellor; "Counsel is mine," &c., Prov. viii. 14. Do you want wisdom? "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," Jam. i. 5; or do you want purity and holiness, he is the fountain to wash in, and cleanseth us from all filthiness, "He loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. Are you sinners, and want peace with God? He hath made our peace and full reconciliation; peace is in him, though it is given to none but to such that apply themselves to God in and by faith in him. Or do you need righteousness? "He is the Jehovah our righteousness; he is the Sun of righteousness," Mal. iv. 2. The sun is not fuller of light than Christ is full of righteousness. O who would not trade with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifthly, Traders must know the terms upon which they are to trade, or how to buy: some trades call for ready money, others exchange one sort of goods for others; so poor sinners that would trade with Jesus Christ, must know on what terms they may have what they need.

Traders must know the terms how to buy goods.

(1.) It is not with money; "Buy wine and milk without money," Isa. lv. 1, 2. Justification without any previous qualifications, or any righteousness of your own; also it is without price, that is without money worth, you are to give nothing that hath any value or worth in it for what you receive of him, yet it is upon exchange, and therefore called a buying, but what must we exchange, or what do we receive thereupon? even "beauty for ashes, and the oil of gladness for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," Isa. lxi. 3. Not that you can mourn for sin until he gives you the spirit of grace to help you to look unto him: you must part with your filthy rags, if you would be clothed with this robe of righteousness, and so will you be clothed with the garment of praise, or with joy and singing also; though these things purchase not what we receive of him, yet we must part with all these, sell all we have, to win Christ.

(2.) Indeed all things we need, are freely given of God through Jesus Christ:—"Let him that thirsteth take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. Justification freely, pardon of sin freely, for his own namesake; for the whole design of this trade is to advance the riches of God's free grace.

Sixthly, Traders must know in whose name they must trade, and come for what they want, whether in their own or in their master's name; it is not allowed for servants to trade in their own names; neither perhaps should they so do would they be trusted; so sinners and all that would trade for another world, must know whether they must come to God in their own names, or in the name of another. (1.) Not in our own names, for if we do, we shall receive nothing of God, our

Traders must know in whose name to trade, and so must sinners.

credit being gone, he will not trust us. (2.) We must trade in our great Master's name, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Whatsoever you ask in my name, that will I do for you," John xiv. 13. That is, upon the account of his merits, for his sake, and by means of his worth, and by the virtue of his intercession, and also by his authority, he having impowered us, or given boldness and free access unto us to come to the Father: and also in his name denotes, that we should do all to his glory, and assume none of it to ourselves, but that we should wholly labour to glorify the Son, and the Father in him.

Traders must trust, so must Christians trust Jesus Christ. Seventhly, Traders trust, or else perhaps they will have little or no trade at all, and great traders are acquainted therewith; they trust sometimes six or twelve months, so such that trade with Christ, or with God in Christ's name, and improve their talents, must trust the Lord Jesus; if you cannot trust him, and rest by faith upon him, and take his word and promises, you will receive nothing of him, neither righteousness, pardon, peace, strength, and comfort, nor salvation. What is, my brethren, believing in Christ, but trusting him, or depending upon his word and faithful promises, relying upon the sufficiency, merits, power, and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. "In him all that believe are justified from all things," Acts xiii. 39, &c. They are poor traders that must have all in hand presently paid down: some poor weak Christians, who are not rich in faith, they cannot trust God, or wait for the accomplishment of his promises. How long did the Father trust the Son, or take his word that he would come and pay him all our vast debts! and how long did Abraham trust God for the performance of his promise of giving him a son, or before the child of the promise was given. "He believed in hope against hope," Rom. iv. 18. And saith David, "In the Lord have I put my trust." "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is," Jer. xvii. 7. "Trust in him at all times, ye people," Psal. lxii. 8. Though the providences of God seem to cross his promises, or God seem long before we have the promise made good to us, or to his Son; yet we must trust in him, and not doubt but in due time he will perform whatsoever he hath promised. Now there are two or three things to strengthen our trusting in God.

Great security, or grounds given to us to trust in God through Christ Jesus. 1. That though we deserve nothing, can merit nothing, yet Christ hath merited all things that are needful for us, and he is deserving, God will not deny us the merits of his Son's blood.

2. God who hath promised is immutable, he changes not; he never changes his mind, nor his absolute purposes and decrees. "He will not lie to David, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips," Psal. lxxxix. 34, 35.

3. We have not only his promise, but his oath; this denotes that the Lord foresaw how hard it would be for us to trust or believe in him; and also it shows the wonderful condescension of God to his poor creatures. Moreover, it discovers the greatest ground for us to believe in him imaginable. Shall God not only promise but oblige himself by oath! Stand and wonder O ye heavens! See what the Psalmist saith, "once have I sworn by my holiness," &c. Again it is said, "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself," Heb. vi. 13. An oath among men is to put matters out of all doubt, and so put an end to all strife. "Wherein God willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us," ver. 17, 18. That man must needs see cause strangely to reflect upon himself, that cannot trust in God, in the true God, especially when his oath is passed in the case. O what horrid unbelief is there in our hearts!

4. Because no soul whoever that trusted in the Lord missed of help and succour in the proper season, when he saw it would do them the most good. "God shall help her, and that right early." No man ever trusted in God through Jesus Christ, and waited patiently upon him, but received most sure and seasonable returns from him. Shall God lose his credit, and not be believed by his creatures? Nay, shall his own children not trust in him, and rely upon his faithfulness?

5. If God seems to delay the performance of his promises, it is to try and put our graces into exercise, to try our faith in him, and our love to him, and the grace of patience also; or else he sees we are not ready to receive what he promised, or the time is not yet come when the mercy will do us the most good, and bring the greatest honour and glory to his own name.

6. That mercy which we have long waited for, will be very sweet and consolatory unto us, when it comes. If men are sure of safe and great returns, they wait with much patience,

content, and satisfaction. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when it cometh it is a tree of life," Prov. xiii. 12.

Ninthly. Traders or merchants (as I showed you in opening another parable,) must keep their books well, and see that their accounts stand fair, and know whether they thrive or go behind-hand. So every Christian or spiritual trader, should see how things stand between God and his own soul, that he may know whether he grows in faith, in love, in zeal, in humility, and in holiness, or not; and if he finds he is grown more cold, more earthly, proud, and unbelieving, it is a sad sign of breaking, or that his heart is not right with God, or at least that he is under some sore temptation, and also under the withdrawals of the quickening presence of Christ, nor can such tell where their partial apostacy may end. However, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger," Job xvii. 9.

Christian traders should keep their accounts well.

Tenthly. Some traders do not improve their Lord's money, and though entrusted but with one talent, yet improve not that, but mind more their own private business, than the concerns of their Lord. And this as our Saviour shows in this parable, many to whom he hath given but one talent do not improve it, but hide it in the earth.

Some spiritual traders do not improve so much as one talent.

Eleventhly. Some traders break, and expose such that are faithful dealers to loss and shame. Even so also some professors backslide or revolt from God, and turn spiritual bankrupts, to the great dishonour of God, the reproach of religion and faithful Christians; and these are exposed and in great danger every day to fall into the hands of divine justice, into the hands of the living God, and to be cast into prison; where under eternal wrath they must abide, until they have paid the uttermost farthing.

SERMON XXX.

Then he that had received the five talents, went and traded with the same. And likewise he that had received the two, &c.—Matt. xxv. 16, 17.

Doct. That the children of men who are called Christ's servants, are traders.

I have opened this, and showed how fitly they may be compared to traders, which closed with the second general head of discourse.

Thirdly, I shall shew, That Christ's own domestic servants are entrusted with his most choice treasure.

I have before proved, that these talents are not all alike in quality, as the text shows they are not in quantity.

1. Some, nay, multitudes in the world (that Christ will call to reckon with when he comes to judgment,) have only natural or external talents given to them, as natural light, knowledge, riches, and other common endowments; but true believers, who are Christ's domestic servants, have special, spiritual and heavenly talents given to them, true spiritual light, knowledge, grace, riches, and righteousness.

The excellency of some talents above others.

And now all must acknowledge these in their nature and quality, as they differ from the other, so they far excel or are much better than those the Pagan world or mere earthly men and reprobates have, or are entrusted with. "The merchandize of wisdom is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold," Prov. iii. 14. By wisdom here, most conclude, is meant Jesus Christ, who is called the wisdom of God; and also takes in true grace, or the true fear and saving knowledge of God. "They shall die without wisdom," (or instruction) speaking of wicked men, Prov. v. 23. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." O how few have this talent.

2. They must be the best talents, if we consider further more particularly the matter of them, or what is contained in these talents, even as was hinted, the blessed God himself, and Jesus Christ himself; he gives himself to some, though but to a few, and this is the great covenant promise, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people." O what a talent is the gift of the Spirit and true grace, and all those things that accompany it!

3. That they are the best talents, or far excel them that are given to others, appears, because they that have them are by the Lord pronounced happy. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding," Prov. iii. 13. Such are

truly happy here, happy while they live, and shall be happy at death, and also eternally happy. Their riches are the best riches, their honours are the best honours, and their delights and pleasures far excel all the sensual delights and pleasures of wicked men.

No man can comprehend what good is in God. 4. Who can count up, or compute the riches and infinite worth that is in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the believer's portion. "Their lot is fallen in pleasant places, they have a goodly heritage," Psal. xvi. 6. Who can reckon up all the blessings of the covenant of grace, or what is contained in the promises of the gospel? They are, my brethren, of an incomparable nature, far exceeding the onyx, the sapphire, the crystal, or the chiefest pearl.

5. Their nature and excellency may be known, if we consider the spring or rise of them, and that also they are a certain token or pledge of the special love of God. The Father's love is the spring or fountain from whence they come. God loves all his creatures with a common love, and he gives them his common favours. But he loves his elect with a special and peculiar love, and therefore he bestows on them his special and peculiar blessings, or talents that far excel all such he gives to others. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. xxxi. 3. Moreover, these special talents or choice treasure God hath given to his people, are as a certain pledge to them that they were comprehended in his eternal love, and are some of his own elect. When God gives his Spirit to any man, saving grace to any man, it is also a pledge to them of their being justified and pardoned, and that they shall be eternally saved; therefore the talents these have, far exceed in worth and excellencies, all others whatsoever; these are soul enriching, soul-raising, soul-exalting, and soul-satisfying treasures; they that God gives these talents to, may say with Jacob, "They have all."

6. Their great worth also appears, by that wonderful price that was laid down by the Lord Jesus Christ to purchase them. These talents were the special purchase of the blood of Jesus Christ. True grace is the special fruit of Christ's merits, or glorious purchase. True, we have them cheap enough, being given to us freely, yet we part with our all for them, and so did every one that ever was possessed with them; had an enlightened sinner kingdoms and crowns, rather than he would not have or should be denied of these things, he would part with them presently, and contemn all earthly crowns and kingdoms, as Moses did the glory of Egypt, in comparison of these things.

Spiritual things costly to God and to Christ. O costly wares, (saith one) God's all goes, Christ's all goes, and the sinner's all goes also, to enjoy them.

The magazine and treasures of heaven are emptied, yet do not mistake, the sinner finds the flesh must be crucified, the old man must die, if he possess the talent of grace and the new birth. O, the woundings, the lancings, the bleedings, the heart-pricking pangs that often attend the new birth, these lead the van to this banner of love; these are like storms and tempests to the flesh, to the old man, or body of sin and death; self is wounded, the life of sin, and the love of this world is at once let out.

7. The gain by trading in these commodities is great, and hath the best increase or incomes.

"Thou deliverdest to me five talents, behold I have gained besides them five talents more," Ver. 20.

They may be improved to double increase, to as much more in respect of the quantity; but this is not all, he that improved his two talents, is made a ruler over two cities, and he that improved his five talents, is made a ruler over five cities; besides, what a believer may arrive to here in improving of his special talents of grace and saving knowledge. As to a further likeness to God, or communion with him, or in comfort and consolation, there are great rewards of grace attends the improvement of grace, and all other spiritual and peculiar gifts of God.

8. The duration of these things shows forth the excellent nature of them, they are eternal things, love to God, peace of conscience, and a likeness to God, we shall carry out of the world with us. The Lord that gives grace, gives also glory to his faithful servants.

Lastly, The returns that these traders meet with, shows it is the best trade and the choicest treasure.

Christ makes the best returns to them that trade with him.

1. Great things for that which is of very little value; what is a cup of cold water to a crown of glory? what are ashes, or mourning, or a spirit of heaviness, in comparison of that glorious beauty, spiritual joy and eternal praises, which Christ returns for those small things.

2. Quick returns, see what the Lord says : " Before they call I will answer," though it is not thus always, Isa. lxx. 24.

3. They are always certain returns, none miscarry ; no ship is cast away that is well freighted with grace.

4. Seasonable returns, just when the Lord sees we need the mercy, and it will do us most good, then we shall have it.

U S E .

1. Be exhorted to choose this trade, the trade of godliness ; you that are willing to be hired and become some of Christ's special and domestic servants, shall receive of these talents to trade with.

2. O begin early, you young men, enter upon this trade in your youth, it is best and soonest learned then, and then you will have the longer experience, and the more time to grow rich and increase in heavenly treasure.

3. Take heed you do not begin in this trade without a stock of saving grace, or think you can manage this calling with a stock of simple morality, or only with common light and knowledge, or by improving your natural abilities for procuring the Spirit and grace of Christ. And you that are true Christians, mind well, and be sure follow this your general calling, and labour you do not go back. But to proceed.

" And so he that received the five talents came and brought with him other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverdest unto me five talents, behold I have gained besides them five talents more," ver. 20.

" He also that had received two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliverdest to me two talents, behold I have gained two other talents besides them," ver. 22.

" Then he which received the one talent, came and said, Lord, I knew thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed," ver. 24.

" And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth, lo, there is that is thine," ver. 25.

Note from hence.

Doct. That such who have received five talents, and two talents, do improve them, but he that received the one talent, improved it not.

I do not mean by this proposition (that lies clear to me in the text) that all true believers who have received most from God, or the greatest talents, do always improve them, proportionably above such who have received less light, knowledge, parts, &c., but that all who do receive the true and saving grace of God, light, and knowledge, do more or less improve those talents, or gain more, but that he that receives but one talent, never improves that one as he ought and might do. No man certainly hath received less than one talent.

1. I shall lay down several propositions, the better to open the nature of the talents.

2. I shall show what may be meant by five, and by two talents, and what by the one talent.

3. What may be meant by hiding of the one talent.

4. Why such may be said to hide that one talent.

1. Proposition. All talents, as I hinted, are of two sorts, earthly or heavenly, temporal or spiritual, common or special.

2. Proposition. That the two talents, and the five, though they differ in quantity, yet I conceive they do not in quality ; for both these servants, or all signified by him that had the five, and him that had the two, were faithful servants, and were saved ; now the same grace, the same faith, the same knowledge, as to kind that one true believer hath, all have ; hence the apostle Peter speaking of the faith of God's elect, calls it like faith. " To them who have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet.

i. 1. It is not like in respect of the degree or measure of it, but in respect to the kind or nature of it, and the object of it. All have true faith, unfeigned faith, faith that works by love, the faith of God's elect, and the faith of the operation of God ; by all these and other names is faith called, but some have but a weak faith, others a strong faith, some a little, and others a great faith ; so some good Christians have small knowledge, gifts and parts, in comparison of what some other good Christians and ministers have. Now these things being matter of fact, and well known to all God's people, as well as confirmed by his holy word, none need to doubt the truth thereof.

Moreover, will any dare to say, that a man to whom God never gave a stock or talent of saving faith, can by any power or improvement of the talent he hath, arrive unto eternal life ?

What the five and two talents are as to their nature.

Grace is of one and the same nature in all believers.

3. Proposition. That no man living, or ever lived upon the earth (to whom God gave talents) ever improved them to the utmost they might have done.

All the golly ever confessed how they have failed therein. Moreover, they that received the one talent, it is evident, did not improve it to the end it was given; and as many saints are signified by him that had the five talents, and many by him that had the two talents. So a multitude no doubt are signified by him that had the one talent, even all that eternally perish, and they are those who never received (nor may be never desired) the saving grace of God.

4. Proposit. That God gives more to them that are saved, than he gives to them that perish, and this I think is as fully intimated by our blessed Lord in this parable, of any thing whatsoever; if it is not partly one grand design of our Lord therein, and did he not indeed give more to, and do more for them that are saved (or for his elect) than for others, they would certainly perish with the rest of mankind; for such that are saved, who had the least given to them, had more than one single talent, or that talent which all men generally receive from God.

If therefore these talents do comprehend all mankind, and take in the special grace of God also, as our annotators declare they do, and other worthy expositors; then what I say, I am sure, cannot be denied, but that the things I have hinted in these previous propositions may be safely drawn from what is signified by the five, by the two, and by the one talent.

Secondly. Show what may be meant by the five and two talents.

1. I conceive by these talents are comprehended, even in the two and five, all things whatsoever that is the Lord's goods, or that grace, light, and saving knowledge, &c., given to all God's elect. Though some of the saints receive more of those precious things than others.

1. Some have greater grace, greater measures of knowledge, greater gifts both temporal and spiritual; some have much of the riches of this world, which they as good stewards improve from a principle of love to Christ, to the glory of God, and support of the gospel, the church and ministry of the gospel in the world, which will in the life to come be remembered and redomd to their account, as an act of God's free grace to them who will not "forget their work of faith, and labour of love," Heb. vi. 10.

2. Some of the saints are in greater places of trust, and in higher stations in the world and church also, as well as endowed with greater parts, gifts, and learning, and so are capacitated to do more for God, and bring greater glory to him, and profit to the souls of men, and good to the church of God. How useful have some ministers been in their day, what pains and labour did they take, and how have they been a blessing to the world and people of God!

3. He that received the one talent, (and all those signified in him) may be such that only received outward favours or temporal good things, together with common and external gifts, knowledge, parts and attainments of the like nature whatsoever, and which in respect of that different and peculiar talent of special grace, it may be partly called one talent. He having not talents of differing species, as all the true children of God have, viz., both common favours and saving grace also.

4. Therefore I conceive the one talent may in quantity be more or less; as for example, the Heathen (none will deny) have one talent, but they have not so great a one talent as such who have the outward ministration of the gospel, and all other advantages in a land of vision, besides the great natural and acquired parts, and learning some of them, may and do attain unto. Yet I say this may nevertheless be called but the one talent, being all but common endowments, common grace, gifts and knowledge, and not any of them having received the holy sanctifying Spirit of God, nor so much as one dram of saving grace.

5. And as I said, it appears that he that received the one talent, did not faithfully according to his ability improve his talent; so it may signify that no mere natural men (that have received that which is the least) do improve it as they might (or are able), and so may be condemned for not doing what they were empowered to do, or for wasting, hiding, and slighting the light and means of grace that was afforded them, under idle and frivolous pretensions, though the fullest improvement of one talent cannot bring any person into a state of grace or save him, because the seed of grace, (or the prime and original stock) must be first given, before there can be an exercise or an improvement made of it; and all know that without true faith in Christ and regeneration no man can be saved; and as evident it is that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither indeed

Christ gives more to, and does more for those that are saved than for those that perish.

industry of his own, but it must be given to him immediately from the Lord.

Object. It will then follow that no Heathen or Pagan can be saved?

1. Ans. That may be a great mistake, for some of the Heathen might hear of Jesus Christ, and have faith in him; by some means or another it might be revealed to them (though the light of nature cannot do it) and so receive more than the one talent.

2. Some that lived before Christ came, might converse with the Jews, or have knowledge of Moses' writings, as history makes appear many of them had, as well as the word of God shows the same thing.

3. It is said that there was among the Gentiles, women that prophesied of Christ's coming, and of his bloody passion, &c., that were called Sybils, (though some think what is said of them is fabulous).

4. Or might not God in some supernatural way (when he spoke in divers ways and manners unto the fathers) make Christ known unto them?

To conclude with this, certainly God will condemn men for not doing those things which he requires of them; and where the gospel comes, how do many slight it! and though "Light is come into the world, men love darkness rather than light," John iii. 19. And this our Saviour saith is the condemnation.

"And hid thy talent in the earth," &c., ver. 25.

In ver. 18 it is said, "He digged in the earth and hid his lord's money."

Quest. What may be meant by his digging in the earth, and hiding his lord's money?

Ans. Digging in the earth may signify his labouring "for the meat that perishes more than that meat which endureth to everlasting life," John vi. 27; or his minding earthly things, being more busy in pursuing after the world, than in improving that knowledge he had of divine things, or of the means of grace which God was pleased to afford him.

What may be meant by hiding his one talent.

2. Hiding his talent may also denote his concealing those convictions he might have in his conscience in respect of sin or of duty. Some men may be convinced of many sins they live in, and of their duty in closing with Christ and following him in a way of obedience, but they strive to stifle those convictions, and keep all in their own breast; and will not improve that light and knowledge they have, but wholly give way to earthly thoughts and to the temptations of Satan, and so dig in the earth rather than look up to heaven; and what is this less than a hiding their Lord's money? they will not declare to others what troubles, what fears, and terrifying thoughts they sometimes have had, concerning the state of their souls and of eternity, but strive to quench the motions of the Spirit, and so put out that fire that was kindled in their hearts, and will not make a profession of what they sometimes experienced God had done for them by the common influences of his Spirit and workings of their own awakened consciences.

3. Perhaps one great part of his talent lay in earthly riches, and that he laid up and refused to improve it by distributing according to his ability to the poor, and to support the interest of Christ. Some who have the one talent no doubt may be church members, and this way the young man mentioned in the gospel, hid his talent, who when our Lord bid him "sell all he had, and give it to the poor, and follow him, went away very sorrowful;" he hid his talent in the earth, and would not trade for heaven.

4. Or perhaps part of this one talent might lie in spiritual gifts and abilities, in the improvement of which he might have been useful to the church, or for the good of others, but he might utterly refuse to exercise those gifts, but hid or concealed them, and by pursuing with an inordinate warmth the things of the world, might hide his talent, if neither earthly riches or spiritual gifts are improved as God requires, they may be said to be hid.

5. Or perhaps God gives men much health and many precious opportunities to attend upon the means of grace, but out of love to their trades and secular affairs they spend all their time, health, and strength, about the things of this life, and though the word of God be preached daily but a few doors off where they live, yet they will not spare an hour or two in a whole week to attend upon the ministration thereof; and when they are told of their great neglect, they find one excuse or another, and so hide their Lord's money, or will not improve the talent God gave them.

Thirdly, Why do such who receive the one talent hide it?

1. Ans. No doubt but it may be from that multiplicity of earthly concerns that is in their hand, they have so much business of their own, and are carried away so much with self-love, that they can find no time to worship, obey, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of the world is in their heart, they can find no leisure time yet to think seriously of their immortal souls, and of eternal things.

From whence it is that some hide their talent.

2. They may hide their talent, because the fire burns too hot for them, I mean convictions are too strong, that have taken hold of their consciences, or that candle that is lighted, if they put it not under a bed, or quench the fire kindled in them, they fear they may come under reproach and be derided by their ungodly neighbours or company they used to keep, or perhaps they may foresee the fire will waste too much of the fuel, I mean their substance, perceiving religion may be too chargeable for them, and from hence are led by Satan to hide their talent.

3. By what our Saviour here intimateth in respect of this person's plea, one chief reason of his hiding of his talent, is upon a false apprehension of the blessed God; he confesseth he had not traded with his Lord's money, or had not improved his talent well: and what answer doth he give? what was the reason of his unfaithfulness? See what he says:

“And he said, Lord, I knew that thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sown, and gathering where thou hadst not strawed, and I was afraid and went and hid thy talent,” &c., vers. 24, 25.

He chargeth his Lord with the highest injustice, not only that he was an austere or a severe man, but a cruel and unreasonable man, for so much and no less is implied in his answer. Is not he a cruel and an unjust man, that would reap where he never sowed? this person seems to talk like an Arminian, some that hold those notions, argue much as this man doth. Thou dost expect that I shall improve what thou gavest me, and yet thou never didst give me thy saving grace, nor sowed the seed of it in thy heart, and all the improvement I can make of the talent thou hast given me, (I am told by thy servants) will not bring me to heaven, what should I labour to improve what I have, for, it will bring no saving profit to my soul? If thou hadst done for me as for some others, I should have done as they did, the fault is not in me, but if I perish, the cause is because thou didst not sow the seed of true grace and holiness in my heart.

But the answer his Lord gave him, may tend to silence him, and all free-willers in the world.

“His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reaped where I sowed not, and gathered where I have not strawed,—thou oughtest therefore to have put my mooney to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury,” ver. 26, 27.

1. What though God acts in a way of sovereignty, and gives more to one man than he gives unto another, yet ought not he that receives the smallest talent, or but one, to improve that one?

2. May not God require of man that which he hath lost, that power which originally he had? man had power to keep the law of perfect obedience, and it was by his own sin he became weak, and is made unable now perfectly to keep it; yet is it not his duty still to keep it? hath God lost his power to command, because man hath lost his power to obey? and because man cannot change his own heart, nor wash himself from his iniquity; can he not reform his ways, nor cry to God for help, and improve the means God directs to in order to faith and regeneration.

3. Or because God's elect are helped to believe and to obtain eternal life, shall any ungodly wretches have an excuse in the day of judgment to say, thou reapest where thou hast not sown, or requirest that of us thou gavest us no power to do? I tell you again, that all men are condemned for the breach of the law or covenant of works; and their slothfulness and neglect of improving the means and talent God hath afforded them, will aggravate their condemnation.

All men should labour to see themselves effectually called.

Contin. of Pool.

4. If God hath chosen some, all should strive to see that they are effectually called, for none can know that they were elected but by their being effectually called.

5. He that hath but one talent, is in a capacity to improve that one, and God commands him so to do, and for his non-improvement of it our Lord shows in this parable, he shall be cast into hell. “And cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness.” Take here what our learned annotators have said upon the answer of this person. The Lord of the unprofitable servant tells him that the fault lay in his own sloth and wickedness, and his dread of his Lord's severity was but a mere frivolous pretence, and unreasonable excuse; for if he had dreaded any such thing, he would have done what he could. And shall not God as justly another day reply upon those who think to excuse their lewd and wicked lives, their impeni-

tency and unbelief from their not being elected, not having power of themselves to repent and believe, nor receiving efficacious grace. O you wicked and slothful wretches, did you suspect or fear you were not elected, why then did you not give all diligence to make your calling and election sure? Do you plead the power of your own will to repent and believe, and that I did not give you special and effectual grace? But had you not a power to keep from taverns and ale-houses? and to keep from lying and swearing, and open profanation of my sabbaths? had you not power to read, to hear, and to pray, if you had to the uttermost used the talent I gave you, and I had been wanting in my further necessary influences of grace, ye might indeed have said something, but when you made no use of the talent you had, why should I trust you with more? Faith comes by hearing, reading, praying, you had power to improve these talents you had, if you took me to be so severe a master, why did you not do what was in your power to do? &c. Thus the annotators.

Wicked men do not improve the talent they have. He that is condemned at the great day, (it appears by what our Lord shows in this parable) will be charged with this, they do not use the means, nor cry to God for faith, to enable them to believe; but sin against the light of their consciences, and hate the light, or love darkness rather than the light, and this will be their condemnation.

APPLICATION.

1. **Reproof.** This reproves such that say, the one talent is saving grace, **Reproof.** or of the same species with those who are sincere believers, or the two, or the five, and if indeed it was so as they affirm, then all men in the world have saving grace, because there are none that have less than one talent, and then it also follows God hath no special love to one man more than another, and then also mere natural men have power to "receive the things of the Spirit, and they can discern them," and yet the apostle says, they cannot; and then also salvation would not be of God's free grace, but of man's free will.

2. **Exhort.** Be stirred up every soul of you, to a diligent improvement of the means of grace, and of the talents you have received. Have you the gospel? have you gospel sermons and gospel seasons? have you convictions? have you knowledge, have you gifts, labour to improve them; for know, God will leave all men without any excuse at the great day.

Be exhorted from hiding your talents.

FOR MOTIVES TO EXCITE.

1. By hiding your talent you will show, that either you are ashamed or afraid to own and confess Jesus Christ, or else that you have earthly hearts, and are idle and slothful persons in spiritual matters; and either of these show the badness and baseness of your hearts.

2. God also by this means loseth that glory which he expected from you, in bestowing those talents upon you. We should remember that the talents are given to trade with that we may bring honour unto God, and profit to ourselves and to others also. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matt. v. 16. Though we can add nothing to God's essential glory, yet we may predicate and manifest his glory, and the glory of his rich grace in us.

3. Otherwise also you will be great losers, for the profit of improvement will redound to you. "He that is righteous, is righteous for himself." Properly God receives nothing of us, the more thou gainest by trading, the richer thou wilt be, the more rich in faith, rich in love, and rich in good works, and more rich in experiences, and the more joy, and comfort, and peace of conscience thou wilt find.

4. Hereby also others will receive the more profit by thee; the world suffers loss by the non-improvement of those talents the servants of Christ have received; how can we be the lights of the world, if we hide our candle under a bushel, or put it under a bed? they that are in the house will have no light by it, which is indeed to go about to frustrate the very end and design of our heavenly Father in lighting our candle.

5. Besides consider, that hereby thou wilt appear to be a faithful servant of Christ, and not a slothful and idle person, and thou wilt also have the more faith to live on in "the day of need," Heb. iv. 16. "Thou knowest not what evil may be in the earth," Eccl. xi. 2; thou mayest be taken off of thy trading. "The ant gathers her food in the summer," Prov. vi. 6, else how should she live in winter? These opportunities

of improving thy talents may fail, our day may be darkened, and dismal storms may soon rise, and our spiritual trade be obstructed by our enemies.

6. If you hide your talents, you will certainly be undone, you will come to utter beggary; "For so shall thy poverty come upon thee as one that travaileth, and thy want as an armed man," Prov. vi. 11. What is the fruit of idleness but shame and poverty? Such shall beg at harvest, and have nothing.

7. Moreover, consider, thou art but a steward of thy master's goods, and shalt be called to an account when he comes, and the non-improvement of thy talent will bring eternal destruction upon thy soul; he will say, "Take the unprofitable servant, and cast him into utter darkness," &c., ver. 30. You will certainly one day repent the non-improvement of your time, your health, your treasure, your opportunities, your gifts, your light and knowledge, or whatsoever God hath bestowed upon you, and expects the improvement of.

SERMON XXXI.

And after a long time the Lord of those servants comes and reckoneth with them.—Matt. xxv. 19.

Christ will judge all men at the last day.

THIS coming of our Lord refers to his coming the second time, and it also shows, that when he appears, he will call all men to an account, or judge the whole world.

1. And now that our Saviour will come again the second time, we have fully proved in opening of the precedent parable, no one truth is more clearly confirmed in the word of God.

Also we have showed how, or after what a glorious manner he will appear, and pray observe, that when Christ comes, our working time will be over, the harvest then will be ended, the servants shall then receive their rewards; "He will reward every one according as his work shall be," Rev. xxii. 12. "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," Rom. xiv. 10.

Note also. That though Christ will come again, yet it seems long before he comes. "After a long time the Lord of these servants comes."

1. It seems long to the world, even so long that many say in their hearts, that he will never come again.

2. Also the time seems long to the saints, who love him, and long for his appearance, especially to such who are persecuted and in great tribulation; and the slothful servant by this means says, my Lord delays his coming. But come he will, and when he comes the godly will rejoice with exceeding great joy, it will be a happy day to them, but be a dismal day to the wicked, and to all idle and slothful servants; they do not desire that day, no, they have abused his mercies, and contemned his grace, and wasted his goods, he will come "in flaming fire," 2 Thess. i. 8; to all such, to take vengeance upon them, and let out his fierce wrath. "Sinners in Sion then will be afraid, fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites," Isa. xxxiii. 14.

U S E.

What do you think concerning the coming of Christ? do you love to hear of it? if you are true Christians, you believe he will come; but do you long for his coming, and are you prepared for that day? do you pray for his coming? do you say, come Lord Jesus, come quickly?

Do you expect to be called to an account when our Lord comes? he will reckon with all his servants; you will be asked how you have improved your time, your strength, your wealth, your parts, your gifts and your graces; be persuaded to manage things so well now, and make such improvement of the talents you have to his glory, that you may be willing to give up your accounts to him: and this brings to the next words,

"And so he that had received five talents, came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverest to me five talents, behold I have gained other five talents more." ver. 20.

"He also that had received the two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliverest to me two talents, behold I have gained other two talents besides them," &c., ver. 22.

We my note from hence,

1 Doct. That Jesus Christ hath some faithful servants.

2 Doct. That a faithful servant of Christ freely acknowledgeth all things whatsoever he hath received of Jesus Christ.

What every true Christian hath received, he owns, and is ready to acknowledge it; Lord, thou gavest me my precious soul, endued me with reason, wisdom and *Deut. iv. 9.* knowledge, and gavest me the charge of it, to keep it with utmost diligence, and to see it well clothed, fed, healed, cleansed, sanctified, adorned, refreshed and comforted; thou gavest me the riches of the world, and much health, and many children; and thou gavest me the gospel, and a gracious ministration thereof; thou gavest me many gifts, and many choice graces, thou gavest me a time of great gospel light, and sweet liberty to worship thee, thou gavest me a great dignity and honour in thy house, thou gavest me many precious promises and blessed ordinances, I was placed in a high station among thy people.

Whatever they have received, they readily confess and acknowledge it to the Lord Jesus; his Lord and he agree in their accounts, he is charged with receiving five talents, and says, Lord thou deliverest to me five talents. Some now are not ready to confess what talents they have received, no, but seem to lessen them, as if they had not that time, that strength, that wisdom, that wealth, and those advantages and opportunities of doing good, and of serving Christ, his people and interest, as indeed they have; and this gives great ground to fear that they are not faithful servants. Again,

I have gained besides them five talents.

Note—2. Doct. That a faithful servant of Christ is ready to produce the increase, as well as the principle stock first received.

In speaking to this,—1. I shall show what may be meant by gaining five and two talents more.

2. Apply it.

1. It may denote an equal improvement of every particular talent; he had not only improved one talent, and omitted to trade with and improve another, to the honour of his great Master; no, but he had improved every one which he had received; not only his temporal or earthly good things, but his spiritual good things; and not only his spiritual good things likewise: he was not only faithful in much, but in that also which was the least. Some perhaps may improve their spiritual gifts, be ready to instruct others in spiritual things, and help them that way, nay, may be they are very forward to be preachers, none perhaps have greater zeal that way than they; but God having given them also a talent of earthly riches to improve, or a considerable portion of the good things of this world, but that they improve not; no, though the ministers of Christ and the poor want, they pretend they cannot give, cannot spare their money, no, that they keep for themselves, and convert it all to their own use; now these discover they are unfaithful servants, every talent proportionably is not improved.

A faithful servant of Christ improves every particular talent he hath received.

And in like manner another may be ready to improve a talent which he hath received, the improvement of which not exposing him to any outward loss, but he having the word of God to attend upon, and the talent of time and opportunity to attend thereon, and strength and ability to visit the sick, or look after the concerns of the church; but that talent he has no heart to improve, pretends he cannot spare his time: as if his time was not his Lord's goods, and chiefly to be taken up in his service, to his honour, and to the good and profit of his people; now this manifesteth the baseness of the man's heart; if he hath five talents given him, he would never gain other five, viz., equally improved every one, and make them double, or at leastwise make great increase, satisfactory increase of each in particular.

Quest. Wherein doth the gain by his improving his talents consist?

Ans. In three or four things.

1. They gain for themselves. (1.) They gain more spiritual knowledge; by exercise they increase in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2.) In their gifts. (3.) In grace; they make their small faith to become a great faith, they gain also more love, more patience, more meekness, and more humility; they "add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity," 1 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. In these things they abound, and in these things their gain consists. (4.) They also gain double experiences of God in all his ways, ordinances, and providences.

Wherein Christ's faithful servants double their talents.

2ndly, Others also gain by them. (1.) They that want spiritual strength, spiritual comfort, are both strengthened and comforted by "them with the same comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God," 2 Cor. i. 4. Others receive an equal portion of comforting, by improving their stock. (2.) They that want light, being very ignorant of God and of Christ, they by improving their knowledge in instructing them, gain perhaps in a little time as good an understanding as themselves, may, perhaps do exceed them through God's blessing their endeavours. (3.) Others who are poor and want the good things of the world, gain a comfortable supply of whatsoever they need, by their free contributing to them out of the talent or stock they received; and to others they perhaps lend five, ten, twenty, or a hundred pounds, and so put some in such a way to live, that in a few years they grow as rich as they themselves, and so their talent is just doubled.

3rdly, God also by the improvement of their talents gains honour to his great name. (1.) This is done when by their means many poor souls are gained to Christ by their holy doctrine, and holy lives and conversations. (2.) When by their means religion is commended, gains honour and reputation in the world. (3.) When the church of God by the care and faithfulness of his servants, is increased, preserved in love, unity and sweet concord, and flourishes in all the fruits of righteousness. O what glory doth hereby redound unto God! (1.) When by your holy and shining conversations the mouths of such that scoff at religion are stopped. "For so is the will of God that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," 1 Pet. ii. 15. Christ's servants by carrying it wisely towards all men, submitting to every ordinance of man not repugnant to the word of God, and in living godly and pious lives, bring double honour unto God; for, 1. They hereby stop the mouths of some; and, 2. Are instruments to convert others. (5.) Hereby also they gain a double reward to themselves at the great day; for according to every servant's improvements of his talents, our Lord shows such shall his honour be when his Lord cometh.

APPLICATION.

1. We infer from hence, that true grace is of a most excellent nature, it is a fruitful seed; for in whomsoever it is sown, if cherished, it brings forth plentifully.

2. This also shows that such who are sincere and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, they equally improve every talent which they are entrusted with, they will not offer unto the Lord that which cost them nothing, but do honour the Lord with their substance; their time, their strength, and their wealth, is all improved to the honour of God, and the good of his people.

3. We also infer, that according to the quality and quantity of those talents we have received, Christ looks for our improvement of them; he that hath received five, it is not enough to trade with two or three of them, and never improve the other; no, every one according to the nature of it must be laid out and used for the honour of our blessed Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Let churches from hence learn to take notice who they are that have received any considerable talent, and observe whether they do faithfully improve them, whether their talents consist in spiritual or earthly good things. Moreover, if they find some do not do it, they ought to lay their sin before them, and labour to convince them of their evil, and if they persist in a continual neglect after all due means used, they ought to deal with them for their unfaithfulness to Christ and to his people; is it not strange that none are brought under a church censure for the horrible sin of covetousness; is there any instance in this case to be given? Certainly either there are no members of our congregations herein guilty, or else there hath been too palpable omissions of the discharge of duty herein.

5. Moreover, it may severely tend to reprove those ministers and churches who have profitable gifts among them, which if called out to the exercise of those gifts and talents, might be a great blessing to the churches, and interest of Christ in the present and future time: why were these ministerial gifts and talents given? were they not to the end Christ might by them receive glory, and the church and souls of men profit, perhaps the evil does not lie in the persons themselves; for they may say, would you have us impose ourselves or our gifts upon the church, or run before we are sent; we must be tried, and have the regular call of the church, before we undertake to preach; besides, no man is a competent judge of his own abilities for the ministry.

6. We may also perceive from hence how acceptable and well pleasing a thing it is in the eyes of our blessed Lord, to see every one of his servants to improve their respective talents, to the end he gave them.

Churches re-
proved that
call not out
such that
have received
ministerial
gifts to
exercise
them to the
honour of
Christ.

“Well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” ver. 23.

See the high commendation Christ gives to these servants, “good and faithful servant.” None is originally, essentially, and perfectly good but God alone, goodness here refers to a man’s sincerity and serviceableness; he that is a faithful, true and laborious servant, we call a good servant, in contradistinction to a slothful and evil servant. It is said “Barnabas was a good man.” &c., Acts xi. 24. That is a very sincere and godly man, one full of zeal and of the Holy Ghost. The acceptableness of the uttermost improvement of our talents in Christ’s sight appears.

1. In that commendation he gave him in calling him a good and faithful servant.

2. In that he makes him ruler over many great things, that had only been faithful over a few things; the Lord Jesus hath not made our burden under the gospel hard; no, his burden is light comparatively to the hearing of the duty and ordinances under the law. O what a multitude of statutes, laws, and ordinances were given to the Jews and Jewish church! and this will tend to aggravate their sin, who refuse to obey the Lord Christ in some of those few things required of us then.

3. In letting him into his Master’s joy; for though it was not the faithfulness of the servant that gave him a title, and entrance into this joy, yet Christ takes his faithful obedience as well, as if he had procured thereby a title to heaven; nay, perhaps more kindly, because it was love to his master, and respect to his name and glory, that was the great motive of his obedience and faithfulness.

“Ruler over many things.” Note from hence,

Doct. That Christ make his saints and faithful servants rulers, yea, rulers over many things.

When the saints shall be rulers. 1. They shall reign and rule with Jesus Christ; the government of all the earth shall be given to the saints; they shall not only a thousand years inherit the earth; but shall be kings and rulers. “And thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth,” Rev. v. 10. And again it is said, “And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years,” Rev. xx. 4. Over many things, i. e., Over many nations, and over many people. “A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall decree justice.” Compare these scriptures with that in Daniel. “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him,” Dan. vii. 27.

Some think that all the kingdoms of the earth shall be given to the saints before Christ comes. No doubt but there will be a glorious state of the church in the last days, that now draw very near, and will commence at the sounding of the seventh trumpet; but the peaceable and universal reign will not be until the king comes; for Daniel and all the saints that are fallen asleep, shall have their lot in rule, government, reign and glory of the kingdom of our blessed Lord.

“Enter into the joy of thy Lord!”

The joy of our Lord is too great to enter into us, and therefore we shall enter into that. It is our Master’s joy: (1.) That joy he hath procured for us, through his sorrow and sufferings. (2.) It is his, because given and granted to us by the Lord Christ; it is he that hath the only power to give it. (3.) It may be called our Master’s joy, because to its nature or quality, it will be the same he now himself swims in, or is possessed with, and filled full of, viz., heavenly joy. (1.) It will be great joy as it is heavenly, so it will be exceeding great, even joy unspeakable and full of glory. (2.) It will be soul-satisfying, and soul-ravishing joy. (3.) It will be unmixed joy, joy without sorrow, and light without darkness. (4.) It will be everlasting joy: “they shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing shall fly away,” Isa. xxxv. 10. O who is able to conceive, much less to express the nature or greatness and sweetness of the joys of heaven!

U S E.

1. What fools are those poor wretches, who are so much taken with, and delighted in earthly joys, which as they are but for a moment, so they are full of mixture of sorrow and misery, and can give no person ease and satisfaction.

2. But what fools are they then who value the joys of heaven, and resolve they will not part with their brutish lusts, though they never taste of the joys of our Lord, but expose their souls to eternal pain and sorrow in hell.

3. May not the joys of our Lord provoke us his servants to be very faithful and industrious in his service? No doubt but this was left on record on purpose to be a motive

to press us to holy diligence, and faithfulness in the work of the Lord, our labour shall not be in vain. O what wonderful rewards will the rewards of grace be! Certainly there are none wise but such who contemn the glory of this world, and all the vain and sinful joys and delights thereof; they that have tasted how good the Lord is, or have tasted of heaven, cannot but prefer the blessed God above ten thousand worlds. Whom have I in heaven but thee? neither is there any on earth that I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25.

4. Be exhorted ye that are Christ's servants not to faint in your minds, nor be discouraged, though you meet with sorrow here; "For your sorrow will be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you," John xvi. 20, 22. Your sorrows are but for a moment, but your joys will be for ever, and the greater sorrows you meet with in this world for Christ's sake, or bear patiently to his praise, the greater and sweeter will your joy be hereafter.

5. What folly then are they guilty of, that hide their talent in the earth! they choose to trade for the earth rather than heaven; that talent that should be improved for the good of their souls they hide in the earth.

SERMON XXXII.

His Lord said, well done good and faithful servant, &c.—Matt. xxv. 21.

WE are not a little pleased when our parents say, well done my good child, or a master says, well done good and faithful servant, but what is it then to have the praise of Christ.

Note. Doct. That the consideration of Christ's commendation of his servants faithfulness, should move the hearts of all his servants to holy diligence and faithfulness in improving their talents.

Quest. What talents ought they with their uttermost care and faithfulness to improve.

Ans. I answer:

Time ought to be improved.

I. The talent of time. Time is a most precious thing, which God bestows upon all, though to some a larger talent of time than others.

Time may be considered as twofold.

1. Time itself.

2. The opportunity of time.

1. The time of youth. Some have the time of their youthful days, though others have lost that time and cannot recall it, and now mourn to think how foolishly they wasted and consumed those precious days, without bringing glory unto God, or reaping profit and comfort to their own souls, but contrariwise greatly dishonoured their blessed Lord and Master.

I have showed in opening of another parable, how the time of youth should be improved. God calls for this time. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come," &c., Eccl. xii. 1. Of all persons, such who improve the days of their youth, are accepted of the Lord Jesus Christ. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me," Prov. viii. 17.

2ndly. The time of health. Before sickness and bodily distempers take hold of us; many have by sickness, lameness, or one distemper or another, been taken off, being in no capacity to attend upon the word and means of grace. Moreover, experience shows how unable in sickness and under pains and diseases, we are to dedicate ourselves to the work and service of Christ, or to discharge the duties of religion; we have then enough to do to bewail ourselves, and to bear up under our infirmities, therefore whilst health and strength lasteth, we should, with all our might, do whatsoever the Lord requires of us.

Secondly, the opportunity of time should be improved.

We have many opportunities allowed us, or particular seasons and advantages put into our hand. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, he seeing he hath no heart to it?" Prov. xvii. 16. Why have we so many opportunities to attend upon the ministry of the word, who have no heart to lay our earthly business aside, and diligently wait upon God in those opportunities. O how would some in other nations rejoice, and prize such seasons which in and about this city have afforded us, nay, many poor hungry souls in some dark corners

The opportunity of time must be improved.

of this kingdom would not a little rejoice could they be entrusted with this talent; some go six, nay, ten miles to hear a sermon, and yet cannot perhaps have such opportunities but once in a month, while we have them every day in the week; but alas, alas, many will not go out of their houses, nor leave their earthly concerns for one hour in the week, though the word is preached very near their dwellings; I am afraid this sort will not be able to give a good account to their Lord when he comes, about their improving of this talent; they shew that they hunger not for "The word of God, nor rejoice at it as one that finds great spoil," Psal. exix. 162; as holy David did; neither do they prize a meeting with Christ, or communion with Christ in his ordinances; for hath he not promised to be in the midst of them that are met together in his name," Matt. xviii. 20. Besides, they consider not what reproach hereby they cast upon the worship of God, and what grief they bring upon his people, especially his ministers; they are commanded to preach the word out of season as well as in season; and is it not, my brethren, your duty as much to hear it out of season, as ours to preach it? and do you not hereby shew to all that you prefer the gain of the word. Alas, man knows not his time, he considers not the worth of time, nor knows how short his time may be; he may also perhaps have a heart to improve opportunities of time hereafter, when he may not have opportunities to improve: they might learn more wisdom by the children of men. Husbandmen improve the time of sowing and the time of reaping; tradesmen observe their fairs and markets, and merchants their exchange time; nay, the bees and ants observe the time to labour, and provide in summer against the winter. If men lose the proper seasons and opportunities of improvements, in vain do they think to thrive.

Thirdly, Every man and woman should labour to improve the helps God affords them to the great end of glorifying God. (1.) The dictates and convictions of their consciences. (2.) The reproofs of his Holy Spirit. May be conscience accuses and convinces a man of this or that sin he hath committed, and the Spirit under the word severely reproofs them also, and yet they neglect, slight, and quench the Spirit, and seek to stifle their own consciences, which to do is an abominable evil, and dangerous also; for if those convictions go off, it may be long before they find them again: when a fire is almost gone quite out, it may cost much pains and blowing before it kindle again. A mariner, if he loseth a fair wind, he may lose his voyage.

The convictions of the conscience, and the movings of the Spirit of God should be improved.

Fourthly, all that light, knowledge and those gifts God hath given to us, we must improve, wherefore are these talents given? but this I have spoken largely to in opening another parable.

Fifthly, Are you intrusted with a portion of the good things of this world? you have heard this talent God expects that you should improve to his glory, and to the carrying on and supporting his interest in the world, and also his ministers and poor members, that which they are to have, he hath put it into your hands, and made you his stewards of it, and if you fail or be unfaithful in the discharging your duties, so that the cause of God languisheth in your hands, his poor ministers discouraged, wanting what is necessary, and his poor want bread to eat; you will have a sad account one day to give to your great Master. "Will a man rob God?" Mal. iii. 8. Methinks that high commendation Christ gives his faithful servants, should set you on fire to do your utmost in distributing your Lord's money to his children that need it; "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Sixthly, The talent of special grace, nay, every grace of the Spirit, must be improved.

Grace must be improved.

1. Indeed grace is the chiefest talent, the best of our Master's goods, and it is a talent also (you have heard) which he doth not intrust all men with; no, none but such he hath a particular or special love unto. Brethren,

Our faith and other graces may be but small or weak at first, but by a due improving of them, they may in time grow strong, and flourish in our souls. Paul observed after what a precious manner the faith of the saints at Thessalonica grew: "we are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you towards each other aboundeth," 2 Thess. i. 3.

The way how grace comes to grow, may be twofold.

(1.) By God's infusing new degrees of it, or further measures, and so adding to the first stock.

(2.) By their daily exercise, for that way grace is augmented, and grows in believers also: indeed he that improves the grace he hath, God hath promised to give more grace unto: "But he giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth

grace to the humble," Jam. iv. 6. Such shall be helped to mortify sin, to resist Satan's temptations, and to discharge acceptably all religious duties, and to bear all reproaches and heavy burdens for Christ's sake.

2. But by the non-improvement of grace, that which we have may be much spent and wasted.

3. Consider, what great advantages we have in order to growth in grace; what fruitful seasons, fruitful shinnings, and fruitful showers; the sun approacheth near, and shines hot on us, beyond what it doth may be on thousands. And God affording such seasons of grace, expecteth suitable improvements of grace: "what could have been done more to my vineyard which I have not done in it?" Isa. v. 4.

4. We had better have loss, waste, and decay in our earthly substance a thousand times, than to waste or decay in grace, zeal and holiness: also a saint may so far decline or decay in faith and other graces, that he may fear he hath not one dram of it left in him, and so fall under great darkness and despondency as to cry out with Job, "my hope is cut off."

5. Moreover, according to our growth and increase in grace, will our peace, joy and consolation be; would you lose that through slothfulness and neglect of improvement of your strength and time, and opportunities in one year, that you did not arrive at until many years passed over your heads?

Quest. What hinders our growth in grace?

Pet. ii. 11.

1. Ans. Giving way to those fleshly lusts that war against the soul; also a neglect of a holy and diligent watch over our own hearts, or not endeavouring to mortify sin, but let the weeds of vain thoughts lodge in us, greatly tends to the decay of faith, and weakens all grace in our souls.

2. By letting earthly things take up too much room in our hearts, by giving way to inordinate desires after riches or about the cares of this world.

3. By grieving the Holy Spirit, by which means he may withdraw his sweet influences, whereby all grace is strengthened. Indeed, no grace can thrive when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from a poor believer.

4. Or it may be through neglect of prayer, hearing the word, meditation, and Christian converse: can the babe grow that refuseth the breast? we should "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2.

5. By preferring worldly gain above spiritual gain and profit; a little of the world will not satisfy some professors; no, they can be better satisfied with a little faith, a little zeal for God, a little holiness, than with a little gold and silver. God from hence may blast them in their gifts, and cause their grace to decay. When men do not increase in their bounty to God's people, he lets them decay and wither in their souls, and sometimes in their trades and estates also.

Quest. How should all our talents be improved?

1. With uttermost care and diligence; "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," Eccl. ix. 10, &c. It is said that Mary did what she could; it is the diligent hand that maketh rich: through slothfulness the evil servant failed, and his unfaithfulness consisted partly in his negligence.

2. According to the degree and measure every one hath received, (as before I shewed you,) he that hath five talents must improve those five, and he that hath received two must improve those two, and he that hath received one, must improve that one.

3. All the talents we have received, must be improved so as to answer the end for which they were given.

(1.) To the honour and glory of God, this is the first and main end why God gave talents to his servants.

(2.) To the good of others, even the good of all men, but especially the people of God.

Hast thou the true knowledge of God in a greater degree or measure of it than others, thou must not conceal or hide this talent, but when opportunity presents thou must speak for God. Perhaps,

1st. Thou mayst be cast where some may make violent opposition against some main truths of Christ, or points of faith, and thou art by: now if thou holdest thy peace and let the truth suffer, and yet art able to maintain and defend it, thou mayest be deemed to hide thy talent; therefore then thou must stand up for thy Master's cause, and with all wisdom plead for that truth thou seest is opposed, and neither be afraid or ashamed though it may be to thy outward loss; shall truth suffer through thy silence?

2ndly, or thou mayst be cast among poor ignorant persons, who know not Jesus Christ, and if thou seest they are willing to be informed, thou must improve thy talent to their in-

struction and profit ; but be sure thou dost it in all sincerity of heart, in love to God and to their precious souls, and not to be taken notice of, or to get applause of men, or out of vain glory.

3rdly, Let it be our care to instruct the ignorant, and to reduce such, if possible, that are gone astray, and led into errors, or corrupted with heresy ; and also,

4thly, to strengthen those that are weak, and confirm the feeble-minded, and such that are wavering.

5thly, To succour such that are tempted or in trouble.

6thly, To comfort such that are dejected or cast down in their spirits.

7thly, To encourage the fearful in a day of persecution. And

8thly, To reprove backbiters and tale-bearers, and rebuke the unruly and such that go on impudently in sin and ungodly courses.

9thly. To do what lies in us to quicken the slothful, and exhort them to their duties, and in all things to seek the peace and good of that church where God hath set us, that God in all things may be glorified.

Thirdly. We must so improve our talents, that we may be ready to give up our accounts with joy, that we may hear our blessed Lord say to us when he comes ; " Well done, good and faithful servants."

U S E.

This tends to reprove all such that never consider what talents they are which they have received, neither regard the due improvement of them.

Also it reproves such that are slothful or negligent in their duties, or barren persons, or like Israel of old, " empty vines, that bring forth fruit to themselves ;" as if their time, strength, knowledge, wealth, and all they are entrusted with, was their own, and should never be called to an account about the improvement or non-improvement of them.—

But to proceed.

" Then he which had received the one talent, came and said, Lord, I knew that thou wert an hard man," &c., ver. 24. " And I was afraid, and hid thy talent, so there thou hast that is thine," ver. 25.

" And his Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant," &c., ver. 26.

Note from hence.

Doct. That he that improveth not that talent God gave him, but hideth it, is a wicked and slothful servant, he is charged with slothfulness.

In speaking of this I shall do two things.

1. Show wherein the wickedness of this servant consisteth.

2. Give you the character of a slothful person.

1. He is a wicked person, and part of his wickedness lies in his slothfulness. All men in the whole world are of two sorts, godly or wicked, good or bad, believers or unbelievers. Also Christ's domestic servants, those of his own house are also of two sorts, either faithful or slothful servants, wise or foolish, sheep or goats, wheat or tares.

2. The wickedness of the slothful servant lies in hiding his talent in the earth, viz., in his earthliness, or in preferring outward or external things above those things that are spiritual and eternal, or in loving this world above the love and favour of God.

3. In his charging God with injustice, or being hard and cruel, laying the cause of their destruction upon God himself, in commanding them to do that which they have no power to do ; whereas the Holy God showeth that he will pass the sentence against them for their non-improving the talent he gave unto them.

" Thou knewest that I reaped where I sowed not."

It is spoken ironically ; well, if this were so, yet shall I therefore not reap where I did sow ? It is the genius of wicked men to have hard thoughts of God, and to lay the blame of their miscarriages upon God himself ; " I should do better if God would but give me grace:" such seem to dread injustice in God rather than his justice, whereas God could as soon cease to be, as cease to be just and righteous.

4. Ironical reprehensions, or rebukes of God set forth, is dreadful displeasure ; Can the blessed Jesus bear the falsehood or misrepresentations of wicked men ? " Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them (that is thy sins) in order before thine eyes.—Now consider this ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you," Psal. l. 21, 22.

5. The wickedness of unfaithful or slothful servants consisteth in their slighting the

Lord Jesus Christ through their unreasonable unbelief: "Ye have said it is vain to serve God, and what profit is it we have kept his ordinances?" &c., Mal. iii. 14. They think all that is done in the service of God is lost labour, neither bringing profit to God, nor any to themselves; better sit still, or hide our talents, and do nothing, than to do it to no purpose:—"Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not, wherefore have we afflicted our souls?" &c., Isa. lviii. 3. They complain (like this wicked servant) of hard usage from God, though they did nothing in a right manner, from a right spirit or principle, not to a right end, yet would be rewarded for the base and hypocritical services they had done.

Had the wicked servant believed what his great Master had done, and rested wholly upon him, or believed in him, though there was no reward for his own work, yet love to his Lord would have engaged his heart, and drawn him forth to have done his uttermost to the glory and honour of his blessed Master. The more severe wicked men apprehend God is, the more careful and strict they should be to improve their time and talents; for if they look upon him as a hard man, or a usurer, they might from thence learn to bring him the more increase, so that out of their own mouths they will be condemned. What have they such thoughts of Christ, and yet trade not at all, but return back only the principal stock? "Take that which is thine."

Quest. How can a sinner give or restore that to Christ he received of him. Answ. Here lies an absolute disparity, a disparity in this parable, and not only in this, but also in some other things, it runs not on all four. For though it is true, a servant among men may return the principal stock back to his Lord, of which he made no improvement, yet sinners cannot be said thus to do; for they like the prodigal (as they improve not what they have) so they waste what was first delivered to them.

6. The wickedness of this servant consisted in saying in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, (as our Saviour shows in another place;) this wicked person certainly thought his Lord would never come again, he being so long gone. Now this is an abominable evil, considering the repeated promises our Saviour has made of his second coming; it is indeed to charge Christ with breach of his promise, and his word not to be believed.

Secondly, How may a slothful and wicked servant be known?

Ans. 1. By his negligence in and about the Lord's work; he is a wicked servant that basely omits or neglects the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and has his heart much more set upon his own worldly business; he cries I have business of great moment to do, I cannot come, I have bought five yoke of oxen, I must go and prove them; and another saith, I have bought a farm, and I must needs go and see it. And, saith a third, I have married a wife, (one perhaps that is an enemy to religion) and I cannot come.

2. He is such a person whose heart is wicked, he being never changed or renewed by the Spirit of God; and therefore one that remains in the old nature, having enmity in his carnal mind against God, Rom. viii. 7, being filled with uncleanness, and covetousness, whose god is his belly, and that glories in his shame, minding earthly things, Phil. iii. 19; every wicked servant is not to the like degree openly profane. For some of Christ's domestic servants; such, I mean, that are members of the visible church, are wicked and slothful servants; yet these are more close and secretly wicked, and some of them not known or discerned to be such persons, yet they may be partly discovered by their proud, niggardly and covetous tempers, and by their neglect of the most hard and most difficult part and duties of religion, being not indeed and in truth what they profess to be, nor the same abroad and in the closet, which they are thought, or taken to be by some, if not generally by all, yet their idle, slothful disposition manifesteth they are wicked persons.

Quest. How is that known?

1. A slothful person is soon weary; if you set him on work, he is tired presently, he takes no delight in his work, and thus we find God complains of some, "Ye said also, Behold, what weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this at your hands? saith the Lord," Mal. i. 13. It seems to me, that which made them weary of God's service, was partly the great charge that attended his altars and sanctuary, they would not bring the best of their flock and herd, and therefore saith the Lord; "Cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing," ver. 14.

Thus some in God's house grow weary of his service, the charge is too great for their carnal hearts, and though they offer the lame and the blind, I mean some small matter,

yet they are weary in doing so much; they can keep good tables, and clothe themselves and children in rich clothing, and spend pounds idly on unnecessary occasions, but one shilling once in the week to Christ is too much, they are weary, and so render themselves wicked and slothful servants.

Secondly, A slothful servant neglects his vineyard and his fields: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding—and lo it was all over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof," Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.

Just thus it is with a wicked and slothful servant of Christ, or one that professeth himself so to be, he neglects his own vineyard, I mean his own heart, he labours not to mortify his sins and inordinate lusts and desires, but lets the weeds and nettles of corruption grow therein, and earthly thoughts are given way to, also he neglects praying, hearing, and meditation, alas, he has no time for such duties, his own business is so great that lies on his hands; and this shows that he is a wicked and slothful servant.

A slothful professor neglects his heart, neglects mortification, &c.

3rdly. A sluggard or slothful person is ready to make many excuses, and small matters hinder him from attending upon the worship of God.

"The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets." He dreams of danger when none is near; what lion or devil should hinder us from attending upon our Lord's works? But this is indeed a ground to fear, a lion hath got hold of him, *i. e.*, Satan by his temptations is too hard for him, but this lion he sees not; no, it is a lion of another nature which he fears.

A slothful servant makes frivolous excuses.

4thly. A slothful person's endeavours are not agreeable to his desires: "The desires of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour, he coveteth greedily all the day long," &c., Prov. xxi. 25, 26. He is a man of desires, but no man of endeavours; his desire torments him almost to death, whilst he passionately desires that peace and satisfaction which he hath not, nor is ever likely to find, unless his mind was changed; he desires inward joy, and fain would be saved. "Let me die the death of the righteous, let my last end be like his," but he will take no pains to procure what he desires, nor improve the means to so great an end. And this his idleness exposeth him to want, and so to death; it will kill him at last, or be the cause of his damnation. "He coveteth greedily all the day long." If desires, wishes, and wouldings would procure what he wants without endeavours, he would be a happy man; he is not like David. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after," &c., Psal. xxvii. 4. He did not desire it only, but he resolved that his endeavours should be according to his desires; and thus the prophet Isaiah speaketh also, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night," Isaiah xxvi. 9. Well, was that all? Did he only desire God? No, see his next words. "And with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early," most affectionately and sincerely, and also timely; he desired and longed for the Lord and his endeavours were suitable to his desires; and thus the spouse acted also. She desired her beloved, and she rose to seek him, and never rested until she had found him; but this a slothful person does not, and as his endeavours are not for Christ; so also his desires are not after Christ neither; no, but only after salvation; he would be saved, but loves not the Saviour so much as he loves the world; he is for the portion, but cares not for the person.

A slothful person desires, but his endeavours are not agreeable to his desires.

Can. v. 5, 6.

5thly. A slothful person cries, "Yet a little more sleep, yet a little slumber," Prov. vi. 6. Just thus some professors cry in their hearts, a little more liberty to pursue the world, I will be more diligent in Christ's service, and thoughtful of his church, but at present O let me have a little more rest, dispense with my omissions a little while longer; and thus they slumber and sleep away their time, which should be improved to the honour of Christ, and to the good of his people, and the salvation of their own souls, until poverty and destruction comes upon them. "So thy poverty shall come upon thee, as one that travaileth," &c. That is, swiftly and unexpectedly, and unavoidably, no escaping it.

6thly. A wicked and slothful person is confident of the goodness of his own estate. "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason," Prov. xxvi. 16. He may say, Christ is his hope, it is on his righteousness, or that he dependeth upon Christ alone; and saith, "He is rich, and increased with goods, and hath need of nothing," &c., Rev. iii. 17. Alas, sin is a small thing in his sight, and he troubles not himself about duties of religion, nor perhaps loves to hear the doctrine of sanctification and

inherent holiness preached. Sirs, I am afraid many of this sort will appear slothful servants when our Lord comes; for he that loves not the doctrine of holiness, loves not be sure the practice of holiness. Come, such persons who exalt their own wisdom and knowledge above others, and are proud and conceited of their parts and attainments, and magnify their wisdom above seven wise men, (that is the perfect body of orthodox Christians) that can give a reason sufficient to convince them of their errors; have a black character upon them, for though they live in sin and are ungodly, yet are confident of their salvation.

7thly. A slothful person cannot encounter with difficulties; "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold, therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing." Prov. xx. 4. It is not said in winter he shall beg, but in harvest, which I conceive refers to the Matt. xiii. 29. great harvest day, viz., the end of the world, which our Lord calls the harvest, such that labour not to plough up the fallow-ground of their hearts, and sow to the Spirit, shall in that harvest day cry, Lord, Lord! but though they then beg, they shall have nothing. These persons hate, and strive to avoid all laborious and difficult work, though there is a necessity of it to be done. If an idle faith, a presumptuous faith, or Acts xv. 9. faith without works, will serve their turn; they have got that, but none of that faith that purifies the heart, and that leads them to "deny themselves, and to take up Matt. vii. 13. their cross and follow Christ," Matt. xvi. 24. But these things are too hard¹⁴ for them, they must be saved in an easier way, they cannot enter in at this strait gate, nor walk in this narrow way, they cannot bear the cold blasts of afflictions, temptations, reproaches and persecution.

Mr. Foot's Annotat. 8thly. A slothful person feeds not upon that which he hath gotten. "The slothful man roasteth not that which he hath took in hunting," Prov. xii. 27. Some think, Solomon meaneth that which he hath got unjustly, or by fraudulent practices; but this I humbly conceive, is not meant hereby, but rather when a man hath got by his endeavour the things of this world, he does not live upon them, he enjoys not the fruit of his labour, though he may catch venison, yet lives upon mean diet. So some spiritual slothful persons, they may hunt for food for their souls, go and hear this and that minister, and search the scripture to know the way of life; but when they have attained to some great degree of light and knowledge, may be know Christ only is the way, yet they believe not on him, they find by hunting this and that promise, but do not make food of it, i. e., do not by faith apply those promises to their own souls; also they see this and that ordinance Christ hath appointed, but they obey them not, submit not to them, and also they find there are such and such severe threatenings pronounced against all unbelievers, impenitent and disobedient persons, but they fear them not; and thus the slothful servant roasteth not what he hath took in hunting.

9thly. The way of the Lord to a slothful person is as an hedge of thorns, that is, it is grievous to him, or there are in it such difficulties, that he despaireth to pass through, and never striveth to overcome them. "The way of the slothful is as an hedge of thorns," Prov. xv. 19. The Holy Ghost alludes to that way which he ought to walk in, it is grievous to him, like pricking thorns; now the reason of this is because his heart is not changed, for all believers found, before they received the grace of God, and were renewed, how grievous the work of religion was to them. The old nature hates true piety; "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. "But the way of the righteous is made plain," Prov. xv. 19. And hence the beloved disciple saith, "And his commandments are not grievous," 1 John v. 3. They that are true believers, having obtained a new nature and sincere love to Jesus Christ, the hardest command is easy and not grievous to them, though it may be hard to the fleshy or unrenewed part, yet after the inward man they delight in the law of God; and this shows the absolute necessity there is of regeneration, and what a woful state such are in, who only have their understandings somewhat enlightened, but have not their hearts, their wills, and their affections renewed or changed, for religion is but a burden to them; and this discovers that a vast difference there is between a true, sanctified person, and all others.

10thly. Slothful persons live not up to what they know of God, they do not improve their utmost strength and abilities, but know more than they will do, and this our Lord shows very clearly in this parable, in respect of this wicked servant; they do not bring up the bottom of their lives to the top of their light, as it is impossible to obey the truth, and not to know it; so to know the truth, and not to obey it is unprofitable. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," Matt. vii. 21. Divine knowledge (saith one)

is not like the light of the moon, to sleep by; but it is like the light of the sun to work by, it is not a loiterer in the market-place, but a labourer in the vineyard. A man may be a great scholar, and yet be a great sinner; Judas was a preacher, and yet a traitor. Many professors know what is to be done, but never do what is to be known.

Thus I have given you the character of the wicked and slothful servant.

“Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath the ten talents; for unto every one that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath,” ver. 29, 30.

The taking away of his talent (saith one) and the taking him away from his talent, is all one. Our Lord no doubt means he shall be stripped of all Christ gave him, even his very soul shall be required of him, and he shall never be trusted any more; this is done at death, and will appear to be fully done in the day of judgment. Though God sometimes before discovers some men to be hypocrites, and all they boasted of, seems then to be taken away, they are utterly blasted, &c.

“And give it to him that hath ten.”

In this there is also a disparity, we are therefore only to attend on the scope and design of our Lord in these words. A lord among men it is true, may take the money, or talent he gave to an unfaithful servant, and give it to another, but I see not how the talent our Lord refers to, can be given to another; neither ought parables to be strained after such a manner, that in all things they must run parallel-wise, and they that see not this, let them remain blind.

1. We are to learn from hence, that whatsoever wicked men have of earthly things, or common talents, they shall lose it, or be dispossessed of all they had.

2. That though Christ's faithful servants shall not receive an addition from those that were wicked; yet that the industrious and faithful Christian shall have much more abundance; or, as the unprofitable servant, shall have nothing; so the faithful servant shall be greatly enriched; and all this our Lord speaketh to encourage our diligence in his service, and in improving all gifts and blessings we have received of him.

Quest. How can that be taken away from him which he had not?

1. Answ. To say he had no talent, is not so; for his Lord gave him one talent; neither can that which a man hath not, be taken away from him.

2. Therefore our Lord doubtless meaneth it was all one as if he had it not, he hid it, he used or improved it not, or had gained nothing by it, and so it may be said he had it not, or did but seem to have what he had.

3. Besides temporal things are said not to be. “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings and fly away,” Prov. xxiii. 5. Whosoever has true grace, has really something, *i. e.*, they have that which hath substance in it; but whatsoever is short of this, is in Christ's account just nothing.

“And cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” ver. 30.

Thus our Lord ends many parables to discover the certainty of the torments of hell. “Unprofitable servant,” &c.

Quest. Are not all unprofitable servants?

Answ. All are unprofitable in the sense our Lord speaketh, when he says, “When you have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants,” Luke xvi. 10, that is, that we deserve nothing. God is not a debtor unto us, but whatsoever we have is of his grace alone; the meaning is, God receiveth no benefit by our service. Now if faithful servants are unprofitable, how much more are wicked and slothful servants, they neither bring glory to God, nor profit to men, nor unto their own souls?

USE.

1. How dismal will the end of all wicked men be? Whether profane persons or professors, who are hypocrites or slothful servants.

2. Let the great end, design, and scope of our blessed Lord in this parable be well observed. 1. That though he carries long, yet he will come again. 2. That when he comes he will be as a King, and Judge of heaven and earth. 3. That whatsoever talents any have received, God expecteth the improvement of them. 4. That some have more given to them, and talents that far excel what are given unto others, and that God distributes his own goods and favours as he pleaseth. 5. That all those that he gives true grace unto, do more or less improve their Lord's money. 6. That whatsoever any men have, whether earthly or

Loveday.

What is meant by taking away the one talent.

How that can be said to be taken away what a man hath not.

Prov. viii. 21.

spiritual good things, they received all from Christ, and shall be called to give a strict account to him for them at the last day. 7. That proud and sinful men are subject to charge God and the blessed Jesus foolishly; nay, to censure him as being severe, and even lay the blame of their miscarriages upon him, as if he had not given them enough, or that which was sufficient. 8. That all their mouths shall be stopped, and the justice of God vindicated at the great day, and that their own plea shall silence them. 9. And that, though the rewards God will give, are rewards of grace; yet all pious and laborious servants of Christ shall have glorious rewards. 10. That there will be degrees of glory; one is made ruler over ten cities, another over two cities. 11. That eternal wrath in hell shall be the certain portion of all wicked men. Now to conclude with what I shall say to this parable.

3. Let us all be exhorted to holy diligence in our Lord's work and service. (1.) Consider the weightiness of the work, it concerns our eternal happiness. (2.) Consider, what hard work the Son of God (considered as God's Servant, or Mediator, hath done for us,) and how he sweat and bled at his work. (3.) Consider, what honour, fear, and service, love, and obedience Christ deserveth from us, and what a good Master he is; and God by our fruitfulness is said to be glorified. (4.) Let us consider, whose eyes are continually upon us, whilst we are at our work. (5.) Consider, that now our Lord is very near, or it will be but a very little while before we must all appear before him, to give up our account. (6.) Remember how kindly our Lord will embrace all his faithful servants, when he comes, and what a commendation he will give them, and what joys they shall enter into. And thus I close with this parable.

SUPPLEMENT

TO AN

EXPOSITION

OF ALL THE

PARABLES AND SIMILITUDES, ETC.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

CREDITOR THAT HAD TWO DEBTORS.

SERMON I.

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which loved him most? Simon answered, and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast judged truly.
—Luke vii. 41. 43.

THE reason of our Lord's speaking this parable, we may see, ver. 36. One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him, &c. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and he sat down. And behold a woman in the city, that was a sinner; that is, a great sinner, a notorious sinner, the chief sinner in the city; when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, ver. 37, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, &c.

The reason of our Lord's speaking this parable.

This offended the Pharisee, and he said, "If this man was a prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner;" and then Jesus answered, and said, &c.

2. As to the scope of this parable, it is,

1. To show, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, great sinners, such that see the need they have of a Saviour: the Pharisees were sinners, though more close and secret sinners: not sinners in their own eyes, like others, but righteous persons.

2. To show there are degrees of sin, or that some are greater sinners, more notorious in sin and wickedness than others.

3. To show both little and great sins, when the sinner believes and repenteth, there is forgiveness and pardon in God, through Jesus Christ, for them.

4. That all sin is forgiven freely of mere grace and favour.

5. To show, that great sinners, when forgiven, do love Christ more than others; and that the sense of pardon of sin causeth a poor sinner to love Jesus Christ dearly.

But to proceed to speak to the parts thereof ;

1. By the creditor, the great God is meant.

2. By the debtor that oweth Him five hundred pence, is meant Mary Magdalene and other great sinners, that believe.

3. By the debtor that owed Him fifty, any sinner that is not so notorious in wickedness, perhaps a Pharisee, or one who seems not so great a sinner ; though I see not how it may be particularly applied to Simon, for whether he believed in Christ or not, and was pardoned, is doubtful.

Having nothing to pay, or nothing to satisfy the justice of God.

“ He frankly forgave them,” that is, freely, without any payment the debtor made, or could make. Note,

Doct. 1. That sin is a debt, and sinners are debtors unto God.

See the parable of a certain king that took an account of his servants, Matt. xviii. 24.

Sin is called a debt.

T. Delann.

Why sin called a debt,

1. That sin is a debt, and sinners debtors : this I shall but just touch upon here, because it is opened more fully elsewhere.

Sin is called a debt, “ forgive us our debt,” &c. By sin we are in debt to God’s justice, we having violated his just and holy law.

Sin is called a debt, *ὑφειλήματα*, *debita*, (saith one) sins and debts are used promiscuously, as Luke xi. 4. Compared with Matt. vi. 10. It is generally used in respect of any that are obnoxious to punishment ; the Latins, *Pœnas debere*, so the Hebrew word *נָסַף*, is used both for debt and guilt ; it is not called a debt as if it were owing to God, but the contrary, i. e., obedience and holiness ; in sin there is guilt, or an obligation to eternal punishment ; and this is called a debt, &c.

But for the farther opinion of it, consider,

1. A man may rob his neighbour of his goods, or of his good name, and so be a criminal and a debtor : sinners have robbed Almighty God of His holiness. Adam gave more credit to the devil than unto God, and so all wicked men.

2. Man brake God’s holy law, and so became a debtor to His justice, i. e., obnoxious to the penalty denounced.

3. Debts may be more or less, though the least must be satisfied, for, so some sinners are more guilty than others ; here is one that owed Him five hundred pence, and another fifty.

4. Debts may be as great, that a debtor may not be able to pay them, nay, have nothing to pay ; sinners are such debtors they are not able to pay, or satisfy God’s justice for their sins ; they have not one farthing to pay.

5. If a debtor fall into a man’s hand that is for strict justice, unless he or his surety pay all he owes, he must go to prison : now, God being just, infinitely just and holy, justice being a perfection of his nature, unless sinners or their blessed Surety pay all the whole debt, or make a full and complete satisfaction to the law and divine justice, they must go to the prison of eternal darkness : “ And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both,” or freely forgave them.

Doct. 2. That sin is frankly or freely forgiven, as an act of sovereign grace alone, to poor sinners, through Jesus Christ.

Pardon of sin is an act of God’s free grace.

It is forgiven freely to us, as an act of God’s grace alone, but not without a full satisfaction made by our blessed Surety, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24.

“ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,” &c. ver. 25.

God doth not forgive sinners, as a simple act of mercy, without respect had to that atonement, redemption, or satisfaction, made to his justice by Jesus Christ, and this was signified in all those legal sacrifices, and without shedding of blood was no remission ; to show, Heb. ix. 22. that without the shedding of Christ’s blood there is no pardon, no remission of one sin, whether great or small sins.

Obj. If we, in Christ, paid all our debts, and that his righteousness, i. e., his active and passive obedience, is imputed to us, how can we be said to be forgiven freely ? to this purpose Bellarmin.

How sin is forgiven, and yet Christ satisfy God’s justice.

1. Answ. We found not the Surety, but God.

2. Men may as well urge the Surety’s money was the debtor’s, because His money pay the debtor’s debt, and it is accepted for him ; nay, and that the bankrupt is as rich as his Surety.

3. Men, after the same manner also, may say they are their own saviours, because saved by One substituted and accepted in their stead, to make an atonement for their sins,

or to satisfy justice, and save their souls; and thus, instead of magnifying free grace in pardon and justification, men may utterly destroy it, and say they are justified by works, because it is by works of obedience done by our Surety. But nothing is more fully laid down in the word of God than this, viz., That we are forgiven freely, pardon'd and justified freely of God's rich grace; it is all in a way of mercy and grace to us, but in a way of merit and desert to Jesus Christ; so that all the glory does redound to the free grace of God, and to Jesus Christ, the great pay-master; and thankfulness on our part: and that we are frankly and freely forgiven on our part, though our debts are paid by Jesus Christ, I shall endeavour to make appear.

Pardon of
sin cost
Christ dear.

I. In respect of the spring and rise of the way of our pardon; the satisfaction which was made for us, was contrived as an act of infinite wisdom, which is a greater demonstration of grace than if God had pardon'd us as a simple act of mercy, without a satisfaction to his justice: what could be a greater gift of free grace, than to give his Son to die for us?

II. Because whatsoever Christ did for us, was in him also an act of his grace and love; "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. viii. 9. &c. But farther to prove it;

III. Pray see how the scripture declares it to be wholly of the free grace of God that we are pardon'd, justified, renew'd, and saved; "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that sheweth mercy," Rom. ix. 16. As election is of grace and mercy alone, so is justification, pardon of sin, and eternal life also; "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 3. Grace may be extended to any object, but mercy refers to persons in misery; and God set his love to the elect, as fallen, and so as objects of mercy: mercy is grace and love to the miserable, though grace properly is love not limited to this or that person, in respect of their circumstances, but only let out as sovereign pleasure pleaseth: yet, I say, no elect person proceeding from Adam whom God manifesteth love and grace unto, but are objects of mercy also; because, they, by sin, were made miserable as well as others. The time when God set his love on us, and Christ loved us, was when we lay in our blood: and in that condition, from eternity, God beheld us. Observe St. Paul's words, "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. 5; according to his mercy as well as grace and love, though we are pardon'd, justified, and saved according to the works which Christ hath done; yet we must not call his works and obedience, ours, not according to works of obedience or righteousness that we have done. Moreover, also the elect are called vessels of mercy, as well as of grace and love.

How it appears that our pardon is of God's free grace alone.

Man in object of mercy as well as of love.

IV. That pardon of sin, justification, &c., is alone of God's free grace, love, and mercy, will farther appear, because there was no force or constraint put upon God, the Father, or the Son, to undertake our redemption: I mean, God had been just and righteous if he had showed fallen man no favour, no love nor pity; it rose not from any necessity of nature that was in the divine Being, but only from God's sovereign will, grace, and compassion.

V. It also appears in that the gift of his own Son was an act of his free love to us; he was given to die for us, to procure pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons. What could be a greater act of love than this?

VI. We did not, could not, oblige the Holy God, nor move his heart towards us in a way of grace, love, and compassion. Did Adam entreat, pray, or beseech God to pity or pardon him, or any of his offspring, and send him (or them) a Saviour? No, no, he ran from God, and begged no help nor forgiveness of him, before free grace was manifested unto him.

VII. Did any sinner deserve pardon of God? much less such a way of it that divine wisdom found out. Were not all men rebels against God? it was free grace, sirs, without the least desert or merit; for we were so far from being deserving, that we were ill-deserving, nay, hell-deserving creatures.

VIII. Had sinners anything to pay which could satisfy the justice of God? No, pray read the words of my text, "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." Alas! they ran every day more and more in debt, and had not so much as one farthing to give, to satisfy for the evil one sin had in it; or had we any friend or brother, or could we find a surety who would oblige himself to pay our debts, was the ransom of our finding? No, no, (saith God) I have found a ransom.

IX. Or did God do all that good he designed to do, and hath done for us, with respect had to some after-recompence to be made by us, or compensation for his great love, grace, and

gity, showed to us? No, no, he knew it was impossible for sinners to do that, nor did he expect it at our hands, no, not anything, but a thankful acceptance of his infinite favour. "What giveth thou to him, or what receiveth he at thy hands?" Job xxxv. 7. My brethren, when we have done all we can do, "We are but unprofitable servants, and do no more than what was our duty to do," Luke xvii. 10. How then can we make him any recompence? besides, are not the blessings such that are infinite or inconceivable? i. e., God to be our God; what can finite creatures give in recompence of such a gift? "He (saith Paul) is not worshipped of men's hands, as if he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all men life, and breath, and all things," Act xvii. 25. Do we, can we give anything to God? faith is the most noble grace of all graces, but faith doth not give anything to God; no, but it is always a fetching from him; we therefore bring nothing but empty vessels to him that he may fill them. Alas! all that we are and can do we owe to him, also faith, repentance, and all ability to do good, we derive from him as his own free gifts; we must therefore say with David, "Of thine own have we given thee," 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

Besides, God is full already, we can put no more into this vessel; there is no empty space in God nor in Jesus Christ; who can add to infiniteness? or fill this ocean fuller than it is? There is, my brethren, no recompence to be made by us to God; no giving to him, nor of his receiving at our hands; God hath no need of us, nor of any thing we can do, though he accepteth of our services in and through Jesus Christ; therefore the all-sufficiency and independency of God, shows it is of his grace alone. Is not God happy, yea, infinitely happy, perfectly happy in himself without us? and was he not as happy before he made the world, either angels or men, as he is now? or can there be any addition made to his infinite or essential glory?

X. Or are there any previous qualifications to be in us, or any gracious act performed by us, in order to pardon of sin, as a cause thereof, or wherefore God doth forgive our sins? May be you will say, yea, there is repentance, and faith required in order to pardon.

Ans. Is not man before grace, or before he is quickened, dead? and are not all his works dead works, and not accepted of God? Can a tree bring forth good fruit before it is made good; either that repentance you speak of is good fruit, or not, (I mean evangelical repentance) or it is not; but such repentance it cannot be before he receives the Holy Spirit; besides, are not faith and repentance the gifts of God, or doth legal repentance, or any evangelical act of the creature, procure God's grace and special favour? or must not God as an act of his own free grace turn the sinner before he can be turned? or because repentance is required as a condition of communion; is it a procuring condition by way of casualty; or because God commands sinners to make their new hearts? hath the sinner power of himself to do it? or is not pardon, peace, wine, and milk, had "without money and without price?" Isa. lv. 1, 2; if so, our repentance, faith, &c., procures it not at God's hand.

XI. Doth not God act towards man according to the counsel of his own will? and doth not pardon, and all good we receive, alone flow from hence? "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace that was given us in Christ before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9.

XII. Or is there any room left, after all that God has done, for sinners to boast or glory? or doth the will of God depend upon the will of man? or the will of man upon the will of God? Is it not God (who by his almighty power inclines the will of man to move and bow to the will of God? Or shall any have cause to admire themselves in the day of judgment, in respect to the care they have had of their own souls, and for their improving the means of grace? or shall they not admire God's free grace and infinite love to them? or doth not God do more for them that are saved than he doth for those who perish? "Who makes thee to differ from another? or what hast thou which thou didst not receive? now if thou didst not receive it? why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Cor. iv. 7. What I have said I hope will fully tend to satisfy all, that pardon of sin, justification, and eternal life, is alone of God's free grace.

APPLICATION.

1. Let great sinners from hence see what ground there is for them to throw themselves upon Christ for pardon; this woman was the city sinner, she was a great sinner; but with Paul she obtained mercy. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; poor sinners are ready to were not their sins so great God would pardon them; but he not discouraged, though your sins are great, yet Christ's merits, and God's mercy through him, are far greater. We have a great High-priest, therefore say with David, "forgive my sins, for they are great," Heb. iv.

14, Psa. xxv. 11; he knew God was great in mercy, he that owed five hundred pence, nay, ten thousand talents was pardoned, as well as he that owed but fifty or a hundred pence. "Though your sins be as red as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," Isa. lviii. 19; it is as easy with God to pardon great sins as small, Christ having atoned for all the sins of God's elect.

2. This reproves those who magnify the power of man, or the will of man, intimating, that after all that God or Christ doth, in order to conversion and pardon, he leaves the whole issue to the will of the creature; so that it is the will of man that determines the matter, whether the Word shall be effectual or not: God (they say) doth afford equal power, grace, mercy, and love to them that are damned, as he doth to them that are saved: if so, then we must read the text backward, "It is of him that willeth, and of him that runneth, and not of God that showeth mercy."

1. If men, before grace is infused into them, or they are renewed, can act as they say, what is become of that enmity that St. Paul says is in the carnal mind? he says the will, or "the mind, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" and these men say it may be subject, without any supernatural or Almighty power is put forth to change the heart, or else they say nothing, but must give up their bad cause.

Hear what one of them says; and that no immediate operation of the Spirit upon the mind or will is needful for any one that believes, &c. This he strives to prove.

Id in Syn.
Dor. p. 200.
Deperspicuit
script.
1 Thess. i. 3.

2. They affirm that moral suasions are sufficient to bring men to believe; so that the power men have to believe, is naturally in them, and not given them immediately by the Lord.

And hereby they deny also, that man is dead in sin, spiritually dead, and cannot act spiritually, nor do anything that is truly good, until he is quickened.

3. Also then we are born again of our own will, or the will of man, and not as it is the effect of the will and good pleasure of God, contrary to the testimony of the Spirit, that says, "which are born again, not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13.

Moreover, (as one notes) it follows according to their opinion, "that the general love which they would have in God to all mankind alike," is but an indifferent respect to all; which proves love or hatred, as the sinner's will determines it; but when they ascribe any particular love to God, it is no other than what rises from the sinner's love to Him, viz., He foresaw what we would do, and how we would repent and embrace Jesus Christ, and be holy, and therefore he chose us.

3. Since pardon is of mere grace, let God have all the glory; he will not give it to another.

4. Poor sinners, plead God's absolute promises, and though you can find nothing but sin in yourselves, yet cry to God, and cry to Christ, to take the cure of you into His own hand, that you may feel His wonderful operations in the day of His power: it is good to lie at the pool, and wait for the moving of the water, and cry that the Holy Ghost would put you into that Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.

5. You are pardoned, see that you ascribe all to God's free grace; O give all the glory unto Him, whose grace I shall the next time show is wonderful! it is God who, through Christ, frankly forgave you, and also gives all things else you need, with Jesus Christ also; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, wisdom, power, and everlasting praises. Amen.

SERMON II.

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.—Luke vii. 42.

DOCT. 1. I have spoken to one point of doctrine from hence, viz., "That sin is frankly or freely forgiven, as an act of sovereign grace."

I shall now proceed to another, viz.

DOCT. 2. That the free grace, mercy, and goodness of God, through Christ Jesus, is great and wonderful.

1. I shall show the rise or spring of grace.

2. Prove and fully evince the truth of this proposition.

3. Show that this grace is let out in a way of righteousness.

4. Apply it

What is
meant by
the grace of
God.

By the way, you know that the word grace is variously taken in Scripture; but here by it I mean the favour, goodness, and rich bounty of God.

The rise or
spring of
grace.

1. As to the rise and spring of grace, it is alone from the glorious and transcendent nature of God: God in himself is good, nay, goodness itself in the abstract. As he is love, holiness, &c., so he is goodness, that is one of

the infinite perfections and attributes of his holy nature; and so God is the Fountain from whence all grace and divine favour flows to any of his creatures.

2. The rise and spring of grace is from the Divine will; it flows alone from the fountain of goodness, and as the result of God's eternal counsel and purpose, according to his own good pleasure, wheresoever grace is let forth, it is as the apostle shows, according to the purpose of him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11: As it is let out in wisdom, and also freely and abundantly; so it is according to his own sovereign pleasure, "who hath saved us and called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace," &c., 2 Tim. i. 9. It hath an amazing rise from God himself, without any motive, or anything foreseen in the creature to excite him; "he is gracious:" No other reason can be given of divine favour.

2. To prove and fully evince, that the grace, mercy, and goodness of God is wonderful.

1. This appears, because where "Sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded," or

Grace far ex-
ceeds sin or is
much more
abundant.

superabounded: grace did not prevent the entering of sin, yet God had a glorious design and purpose in permitting of sin to enter; "by one man sin entered into the world," Rom. v. 12. Though sin that entered was very evil,

the worst of evils, the poison and venom of all evil, yet grace exceeds, far exceeds, exceeds beyond all measure the evil of sin, yet sin had mankind down, and reigned, nay, triumphed over them. Adam's sin set sin upon the throne, and no man nor angel could pull down or destroy this tyrant; for "sin reigned unto death;" all men lay slain and dead at the feet of sin, and it hath (in all it reigns) the chiefest seat in their souls;

Sin very
evil.

they are led, influenced, and brought into subjection to it; it predominates, and has a ruling power in men, and they naturally yield themselves servants

and vassals unto it. Nay, and every faculty of their souls is corrupted thereby; the nature of the reign of sin is therefore dreadful, and is attended with horrid guilt, filth, and pollution, causing the sinner to hate God, and filling his mind with enmity against him, making man a slave of the devil, and obnoxious to the curse of the law, the wrath of God, and everlasting torments and condemnation in hell; there is an amazing and frightful evil

Rom. v. 20.
ver. 7, 13.

in sin; and the entering of the law made it appear more evil, yea, exceeding sinful.

In what re-
spect grace
may be said
to exceed
sin.

But yet the grace of God much more abounded or super-aboundeth, in that sin, (though it hath so much evil in it, nay, may objectively be said to have infinite evil in it) yet it is but the product of the devil: the fruit or spawn of a degenerate spirit; but grace is the product or fruit of the mighty God; and therefore as the cause (in its nature) far exceeds the effect, so does

grace, goodness, and divine power far exceed the evil of sin. What is a degenerate and finite spirit to the holy and infinite God? though sin is very evil in its kind, yet grace is far more good and powerful in its kind, in respect of the cause and fountain from whence it proceedeth.

Sin the pro-
duct of the
devil.

2. If we consider the subjects whom sin defiles, and in whom it reigns, and through whose consent it came to be: grace exceeds sin; sin is of the will of

man; but grace is the product of the will of God: what is a poor, weak impotent creature? "What is man?" Sin is brought forth or produced by the consent of the will of man, in yielding to Satan's temptations.

But grace is the product of the will of God, the fruit of a holy and gracious God; therefore, if grace be let forth freely, it must exceed and superabound all sin, as God exceeds the power of the devil, and an infinite Creator a poor finite creature,

Grace helps
a poor crea-
ture to pre-
vail against
sin.

3. Because grace manifested to a poor weak creature, can limit, restrain, curb, nay, kill and overcome sin, when it is in its highest power, or hath its greatest strength and dominion in the soul of a sinner, as appeared in this woman, in whom sin had (perhaps) as strong a power as ever in any one soul;

yet the love and grace of God laid sin and Satan sprawling (as I may say) at her feet; she is made to trample upon them both, by the virtue of a small beam of divine grace shining in upon her soul, through Jesus Christ.

4. Grace must needs far exceed sin in its power, to the rooting out and vanquishing of it, because God purposed in his eternal counsel to permit sin to enter into the world, and to suffer it to abound, that he might thereby take an occasion to manifest the nature and infinite power of grace, in pardoning, subduing, and utterly destroying sin, and him whose work it is. To be sure the holy God would never have suffered this monster to have been born, and to have entered into the world, had it not been to magnify his own glory, and especially the glory of his rich and infinite grace: who would suffer such a traitor to get out of prison, (if he could keep him there) whom he knew would be too hard for a whole kingdom to overcome, when once let loose?

God's design in permitting sin to come into the world, was to advance his own grace.

5. Grace must needs far exceed sin, or superabound, because God added the law upon Mount Sinai on purpose that sin might abound, "moreover the law entered;" well, wherefore? That sin might abound; "but where is sin abounded, grace did much more abound," Rom. v. 20. This was the grand reason, viz., That God might display his infinite grace in destroying it. What warrior would suffer his enemy to arm himself with new weapons, and give him to get fresh strength, if he did not know after all, he could with much ease lay himself sprawling at his foot? "The strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, which giveth us the victory." Grace, through Christ, giveth us the victory when sin is in the fullest strength. Sin hereby seemed to revive and get new arms, or renew its power in wounding and ruining mankind, (by reason of the weakness that is in them, to perform the righteous precepts thereof). And this, I say, God on purpose, caused to come to pass, that he might reveal the glory and power of his Almighty grace, divine love, and goodness to his elect, in pardoning of sin, and vanquishing of it.

The law entered to make grace abound

6. Nay, God lets the law break in upon the conscience of a sinner, that sin may abound in the soul by the convictions of the Spirit, when first he begins to awaken him, so that the sinner is amazed to see what horrid guilt and filth is in his heart, and what a Holy God he has offended, and what wrath he lies obnoxious unto thereby; and yet all this is but to discover his infinite and inconceivable grace in his free-pardoning of all sin, in the sight and sense of poor sinners, in whom the law thus entered, and sin revived; I say, the commandment came and sin revives, that grace might be magnified.

The law enters on the conscience in convictions, that grace may abound.

7. That the grace of God is wonderful, and doth much more abound than sin appeareth in that sin came into the world by man. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," Rom. v. 12. But grace, as it enters by the eternal and infinite God, so it is by the grace of all the three Persons in the blessed Trinity. Now, shall the evil of the sin of one man exceed the grace of all Persons in the Godhead? or shall there be more evil done to us by the sin of one impotent man, than the grace of the infinite God, i. e., the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, can outvie or deliver us from, who believe in Jesus Christ?

Sin entered by one man, grace proceeds from all the three Persons of the Trinity.

8. That grace does superabound, sin appears in respect had to the gift of God, in sending of his only begotten Son to save us from the guilt, power, and punishment thereof. No doubt God suffered man to fall, that his grace and inconceivable love might be revealed this way. O what a gift of God's free grace is Jesus Christ: which way could God manifest greater love and favour, than to give his Son, or not to spare his own Son, but to deliver him up to die the cursed death of the cross for all his elect? Rom. vii. 30. Grace (we may be sure) will withhold nothing from us, that hath not withheld the Son of God from being a sacrifice for our sins, and so to procure our pardon. O this is glorious grace, enough to astonish men or angels.

John iii. 16. The gift of Christ tends to make grace abound

9. Grace appears yet farther to be wonderful, because none of the other attributes of God, but this of divine love and goodness, could help and save undone sinners. Could wisdom, holiness, or power do it? No, for as wisdom had never contrived the way, had not grace and favour stirred it up, so had not rich grace broke forth in the gift of the Son of God, justice would soon have put a stop to all the other attributes, (had it been possible for them to have stirred without being moved by the divine will, or God's grace, favour, rich bounty, and goodness).

Grace magnifies the glory of God in all his attributes.

Moreover, it is God's grace that is the spring and rise from whence all the divine attributes (in our Lord Jesus Christ) are magnified, shine in glory, and meet in sweet harmony, therefore divine grace through Jesus Christ is wonderful.

10. How wonderful must that grace be that lay hid in God from all eternity; and O what a way hath divine wisdom found out, to let it forth

Grace let out in manifold.

ways, under different dispensations.

to poor creatures, and which could not, indeed, be manifested without various ways of revealing the divine will, in different times, different methods, and different dispensations of this Grace, as before the law, under the law, and under the Gospel; and hence it is called "The manifold wisdom of God," Eph. iii. 10. Moreover, it is the grace and favour of God to mankind, which the holy angels desired to look into, and which they are amazed to behold. They saw or beheld God in our nature, the second Person of the Trinity, who assumed our nature into union with His divine Person, and this with the greatest astonishment, but chiefly, no doubt, as it is the effects of glorious grace. "He was seen of angels," 1 Tim. iii. 16. We preach the Gospel, we make known the infinite love and grace of God in Christ, which things the angels desire to look into, or pry into, that is, with admiration.

Grace by Christ abounds the favour showed to the first Adam.

11. It is wonderful grace, because it far exceeds all that favour, grace, and rich bounty which God bestowed upon Adam in innocency. It is true he was a son of God, but it was by creation, but by grace and peculiar favour we are the sons of God by adoption and regeneration, and so are heirs of God, heirs of all things, and can never be dispossessed of the inheritance. Adam had the image of God stamped upon him, but was liable to lose it, and did lose it; but grace in Christ Jesus restores that image again, so as never to be lost. He had a glorious earthly paradise, but lost it; but grace in Christ raises us up to possess the heavenly paradise, which we cannot lose.

Greater favour shown to the saints than to the holy angels in some respects.

12. It is greater favour, grace, and goodness (as it seems to me) than what the holy angels possess or partake of. They are the sons of God, but not the spouse of Christ. They have not that honour, but are only servants that wait upon the sacred Bridegroom and his bride. He that is the eternal God is truly man. Grace unites the Son of God and the nature of man, in one person. This grace and favour magnifies believers, who are united to him above angelic nature. "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," Heb. ii. 16.

The whole of our salvation is of grace.

13. The whole economy of man's redemption, and all the transactions of the Almighty from the beginning of the world, in and by Jesus Christ, as to the design and purpose of it, was to magnify God's glorious grace: if we spake of those covenant transactions between the Father and the Son, about our salvation before the world began; or God substituting, and accepting, and sending his Son into the world; or of his incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and glorification; it is all to manifest the glory of God's rich grace: or if we speak of election, reconciliation, union, justification, vocation, pardon of sin, adoption, final perseverance, and our glorification, it is all but to show the rich bounty and grace of God to his chosen.

14. If we consider to whom (or to what undeserving and ill-deserving creatures) this grace is manifested, it must needs appear wonderful to all; what they were I have already shown. O, what an ill and vile creature was man, and from what an estate to what an estate doth this grace raise all that receive Christ.

15. The beginning and ending, or finishing God's temple-work, is all to glorify rich grace, so that "when the top-stone is laid, it shall be with shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it," Zech. iv. 7.

16. Mercy, grace, and divine goodness is infinite, immense, and unsearchable; for as God is infinite in power, justice, wisdom, holiness, &c., so he is also in grace and divine goodness; therefore where sin abounded, grace much more abounded; for in Christ the streams of boundless grace and mercy are opened; and therefore grace let out in Christ is wonderful.

17. If the knowledge we have of this grace in this world, be so wonderful, or so much of it as is let out here, what will that grace be, which we shall have opened to us in heaven? For what is glory but the consummating, completing, or perfecting the design and purpose of God's eternal favour and rich grace to believers?

18. Lastly, Grace is wonderful, because it reigns; grace hath erected a throne and is upon that throne, and there reigns; and that grace might reign, it stirred up divine wisdom to find out the way of its advancement on the throne; which was to remove all those obstacles which hindered grace's accession thereunto, and mounting thereon; which was divine justice, the law, sin, and the devil; but by Christ's obedience justice is satisfied, the law magnified and answered, and sin and the devil dethroned. So that "as sin reigned unto death, grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. v. 21. Grace, my brethren, like a glorious and victorious queen, is by Jesus Christ raised to the throne and is crowned; it reigns and prevails against all opposition whatsoever. As he that reigns must first overcome all that attempt to have supreme sove-

reignty or the pre-eminency, or those that were got on the throne; so hath God's grace prevailed against sin and Satan who before reigned and tyrannized over us. Our Lord "hath spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," Col. ii. 15. That is, by the blood of the cross, "And hath condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. viii. 3. And now grace reigns, and shall reign unto eternal life.

Thirdly, I shall show that grace is manifested, and comes to reign through righteousness, or in a way of righteousness. See the text just mentioned. "That grace might reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 21. Grace is not elevated, it hath not its accession to the throne in an unjust or in an unrighteous way, but it reigns through righteousness; not through our righteousness, no, but through the righteousness of God, in His fulfilling His faithful promises to His Son, but chiefly (as I conceive) through the righteousness of Christ, or through His perfect and complete obedience, or that righteousness He wrought out, by doing and suffering. It was through the righteousness of Jesus Christ that grace reigns; for without this righteousness, neither holiness, justice, nor the holy law would let grace reign; but O, how hath divine wisdom contrived a way, in a compliance with the divine will, that grace might reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ! divine justice was upon the throne before, judging and condemning guilty sinners, and grace could not reign; but wisdom hath so provided matters now that grace is upon the throne, and all the divine attributes are mounted with rich grace, being magnified, and shining forth with equal glory; but it is all to advance sovereign grace and infinite goodness.

How grace reigns through righteousness by Christ Jesus.

2. Grace reigns through righteousness by Christ also, in the application of what He hath done and suffered for us; His merits are applied, and His righteousness is imputed to every one that believeth in Him, as an act of sovereign grace; and hereby also it appears grace reigns in subduing a man's self, sinful self, righteous self, and all the powers of darkness in the soul, and in quickening, acquitting, justifying, and pardoning, &c., all sinners, yea, the greatest sinners that believe in Jesus.

3. In persevering in the profession of righteousness, and in a state of life unto the end, God's rich grace by Christ is such that He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, until He hath brought forth judgment unto victory.

4. Grace reigns and will reign through righteousness, by conquering and subduing sin, or all those remainders of corruptions in the hearts of His pardoned ones. Moreover, let our condition or temptations be what they will, "Grace is sufficient for us," 2 Cor. xii. 9; which is upon the throne, and shall reign unto eternal life, and at last will crown with glory all who are under the ruling and reigning power thereof.

5. Grace reigns, and will reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ, in subduing and finally vanquishing the last enemy, which is death. Jesus Christ, by whom and in whom grace reigns, hath overcome death, "And now hath the keys of hell and death," Rev. i. 18; he hath power over death and the state of the dead; "I will deliver them from death: O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction," Hos. xiii. 14. So long as Christ reigns as mediator, so long grace will reign in and by Him, "And he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet; the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26.

APPLICATION.

1. Wonder not now, that this woman that owed five hundred pence was forgiven, and he that owed ten thousand talents was forgiven, since divine grace in and by Christ Jesus is so wonderful, and is let out in an amazing manner; or since grace and divine goodness is infinite, the ocean and great deeps of unspeakable love and mercy are broken up, and overflow all banks and bounds. Nothing can stand as a bar in the way of grace; no sin, no unworthiness; for the more sin, the greater sinner, and the more unworthy a sinner is, the more is free grace raised, magnified, and exalted in and by Jesus Christ.

2. How may this silence all the objections any sinner can make against himself? My sins are great. Are they greater than grace by Jesus Christ can pardon? "Where sin abounds (remember) grace has much more abounded," Rom. v. 19, 20.

3. Is grace exalted? does grace reign? is grace upon the throne? O, blessed news to a rebellious world, and to all vile traitors and ungodly sinners. O, haste to this throne; it is one thing to have a gracious king or queen to reign, and another thing to have a gracious Saviour to reign, and grace itself; infinite grace, boundless grace, immense grace, unspeakable grace, inconceivable grace, and unsearchable grace to reign. O, how happy are we under this reign; let all cry, long live this sovereign, this queen, i. e., grace that reigns

through righteousness by Jesus Christ, this is the best reign that ever was; no sovereign prince or princess ever reigned through such righteousness: this is a just reign, grace reigns and exalts the infinite justice, infinite righteousness by Jesus Christ; it is a God-honouring reign, a Christ-exalting reign, a law-magnifying reign; it is a sin-condemning, a sin-killing, a sin-destroying reign; it is a hell-confounding and a devil-consuming reign; it is a death-vanquishing, a death-plaguing and a death-destroying reign; it is a sinner-enlightening, a sinner-quickening, a sinner-renewing, a sinner-acquitting, a sinner-justifying, a sinner-pardoning, a sinner-comforting, a sinner enriching, a sinner-exalting, a sinner-sanctifying, and a sinner-glorifying reign, &c.

4. O happy souls; in whom, and over whom, and from whom grace reigns, almighty grace, infinite grace, and unspeakable grace: what, O child of God, dost thou fear? who can pull grace off the throne? can men? can devils? no, they can as soon pull God out of heaven, or Christ out of heaven, as dethrone God's sovereign grace, as we may infer and perceive by what hath been said.

5. We may infer what vile wretches they are who despise the reign of grace, or condemn God's sovereign grace magnified in bringing Christ to the throne, and being now exalted in and by him on the throne: woe to such that ever they were born! who had rather let sin reign, their lusts reign, the devil reign, unbelief reign, free-will reign, than that grace, free-grace, sovereign grace, almighty grace, should reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ, to eternal life.

TRIAL.

Doth grace reign in and over you? Examine yourselves: are you united to Christ, for that way grace comes to reign in us? Do you truly believe in Christ for righteousness? are you quickened, renewed, regenerated; for so are they in whom grace reigns? Are you dead to sin, dead to the law, dead to your own righteousness, dead to this world? then grace reigns in and over you; if the life of sin is not let out, or if sin reigns in you, and you obey it in the lusts thereof, grace reigns not in nor over you.

6. O come in, sinners, before grace comes off the throne, and divine justice ascends the throne, to condemn such who have abused sovereign grace; we know not how soon that may be.

7. Rejoice, ye saints, and triumph in rich grace; Satan is under your feet, and subdued by divine grace; the world is overcome, "and sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14. That is, the reign, power, and influences of grace.

SERMON III.

Tell me therefore which of them loved him most, and Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most: and he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged, wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. He said unto her, thy sins are forgiven.— Luke vii. 42—48.

It appears from hence, that Jesus Christ is the most High God, for he forgave her all her sins; but none can forgive sins, as they are against God, but God himself only. But to proceed, there is one proposition more I shall speak to, viz.

Doct. 3. That all those whose sins are forgiven, do love the Lord Jesus Christ; and such to whom much is forgiven, or who have been great sinners, they exceed others in love to him.

1. I shall speak a little as to great sins, and show you who are great sinners.

2. Show what pardon of sin is.

3. Show why such who are forgiven, do love Jesus Christ; and why great sinners, when pardoned, exceed others in their love to him.

4. Show that pardon of sin is a great gospel blessing.

5. Apply it; and so conclude with this parable.

1. All open profaneness, or all gross immoral acts of wickedness, are great sins, as murder, treason, sodomy, buggery, adultery, blasphemy, swearing, drunkenness, theft, backbiting, railing, lying, cheating, oppression, extortion, &c., these are great sins, and such who are guilty of any of these sins are great sinners, and are to be punished by the judge.

2. Such who deny the being of God, or the blessed Deity. are great sinners, or that wish there was no God; it is thought by worthy men, that all Atheists ought to die.

3. Such that deny Christ to be the most High God, are great sinners: and sad it is to see and hear what multitudes of them are in and about this city; I say, such are sinners of the first rank that deny the Deity of Jesus Christ. For,

(1.) They justify the unbelieving Jews in their cursed evil, in charging our blessed Saviour with blasphemy, because he said he was the Son of God, that is, the Son of God, by an eternal generation, or of the same essence with the Father, for so they understood him when he said God was his Father; "And Jesus answered them, many good works have I showed you from my Father, for which of those works do ye stone me? the Jews answered him, saying, for good works we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God," John x. 32, 33. Now if the Lord Jesus was no more than a mere man, or not the true living and eternal God, he was a blasphemer, and they that deny his Godhead are guilty of the same blasphemy the Jews were guilty of; they do (I say) justify them in their horrid wickedness, and so render the ever blessed Jesus to be a grand impostor; and therefore are great sinners, or sinners of the first magnitude; which also farther appears.

(2.) Such who deny the Deity of Christ, provided they worship him or give the same divine honour and adoration to him which is due to the Father, or to God only, they are idolaters, because they worship a mere creature, "And give the glory of God to another," Isa. xlii. 8; nay, and if they trust in him for soul help and salvation, they are cursed. "Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusted in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Jer. xvii. 5, &c.

(3.) Moreover, according to their notion and cursed heresy, Jesus Christ cannot be our Saviour, for none is our Saviour but God alone; "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me," Isa. xlv. 5. "I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour," Isa. xliii. 11. Let such men, who deny Christ to be the Most High God, never call Jesus Christ their Saviour any more. O what great sinners are these! let them pretend never so much to sanctity and holiness, yet they are sinners of the first rank.

4. Such men that have received much light, and have been under great convictions of sin, and of the evil which is in sin, yet live in, continue in sin, and in a hellish course of life, their sins are great sins, and they abominable sinners.

5. Such who after most solemn vows and promises unto God, (when they have been laid in a sick bed, or have been in danger of death) how they would return to him, and leave their evil and ungodly lives, yet sin, and as bad and as vile, or viler than ever, these are great sinners.

6. Such who have been often reprov'd, and yet harden their necks, are great sinners, and near to destruction, or being suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

7. Such that plead for sin, or extenuate their sin, nay, boast and glory in sin, or in their shame, or make a mock of sin, and are ringleaders to sin, enticing others to sin against God; these are great sinners, who do only destroy their own souls, but the souls of others also.

8. Such who abuse the mercy, patience, and long-suffering of God, or turn the grace of God into wantonness, are great sinners.

9. Such who pretend to be teachers of others, reprove others, and yet are guilty of the same crimes; what a minister and a swearer, a drunkard, whore-monger! O what abominable sinners are such!

10. Hypocrites, such that appear to be godly, and yet secretly are wicked: these are also sinners of the first rank.

11. Persecutors, and such that reproach the people of God and would take away their lives: those are great sinners.

12. All unbelievers, or such who refuse or reject Jesus Christ and the offers of grace, are great sinners.

13. All that sin presumptuously are great sinners, though they know the thing they do is abominable to God and destructive to their own souls, yet will do it.

14. Lastly, All backsliders in heart, who wickedly depart from God, are great sinners. Now, Mary Magdalene was a great sinner; some say she was

Atheists are vile sinners.

Such that deny the Godhead of Christ are notorious sinners.

A person that has received much light, and yet lives in sin, is a great sinner.

So are such who violate all their sacred vows.

Such who sin, who have been often reprov'd, are great sinners.

Such that abuse the patience of God are great sinners.

Hypocrites great sinners.

Persecutors great sinners.

Unbelievers and all presumptuous persons are great sinners.

guilty of seven abominable sins ; whether that was so or not, we cannot tell ; but let it be so : suppose a man was guilty of all those cursed sins I have mentioned, and Christ should pardon him, certainly you would conclude he must needs love him with a wonderful love. Our Lord saith her sins were many, and yet were forgiven ; and therefore she loved much, and more than some others.

Backsliders
in heart are
great sin-
ners.

Secondly, What is it to have sin pardoned ? or what is the forgiveness of sin ?

First, negatively.

What pardon of sin is not.

1. Pardon of sin doth not free a poor sinner from the being of sin in his soul ; no, there is, after a man is forgiven, much corruption still remaining in the best of God's children, which makes them cry, as Paul did, "When I would do good, sin is present with me." Rom. vii. 21.

2. Pardon of sin frees no child of God from being corrected or chastened by the Lord, for sins that he may afterwards be overtaken with : no, "as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," Rev. iii. 19, &c.

3. Pardon of sin doth not take away the desert of sin, it doth not argue, because sin is forgiven, that therefore, those sins do not deserve eternal punishment, but it discovers that Christ hath borne the demerit of all legal punishment of all the sins of a person that is pardoned.

4. Pardon of sin doth not denote, that every person forgiven, sees, or hath the sight and sense of pardon, or feels the comfort of it in his own conscience : no, a man may be forgiven his sins in the court of heaven, that cannot find that pardon in the court of his own conscience ; for as some truly believe, and know it not, so they may be forgiven all their sins, and know it not.

Secondly, affirmatively.

Psal. xli. 7. Pardon of sin is an act of God's great and infinite grace, whereby he, for the sake of Christ, or through the redemption of his blood, removes the guilt of all sin from the poor sinner.

1. God discharges him from the severe sentence of death denounced by the law ; the law can no more condemn a pardoned person.

2. He is discharged whom God pardons, out of the hand of divine justice, the satisfaction of Jesus Christ being applied to him.

3. A pardoned person is freed from all vindictive wrath here, and from that which is to come ; so that no guilt can come upon him to condemnation for ever.

4. Pardon of sin heals the soul, it cures every disease of the inward man ; such have all their sins blotted out ; as a debt that stands in a book is crossed, so pardon puts sin far away ; it is called a covering of our transgressions ; God will not see sin.

5. Pardon is a non-imputation of sin to the sinner, it being imputed to Christ, and by him all the whole debt is paid ; and in pardon, a discharge is given to the poor sinner.

6. Pardon is the receiving of a penitent and a believing sinner into God's special love and favour, and that for ever there is an accomplishment of the warfare between God and that person, to an endless eternity.

Secondly, Why do pardoned sinners (especially great sinners) love Jesus Christ dearly ?

The cause why pardoned sinners do love Jesus Christ.

Ans. Because, when they are pardoned, they hereby come to taste of the nature of Christ's choice love ; and it is indeed impossible for any to have a sweet and saving relish of the love of Jesus Christ, and not love Him ; "We love Him because He first loved us," 1 John iv. 19 ; Christ's love is the fountain

love, our love is the stream ; His love is the indcement and the effective cause of ours to Him : He that first loves, loves freely ; the other therefore loves under obligation. Sinners are bound or obliged to love Jesus Christ, and such who have most forgiven, are obliged to love most : to forgive one pound to a poor man that had not one farthing to pay, must create love in him to his creditor ; but he to whom five hundred pounds is forgiven, and was in danger every moment to be arrested and laid in prison, must needs cause greater love in him to such a merciful creditor.

II. Because a pardoned sinner sees, or is convinced of the freeness of the love of Christ, and how undeserving he was of such love and pardon. O, saith the sinner, I was an enemy to my dear Lord Jesus, and also a vile and loathsome creature, and yet did he love me and pardon me : O matchless love and mercy ! I, but, saith a great sinner, a city sinner, I was more undeserving, I was the chiefest of sinners, a ringleader to all iniquity, here is a poor creature forgiven, but, alas I led him into many acts of wickedness, and yet my dear Lord freely pardoned me, as he hath this and that person, who never sinned as I have done.

“I was (saith Paul) a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, but I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding great with faith and love,” 1 Tim. i. 13, 14; I consented to the death of Stephen, that holy disciple of Christ. Brethren, suppose a rich traitor, one who raised up war against his gracious sovereign, and prevailed by craft and malice to draw thousands into the same rebellion, should be freely pardoned by his offended prince, would not he see cause to love his sovereign dearly, yea, more than any of the rest? O, saith he, I had no ground to expect to be forgiven of all my companions, but rather to be made an example of; but lo, I am pardoned, and also received into his love and favour.

III. Because when a sinner is pardoned, he comes to know that he was one of those objects which Christ set his heart upon, and chose from everlasting. O! I see I was beloved before time, that I am called and pardoned in time. “O what is man, that thou shouldst magnify him, that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him!” What, Christ set his heart upon such a creature! what, on me! saith a great sinner; what, the great God pardon me, because he loved me, and Jesus Christ set his heart on me, and love me, and die for me, to pay my debts, or satisfy divine justice for my sins, and espouse me! O this raiseth, nay, even ravisheth the poor believing and repenting sinner! Should a poor damsel in rags, a mere vagabond, a beggar, be told, that a king is fallen in love with her, and sends to her a most endearing letter, and rich token of his love worth millions: Oh, she stands astonished! Nay, says the messenger, it is so, and lo, here is also a rich wedding robe sent you, and all princesses’ ornaments, jewels, and pearls, to adorn you. Now, she cannot but believe it, and she breaks out into tears for joy, and readily yields; but cannot forbear, when she comes into his presence, to get behind him, and washes his feet with tears, (as poor Mary did to her dear Prince, Sovereign, and Saviour). I was that vagabond, that vile beggar, saith she, and I see Christ loves me, and hath given to me a rich token of his love, viz., the pardon of all my sins; and he hath put upon me the glorious robe of his own righteousness, and adorned me with the graces of his Spirit. Now, how can such a Mary, such a sinner, forbear, but must love Jesus Christ dearly! A free pardon is worth millions of millions of gold, nay, more than ten thousand worlds; and what is the robe of Christ’s righteousness then worth, and the ornaments of his own precious graces?

For Christ to set his heart upon a sinner, denotes an act of his love and affection, also a high value and esteem he hath for such persons.

IV. Because pardon of sin the soul sees cost Christ dear, even his own heart’s blood. O his love, Mary now could say, is wonderful, I cannot comprehend it, I see love in his purposes, love in his leaving his throne above, and coming into this world, love in his assuming our nature, love in his covenant, and in his promises, love in his dying groans and bleeding wounds, love in his face and countenance, and in his invitations and kind embraces. O my heart is sick of love; I was the person he loved. He loved me and died for me; loved me, and has washed me from my sins in his own blood, Rev. i. 5.

V. The glory of Christ appears to all them that he pardons, but especially to great sinners, the glory of his person, and the glory of his love: and this melts the soul down and makes it little, nay, nothing in its own eyes. O wretched me! how have I carried it to this God, to this Christ! am I beloved thus by Him! and do I love him no more: love him no better! who have pierced him, wounded him, grieved him! I loathe myself; nay, “abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,” Job xliii. 6. Woe is me, (saith the prophet Isaiah) “I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts,” his glory who hath set his love upon me! what an admirable beauty and glory is in this Prince! in this Person! and doth he vouchsafe his favours to me, pardon me, love me, so loathsome a creature?

What strange effects had the knowledge of David’s love on Abigail’s heart when she heard of his intention to take her to wife.

“Let me be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord,” 1 Sam. xxv. 41.

The knowledge of Christ’s love in pardon, &c., kindles a vehement love in the souls of such unto him; it is discovered too, especially if great sinners. “Love begetteth love,” when it is known and manifested to the person it is set upon. O what strange passions of love have been kindled in some virgins, when they have heard of the love of such or such renowned person to them, from whom they deserved no such favour. Sirs, the love of Christ is of an attractive nature in its manifestations.

VI. Divine love is shed abroad in the heart (of a sinner) by the Holy Ghost, Rom. v. 5. Divine love is a grace of the Spirit; it is not the bare effects of natural affections but of the Holy Spirit, and of Christ’s affections expressed to a poor undone sinner; they are constrained by his love, whose love being deep and unsearchable, the more we know

of it, the more and more we love him. "The love of Christ passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 19. The deeper the mine of gold is, the deeper the miner must dig for it, and more pure gold he finds. Now, these great sinners, above others, comprehend the love of Christ, though it can never be fully comprehended by men or angels.

VII. Pardon'd sinners, especially great sinners, dearly love Jesus Christ, by reason of the effects and fruits of his love.

The effects of Christ's love 1. Pardon of sin is not only the effects and fruits of Christ's love to sinners, but of life also; Christ loves us, and therefore he hath quicken'd and rais'd us from the dead, as he rais'd Lazarus from the dead because he loved him.

2. Faith, repentance, and a new heart, a broken and contrite heart, are the effects of Christ's love.

3. Union with him is another effect of it also; because he loves us, he espouses us. A sinner is not only pardon'd, but espous'd; Christ marries all he forgiveth, and so they are thereby freed from all dangers of being arrested for former and after debts contracted; the Husband answers all

4. Justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, communion, and free access to the throne of grace, are the effects of Christ's death, of his obedience, intercession, but primarily of his endearing affection to poor sinners.

5. Peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost, are the effects of Christ's love, and of pardon of sin.

6. Lastly, Final perseverance, everlasting life, a crown of glory, the full fruition of God, and of being for ever with Christ, where he is, are effects of his love. Now these things being so, it must needs follow, that such who are pardon'd must needs love Jesus Christ; yet such that were great sinners love him most! their love exceeds the love of all others, considering how black and miserable they were once above others, and now are made happy for ever.

Thirdly, From what hath been said, it appears that pardon of sin is a great blessing; yet, to open this a little farther, together with the nature and way of forgiveness.

Pardon of sin is a wonderful blessing. I. Consider, that such who are forgiven, or whose sins are pardon'd, are pronounced blessed: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered," Psal. xxxii. 1; nay, no man is blessed indeed, whose sins are not pardon'd. Luther saith free justification and remission of sin makes a divine, and another of great worth also saith, it is this that makes a man a Christian; and such that understand not this doctrine, all other knowledge is to little purpose.

II. Consider the original spring of it, and that is God's wonderful love, (which I have opened) it is the fruits of infinite love, and product of the excellent and inconceivable mercy and divine goodness of God; "To the Lord our God, belongs mercies and forgiveness," Dan. ix. 9. wherein doth the riches of mercy, the abounding of mercy, the multitude of mercies, more appear than in pardon of sin, and in the way of it, in the sea, the ocean of mercy, all the sins of the elect are swallowed up: the mercy of God (as one notes) makes no difference between little and great sins. O consider the original and efficient cause of forgiveness! *i. e.*, the love and rich mercy of God.

The meritorious cause of pardon in Christ's death. III. Consider also the meritorious cause of pardon of sin, or that which procured it, or opened the door and flood-gate of mercy and free forgiveness unto us; for although it would be free to us, yet it cost Jesus Christ dear; it is not had but through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Many think not of the way of pardon; Christ must stand up and plead for pardon, and do also whatsoever he oblig'd himself to perform in that covenant that was between him and the Father, if ever we are forgiven our transgressions.

Our sins, you have heard, were a debt, a great debt, they oblig'd us, bound us over to eternal wrath, and this debt must be paid; God is just, and we had nothing to pay. Now, the Lord Jesus took this debt upon himself, he became our Surety, he entered into bonds to pay every penny which sinners owed, "he made him sin for us that knew no sin," 2 Cor. v. 21; our sins were transferred on Christ, they were charg'd upon him, and he must not only plead for our pardon, but must bleed also; he must suffer and die for us, he bore that wrath and punishment that was due to us for our sins, that we, through his blood, might receive free remission. O what a blessing must pardon be that is thus procur'd; we have no remission but through the blood of Jesus Christ.

The final cause of pardon, is the glory of God. IV. Consider the final cause of forgiveness of sin, which is the glory of God; not only the glory of his grace, love, and mercy, but the glory of his justice, holiness, truth, power, and faithfulness. Sirs, justice, mercy, &c.,

equally shine forth in glory in our pardon, through the satisfaction made for our sins by the Lord Jesus. God appears not only gracious, but just and holy also. Sin is punished, the sanction of the law is vindicated, and justice is satisfied in Christ, or in the way of remission of our sins, "being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," &c. That God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 24. We have not pardon of sin in a way of mercy only, but in a way of justice, and righteousness also.

Now, what a blessing is that which tends to advance and to magnify the glory of God in all his glorious attributes! God is glorified as well as we are pardoned through Jesus Christ

V. Every person that is forgiven their sins, are also justified, and stand righteous before God. Thus do not guilty criminals among men, though forgiven, yet they are not pronounced clear, or justified and acquitted of the guilt of their horrid crimes and treasons that were charged on them. No, they are looked upon as vile and wicked wretches still; but a believer pardoned, is also "justified from all things," Acts xiii. 39, and stands without spot in God's sight, in the righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ: "Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee," Cant. iv. 7. Pardon of sin is never without justification; the one is in a way of mercy, or as an act of mercy, and the other an act of justice. Some would have justification only to consist in pardon of sin, but that certainly is a great mistake and error; though we grant, that actual pardon and actual justification of a person always go together, and therefore forgiveness, I say, is a great blessing.

All pardon-
ed persons
are justified.

VI. Consider, that when God forgives a sinner, He forgives not only one or two sins, but all sins; and not only all sins past and present, but all the sins that ever he shall commit afterwards, in respect to vindictive justice; therefore well might the prophet say, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage,"

When God
forgives sin,
He forgives
past, present,
and to come,
all sins.

Mic. vii. 11. I know some deny that sin is forgiven before a person repents, &c., but sin, as it affects the soul obnoxious to divine wrath, may be forgiven so; and yet not forgiven in some other sense. A father may correct his child, and so doth God his Children, as a tender Father; but as God is considered an offended Judge or Governor, all their sins are forgiven at once, as soon as they are united to Christ, and have his righteousness imputed to them; for else they do not stand always justified, or are not in a justified state, and so not free from condemnation. "But there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. Besides do we not sin daily? "There would be (as one observes,) no instant of time, wherein a believer would not be in a state of condemnation," were not all sins to come, of justified persons, forgiven, as well as those past; therefore there is no necessity of a renewed act of faith, when we sin, in order to our justification, nor pardon of sin, or as to vindicate justice, (for he that is once justified so, and pardoned, is for ever justified and pardoned, and cannot be brought into a state of wrath and condemnation,) though there be need of a renewed act of faith, as to our own consciences and peace, when he have sinned; for a believer may by sudden death, be taken away before he has put forth an act of faith, for the pardon of his last sin; but though he be, he is happy for ever, being ever in a state of life and peace. But if a saint should die before he hath repented, and put forth such an act of faith, which some speak of, he must perish for ever, but this cannot be; the union he hath with Christ cannot be dissolved. "And whom God justifies, them he also glorifies," Rom. viii. 29, 30. Therefore pardon of sin is a great blessing.

Jer Bor-
rough's Re-
mission p. 21.

VII. Pardon of sin is a great blessing, because such have peace with God. "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee." Though a weak believer, because he sees not his pardon may want peace, yet he is in a state of peace, and the ground of all fears and doubts are gone for ever. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Rom. viii. 15. There remains no more fury in God to believers, or to pardoned persons. No sin can break the covenant of peace, or make God to become our enemy, and cast us off. Our consciences may be troubled when God is pleased, and sin be pardoned in the court of heaven, though a poor believer cannot see the pardon in the court of his own conscience. Therefore pardon of sin is a great Gospel blessing.

VIII. Pardon of sin makes all mercies sweet, and to be mercies indeed. What mercy can be sweet to him who lies under God's wrath, and is not forgiven his sins? What con-

fort can such take in riches, honours, lands, wife, children, or friends, when such guilt lies upon him, and he stands charged at God's bar, and condemned by God's law?

IX. Pardon of sin heals all the wounds of the soul, and gives ease to a poor believer. "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." Psal. xli. 4; that is, give me the sight and sense of free forgiveness, let me know I am pardoned. Remission of sin takes away the sting of death.

X. Forgiveness of sin also makes all our afflictions easy to be borne. With what comfort may such, in times of greatest trials and dangers, lift up their heads? So that those afflictions that sink others down, and are hard to be borne, a believer can triumph over, and is more than a conqueror. "Her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned," Isa. xl. 2. If the sweet of pardon makes the bitterest affliction easy, it is a great blessing; but this is so; therefore it is a great and inconceivable blessing.

XI. Pardon of sin takes away the fear of death; such need not be afraid to die, nor to come to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. It is only the guilt of sin that in both those respects terrifies the sinner.

XII. Such that are forgiven their sins, are "delivered from the wrath to come," and shall have eternal life; therefore pardon of sin is a great blessing.

XIII. When sin is forgiven, it is forgiven for ever, and shall be remembered no more.

Heb. viii. 12. All our sins are "cast into the bottom of the sea," they are "blotted out," Mic. vii. 10. they are "cast behind God's back," they are "put as far away as the east is Isa. xliii. 25. from the west, the north is from the south," Psal. ciii. 12. O, what expressions are these! and all to let us know that sin is forgiven for ever. Pardoning mercy is the sure mercy of David; pardoning mercy is an irrevocable blessing. God will never revoke His act of free forgiveness.

XIV. Pardoning mercy is only given to a few. "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." It is denied to the fallen angels, and only given to them for whom Christ died, with an intention and purpose to save; and it being a special and peculiar blessing, it is a rich and a great blessing. What, are there but a few in all the world who have their sins pardoned? and am I one of them, and I one of the worst of all men! O, what peculiar love, distinguishing grace and favour is this.

Infer. 1. What blessed news is here for great sinners, the worst of sinners, even for city sinners? Is there a Mary Magdalene here? I mean, any as vile as she was. O, let such cast an eye upon Jesus Christ, to look to him, throw their souls down at his feet with self-abhorrence, believingly, and they need not fear but Christ will pardon them.

Exhort. 2. O, admire pardoning grace! how free, and how full it is! Sirs, you that are once pardoned, are for ever pardoned, as to vindictive wrath and justice; your iniquities God will remember no more; they are thrown into the depths of the sea, and shall never rise again to your condemnation in this, or the world to come.

Examin. 3. Try yourselves, you that are professors; do you love Christ? have you been great sinners? Certainly you are not pardoned if you do not love the Lord Jesus with most endeared love and affection.

It will be a hard thing for such to satisfy themselves that much is forgiven them if they do not find their hearts burn in love to God and Jesus Christ.

Christ hath the chiefest room in the hearts of pardoned sinners, "He that dwells in love, dwells in God," I John iv. 16; their hearts, thoughts, and desires are set upon, and remain with, and run out after Jesus Christ; if you love him, he is continually in your minds, more than husband, wife, children, silver, gold, or anything in this world. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? neither is there any on earth that I desire besides thee," Ps. lxxiii. 25. Such will often visit him, and labour to be like unto him, and do or suffer anything called to, that they may honour, and show forth the praises and glory of Jesus Christ; be sure Mary did what she could. And sin, every sin and lust is hateful to them, because it is so to him; they also love all that Christ loves, or are born of God.

Lastly, let Christ's love to you satisfy you always, comfort and console your souls, "For who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

STRONG MAN ARMED.

SERMON IV.

Else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.—Matt. xii. 29.

Thus Matthew: Mark also hath the same parable.

No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house.—Mark iii. 57. See Luke also. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.—Luke xi. 21, 22.

THE Evangelist Luke seems to speak more fully and distinctly to this parable, than either Matthew or Mark, though all agree in substance, and speak the same things; and so also as to the occasion or reason of it.

Which we shall first briefly open; and in order to this, consider, that the Pharisees charged our blessed Lord with casting out devils by the prince of devils, after he had dispossessed one with a devil who was "both blind and dumb, who immediately both saw and spake," Matt. xii. 22. The occasion and main scope of this parable.

"But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, this fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils," ver. 24.

"And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself, cannot stand," ver. 5.

"And if Satan cast out Satan, how then shall his kingdom stand," ver. 26.

"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you," ver. 28.

And then he adds, "or else how can one," &c.

So that, (1.) The occasion of these words, or the scope of the parable, was to convince them that he by the power of God did cast out devils, or by the power of his glorious Deity. 2. To discover and detest their most horrid blasphemy in saying he cast out devils by Beelzebub, &c., which he first doth by the parable of "a kingdom divided against itself," which I purpose to speak to afterwards. The devils are not divided, they agree and unite in upholding their kingdom, and did they oppose one another, or not agree among themselves, their kingdom, (our Lord shows) would fall or come to desolation; like as a kingdom, city, or house, if it is divided, would do; but farther to convince them that what he did in casting out devils, was done by the Spirit of God, &c., he brings in this parable also, and that thereby he might manifest their detestable evil, and make it appear that he was the true Messiah, and God over all, blessed for evermore, for who but the mighty God hath power over the "Prince of the power of the air," Eph. ii. 2, or the God of this world; he therefore that can subdue Satan, bind Satan, and throw him out of his palace, must be one stronger than he, which none is, but God only, for the devil will never yield up his stronger hold as long as he is able to hold it; there is no way to dispossess him but by force or power; will any man consent, or willingly yield up to his enemy his palace, his goods, his power, kingdom, and all he hath? No certainly, if he

could prevent it, he would do it, and so would Satan also; and this is the chief thing our Saviour discovers and makes appear by both these parables.

Secondly, we will consider the parts hereof.

The parts of the parable opened.

Else "how can one enter into a strong man's house?" Luke calls it a palace; by the house or palace here is meant a poor sinner, not his soul only, but his body also; but chiefly his soul. A "strong man's house," &c. Satan is this strong man, and sometimes he possesseth both the body and soul of a sinner; though the body is not under his power, but by the special permission of God, nor doth he so universally possess the bodies of sinners as he doth their souls, by his power, craft-devices, temptations, suggestions, and diabolical influences; who "ruleth, or worketh in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2, that is, in them all universally.

"One enter," that is, any one that is opposite to him, one that is his enemy, with a design and purpose to dispossess him, bind him, and throw him out of his strong-hold, and take possession of his palace or habitation. The meaning of our Saviour is, how can I enter by my spirit and power into the house or palace of the devil, viz., into the heart of a sinner, if I do not first destroy, or spoil Satan of all that power he hath in such a poor creature, or bind and throw him out? or I must subdue Satan, if I either dispossess him of the body or soul of a sinner.

"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace," Satan is armed, and he must be disarmed before he can be overcome.

"Wherein he trusteth;" the devil trusteth in his armour, but when Christ, who is a stronger than he, comes, he takes from him all his armour, and makes him know his armour is not sufficient to defend him from the almighty power of the Son of God. From whence we may note one or two propositions.

1. That the heart of a sinner is the house or palace of the devil.

The doctrine raised.

2. That the devil is a strong and formidable enemy, dreadful and terrible, and yet,

3. Must be subdued, and his power destroyed in a sinner that is subdued, which none can do, but the Lord Jesus Christ only, who is stronger than he.

I shall speak briefly to both of these.

(1.) The body sometimes, and the soul always, of an unconverted sinner, is the palace and habitation of Satan; but before I proceed, let me lay down one or two explanatory propositions, by way of premise.

(1.) The devil hath no just or lawful right to this house, viz., neither to dwell in the body, nor the soul of any sinner, no, but it is wholly by fraud and usurpation he got in and rules there.

2. The devil could not by force take possession of the sinner's heart, but he gets in by craft and subtlety; this way our first parents gave him originally the possession of the hearts of all men.

Secondly, to prove that the heart of a sinner is the house or palace of Satan.

The heart of a sinner is Satan's palace.

How he got possession of the sinner's heart.

(1.) Our Lord calls it the strong man's house; true, God only hath the just right to every man and woman in the world, "all souls are mine saith the Lord." But God left man at first to keep this house, I mean his soul, for him, that is, for his own praise and glory, and gave such strength to man that he might have kept possession, his faculties being true, strong, and uncorrupted at first; they were like so many valiant soldiers that Satan could not by open force conquer; the will being able to resist the whole infernal lake of hellish fiends; but by subtlety the enemy prevailed, and the will consented; as Paul shows, "the serpent beguiled Eve through subtlety," 2 Cor. xi. 3. And the will complying, all the faculties or powers of the soul were overcome, and so the devil entered, and made it his palace or chief dwelling-place.

How Satan's palace is fortified.

2. A palace of a prince is commonly well fortified, when it is in the midst of enemies; so Satan hath fortified his palace with a high wall on one side, called presumption, which seems to be as high as heaven, and on the other side with a deep ditch, called despair, lest grace should assault him; and by this means he secures his palace, and dwells there for a long time in peace; and though the word of God seems to batter the high wall, yet, it is common operations can make no great breach in it on that side, nor fill up the ditch on the other; and let me tell you, the devil hath not stronger fortifications than these two.

3. A palace is the place of a prince's chief residence, and where he keeps his court, and hath his attendants; so Satan's chief residence is in the heart of an unregenerate sinner,

and there he keeps his court, and hath all the depraved faculties of the soul, and "lusts of the eyes, and lusts of the flesh, and pride of life," to attend upon him, and who readily submit to his commands, or cursed suggestions; he "goeth to and fro in the earth, and walketh up and down in it," and is the "prince of the power of the air," but there he finds no rest, no, the heart of an ungodly sinner is his dwelling-place, that is, his palace, where he lodgeth and delights to be.

What are Satan's attendances.

He goes from one place to another, not as an idle Peripatetic, or one that has nothing to do, no, but as a spy to see what house is empty, that so he may get in and dwell there; for the devil has many palaces, yea, thousands of thousands, so that he is no small or petty king; in his walks also he curiously observes, and pries into every person's temper, and into all families, nations, and churches, to see what advantages he can get over them, and set them together by the ears, for he strives to do all the mischief he can to kingdoms, churches, families, and particular persons.

4. A prince can go in and out of his palace at his pleasure, so Satan sometimes, as an unclean and filthy devil, a black and debauched devil, goes out of his house or palace, or out of a man, as our Lord shows, and lets it be swept and garnished, but if it be empty, i. e., if Christ dwells not there, he says, "I will return to my house from whence I came;" nay, and brings other spirits with him also, though not debauched devils, yet worse evil spirits, and there afresh he takes up his habitation and dwells, though the man perhaps thinks he has a better prince dwelling with him.

5. A palace of a prince commonly is painted, adorned, and made a place of delight suiting his spirit; so the heart of every sinner, the devil makes fit and pleasant to him, suiting to his odious and unclean spirit, nature, and temper; nay, and some sinners hearts are garnished, and richly painted with moral virtue and seeming holiness, which pleaseth Satan very well, as a white devil, when he can cause them to rest in, or trust to mere acts of morality and external holiness; he can transform himself from a swearing devil, a blaspheming devil, into a religious devil, a praying devil; for such a painted palace were the hearts of the Scribes and Pharisees, which were swept and garnished (as in the next place in speaking to another parable) I shall show.

How Satan's palace is adorned.

6. In a house or palace of a prince are many lodging rooms both for repose and security, so in the sinner's heart the devil hath several rooms to repose himself in, and are also as places of security to him against danger; which are the "corrupt faculties of the soul," as the "rebellious and obstinate will, depraved judgment, the misled conscience, a deceitful and traitorous memory, and the carnal and earthly affections;" for by this means he takes as it were his quiet repose, and remains safe.

What are Satan's lodging-rooms in the sinner's heart.

7. A house or palace hath many doors, by which the prince that dwells therein can enter; so the devil he hath many doors by which he enters into the heart of a sinner, which are the five senses; at the eyes he gets into the heart of unchaste persons, and also into the hearts of the covetous. "Achan saw a goodly Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold," Josh. vii. 1; he saw it with his eyes, and then Satan entered his heart, he coveted them, and at this door also he entered into the heart of Judas. He gets in also at the ears of others, they are charmed with bewitching music, perhaps at a play-house, or a whore-house, and there the devil enters; the adulteress was taught by Satan to "perfume her bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon," Prov. vii. 17; the devil knows how to get in at their nostrils by bewitching smells, as well as at the ears by flesh-pleasing melodies, moreover he enters into thousands at the door of tasting and feeling; how are sinners ensnared by delicious wines, meats, and other liquors, and abominable delights and pleasures of the flesh, every one, like pampered horses, neighing after their neighbours' wives.

Thirdly, I shall show you what kind of house or palace this strong man's is.

1. It is a most odious and filthy house, prepared and made fit for unclean and filthy spirits to delight in; the heart of a wicked man is alike abominable with the devil in the sight of God, being full of snakes, vipers, filthy vermin, mire, and dirt, for unto such thing the filth of sin, and unclean spirits are compared. Our Saviour likeneth the hearts of the "Pharisees to filthy sepulchres, painted without, but within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness," Matt. xxiii. 27.

What kind of palace Satan's palace is.

2. It is a house prepared and furnished by the devil, fitted for him to dwell and delight in, and it is also fortified against God and Jesus Christ, with all the hellish art, subtilty, and strength the devil hath, that all attacks of the word of God, ministers, godly persons, and motions of the good Spirit might be ineffectual; the devil helps all the powers of the soul (they being under his influences) to resist all good counsel, reproofs, and persuasions of

yielding up their palace to the the Lord Jesus Christ; moreover, wicked men are true drudges to their hellish master, and are always in arms, and fight against God, and blaspheming his name, and all that dwell in heaven.

3. It is a house built upon the brink of hell, and stands in the regions of darkness, and the devil that dwells therein, who pleases those wretched and misled mortals for a time, according to the varieties of their carnal appetites, designs to murder and destroy them every one, and make them as miserable as himself, and will in a short time if they meet not with the mighty Jesus, to enter in, and destroy the strong man armed, their house will be set on fire, and burn to the lowest hell, for the materials with which it is built are fit matter for eternal flames.

APPLICATION.

I. We infer from hence that sinners are woefully blind, and misled, and that their state is most deplorable.

2ndly. Also we from hence infer, that it is no wonder that the word of God hath no more effect upon the hearts of sinners, as they are under the power of the prince of darkness; the strong man armed keeps the house, he hath power over, and reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience; their hearts are fortified against the Lord Jesus Christ, and Almighty power must be exerted to subdue Satan, if ever the gospel becomes efficacious to one sinner. But to proceed,

2. Doct. The devil is a strong and formidable enemy, dreadful and terrible, and yet must be subdued, and his power be destroyed in a sinner that is converted, which none can do but Jesus Christ only, who is stronger than he.

I shall in speaking to this,

1. Show what renders the devil so formidable an enemy.

2. Show why he must be subdued in a sinner that is converted.

3. Show why none but Jesus Christ can subdue Satan.

The devil is a formidable enemy.

I. Satan is a dreadful enemy in respect had to his great strength, called the strong man, and upon the same account he is called a lion, a strong and fierce creature; should all the men in the whole world combine together to fall upon one single devil, they would be but as so many little babes in the hands of a mighty giant, I mean in respect of their own strength.

Satan at one stroke overthrew the whole world.

II. He is a formidable enemy, considering how at one blow he overcame man before he was depraved, or lost that power with which he was created, and also when Satan was but a few days old; and in subduing innocent Adam, a man clothed with mighty strength, he by that one stroke conquered all the world, all the whole race of mankind fell down dead at his feet, O what an enemy is this? If man, when he was so strong and well armed, was subdued by him; what can sinners do now, who are become weak and feeble, and also naked, to withstand his force and mighty power?

Satan hath a mighty host of infernal spirits with him.

III. The devil is a dreadful adversary, considering what a multitude of evil angels he hath in his army, they are a mighty host, and all clothed with great power, though perhaps some of them have greater strength than others, yet all are strong and powerful; they are all angels, though fallen angels, and though they have lost their purity, yet they have not lost their strength: "Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength," Psal. ciii. 20.

Two things discover their strength, (1.) Their superiority, (2.) Their spirituality.

1. Angels are the top of the creation; man was made a little lower than the angels. Now in the works of creation, the superior (as one notes) hath a power over the inferior, the beast over the grass and herbs, and man over the beasts, and angels over man.

Satan being a spirit hath the advantage of us.

2. The spirituality of their nature, adds to their power. Man hath a glorious soul, but he is flesh as well as spirit, and his soul is darkened, weakened, and weighed down by a lump of flesh. It is forced to row with a strength suitable to its weak partner, and sometimes to war against himself. I mean his flesh; also his fleshly part clouds his understanding, but now angels are all spirit, and have no such mixture of matter to encumber them.

The devils agree and are united.

IV. Their unity renders the devils dreadful enemies; our Saviour shows us here that they cement together, and are not divided; order and oneness makes their number formidable, though we cannot say there is love amongst the devils, yet there is mity; they all agree together in carrying on their design against God, Christ, and the souls of men. Whoever heard of any discord, jarrings, or wranglings amongst the devils? This may shame the saints. Shall devils agree to ruin us, and shall not we agree to oppose and counter-work them?

V. The falls of so many brave champions by Satan's assaults, render him a dreadful enemy; what mighty men of God hath he worsted, who were strong in grace, or well armed. Remember righteous Noah, just Lot, meek Moses, and David a man after God's own heart, and wise Solomon, and patient Job, and valiant Peter. What can naked and unskilful sinners do, if such expert warriors were worsted and fell by him?

The devil hath worsted valiant captains of Christ's army.

VI. His courage or fierceness, and undauntedness, renders him a formidable enemy; what saint of God was Satan ever afraid to assault? Nay, oftentimes whole churches, and spoiled them too, tearing them to pieces, nay, his courage and undauntedness appears in his attacking and assaulting the Son of God himself, as also his power in "taking up, and setting him upon a pinnacle of the temple," Matt. iv. 5; what a bold devil is this, and what a sight was there? to see the Son of God, carried in the arms of the devil, whom he knew was a Son of God; nay, and though he was worsted, yet came again upon our Lord. "The prince of this world cometh," &c.

The devil is bold and courageous.

VII. His implacable malice, hatred, and envy to God and sinners, renders Satan a very formidable adversary, he is filled full of enmity, and is unconcilable, he will never yield nor submit himself to his enemies; some men who have received a little of his spirit and nature, have been very malicious, and hardly reconcilable, but the devil is all malice, even made up of hatred and envy, who can stand before envy saith Solomon? if not before an envious man, who can stand before an envious and a malicious devil, who is wholly set upon doing of mischief?

Satan an implacable enemy.

VIII. Bloodiness and horrid cruelty, shows that Satan is a dreadful enemy; many tyrants have been very cruel, but how bloody minded and cruel then is the devil? all the cruelty that any tyrant and bloody persecutor ever exercised he was stirred up to do it by the devil, whose servants they were, and still be, who act in malice and cruelty. 2. What cruelty hath he exercised towards mankind? what ruin hath he brought upon the world, and on the souls of men? (3.) How many millions hath he sent by his cursed temptations to hell? how many hundred thousands of godly Christians hath he murdered, and caused to be tormented with unhuman cruelty? (4.) But what was all this to his attempting to murder the Son of God himself, or the Lord of life and glory?

Satan a bloody enemy.

IX. The subtilty of the devil renders him a terrible enemy; where strength cannot prevail oftentimes, policy does, and many by craft have done more than could have ever been done by power. Now the devil's subtilty is exceeding great, we (saith Paul) are not ignorant of his devices. But too many there are that perceive them not, we should labour to "stand against the wiles of the devil," Eph. vi. 11. It was by his craft he overcame our first parents; the serpent by his subtilty beguiled Eve, yea, and Adam too; he hath his wiles to keep sinners from closing with Christ, and ruin the ungodly; and he hath his devices also to ensnare, deceive, and ruin, if possible, believers; observe some of his devices also.

Satan a subtil adversary.

1. He chooseth the most advantageous seasons to tempt and allure sinners.

2. He manageth his temptations in such ways and methods that shows his great subtilty.

See Mr. Brook's remedies against Satan's devices.

3. In his making use of fit instruments to carry on his designs, in respect of the one and the other, he knows how to assault young converts, by filling them up with pride and vain-glory; he waylays such that fall into great afflictions, causing them to despair, and to think God does not love them, because he afflicts them; he will be sure if possible, to defame, or render odious, such as do him the most mischief, as the faithful ministers of the gospel; and spoil the peace of the churches. He observes the weakest place of that fort he designs to attack, and there make his assaults, also comes upon poor saints, when they are asleep, or off of their watch, or in a secure state; he acts sometimes like a black, and yet can appear also as a white devil, "or transform himself into an angel of light;" 2 Cor. xi. 14. He observes every man's natural temper, and suits his temptations accordingly; he sometimes appears as a friend, when his design is to murder and destroy, like a treacherous enemy; he strives to get ill persons into the church, to hinder the peace and increase thereof, and to expose the whole to reproach. He knows how to retreat and leave his house as a debauched black devil, and swept and garnished with the paint of seeming holiness, and outward zeal and piety; if it be but empty of true faith and saving grace, it matters not how zealous men are for outward sanctity, if they are in a false way; he will rather promote their external holiness, than go about to hinder it; he is not more for discord in the true church, than he is for unity in the false: in

a word, there is not such a politician in the world like to the devil; he knows he cannot force, and therefore he will entice.

X. The devil is a formidable enemy, because he is unwearied; he will not be discouraged if he miss ten times in carrying his designs and purpose: nay, to thousand defeats he will attempt again, hoping to prevail at last; hence the apostle gives the saints a needful caution to be vigilant, because of the unweariness and great diligence of their adversary the devil, who walks about seeking whom he may devour; it is not whom he would, but whom he may, or such God permitted him to devour; though Satan hath worked hard to destroy the souls of sinners near six thousand years, yet he is no more weary than he was when he first began, and therefore a dreadful enemy.

XI. The devil is a formidable adversary, in these last days more than ever, because he is come down in great wrath, knowing his time is but short," Rev. xii. 12. Therefore woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea; my brethren, though the beginning of this his coming down was many years ago, when he was thrown out of the church as a persecuting devil, in the time of Constantine the Great, yet he knowing his time is very short indeed, he is in more rage than ever, and from hence it is that he strives to foment wars and slaughters in kingdoms and nations; and to disturb the churches of Christ with horrid errors and heresies, and to drown the world that way if he can, and fill Zion also with strife, discord, and contentions, which certainly abound now more than ever; and all this is but the effect of Satan's rage, malice, and fury; nay, and we may expect it will be every day worse and worse, as he grows nearer and nearer the end of his reign and tyranny; therefore most dismal times must be looked for; yea, such temptations and tribulations over the whole world that never was since the beginning thereof, or since man dwelt upon the earth; and it will continue until Jesus Christ sets up his visible kingdom, who will take hold of him, and bind this dragon for a thousand years.

XII. And lastly, Satan is a dreadful and terrible enemy, because he is armed; our Saviour calls him a strong man armed.

1. His armour may be his great power; he is clothed as you heard with power and might, which is such armour that no mere man is able to encounter with him.

2. He is filled also with malice and revenge; which is as armour to him; moreover, his pride is as a coat of mail, his power creates in him great confidence, and this fills him with pride, as it is said of the "Leviathan, his scales are his pride, they are joined one to another, they stick together that they cannot be sundered," Job xl. 19, 17. Strength, confidence, and pride, is the devil's shield, or armour, by which means he is very fierce and undaunted, so that the darts of a sinner unarmed, are not regarded by him; but like the "Leviathan, darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of the spear," chap. lxi. 29. All the weapons of mere creatures unarmed, he esteemeth as straw.

3. The wonderful success he hath had, and victories obtained, is as armour to him, he having conquered millions, and subdued the whole world; all nations are become as stubble to his bow, and as a prey to his teeth.

4. Moreover, utter despair of ever obtaining favour with God, arms him against poor mortals; he knows that he shall have no quarter given to him, no terms of peace offered him for ever, and therefore will give no quarter to any he can subdue and overcome; nothing renders an enemy more fierce and cruel than the thoughts of this; what mischief will not that giant, that tyrant do, that knows he shall have no pity showed him, no pardon, no mercy given to him. And this hardens Satan's heart against God, and his hard heart and final despair is as armour of proof that cannot be pierced.

There are no repentings, no relentings, no sorrow in devils, after all the wrongs and mischiefs done to mortals, no, no; therefore his hardness and despair is as armour, that none can touch, but one that is more mighty and more strong than he.

5. Sin also is as armour to him where sin reigns; the devil is armed; a sinful, depraved, hard, rebellious, and an unbelieving heart arms the devil, and makes him irresistible by such mortals in whom sin predominates; and the changing of the heart, of that enmity that is in the carnal mind, tends to disarm the devil, and over such souls he hath but little power.

6. God's law being broken and violated, is as a sword in Satan's hand, by which he kills and wounds unto death, great multitudes; the devil knows how to use a believer's sword to wound them, and oftentimes doth so; but as the law being broke is called the strength of sin, so it is the armour and strength of Satan also, by which means

The devil is now in greater wrath and rage than ever.

What is Satan's armour.

The devil is armed with utter despair which makes him desperate.

Sin arms the devil to the ruin of sinners.

Satan armed by God's broken law.

no man in an unrenewed state can get out of the devil's hands : do you not see, saith he, how your God in his law curses you, and for your sins hates you, and how this broken law you slain and dead at my foot ; nay, that God that made you, hath left you, and given you up into my hands, and I have power over you, and will dwell, nay, reign in and over you, do what you can, you cannot, shall not get out of my hand ; therefore let your hearts take pleasure in sin and all unrighteousness, and deny yourselves of nothing that is either sweet, pleasant, or profitable to the flesh, so much to the first thing.

Secondly, I shall shew you why Satan must be subdued in a sinner that is converted, and his power destroyed in his soul.

1. Because he will not be intreated, there is no, persuading the devil to yield up his palace, no, no, he cannot be prevailed with by flattery, as some cruel tyrants have been : if Satan be not destroyed and overcome by force, he will hold his own for ever, there are no devices against him, or subtle stratagems that any poor sinner can invent, to supplant or countermaine him. Many a strong and cruel enemy whom men could not spoil nor destroy by force and power, have been utterly overcome, defeated, and spoiled by policy ; but Satan is too great a politician this way, to loose his strong hold.

Satan will not be intreated to let go his captives.

2. The devil must be subdued in the sinner's heart that is converted, because he hath them all in his chains, and they are his mere slaves, and captives, nay he "takes them captive by him at his will," 2 Tim. ii. 26. There is not one man nor woman in the world, but naturally are the captives of this cruel and merciless devil, he rules in the hearts of all the children of disobedience.

Satan has all men naturally in chains.

3. Because grace cannot enter into that heart where the devil reigns, nor will, nor indeed can Jesus Christ dwell therein, for wherever Christ dwells he reigns, sirs, it is impossible for two princes that are directly opposite in their nature ends, and designs, to reign over one and the same subject ; now thus sin is contrary to grace, so is grace absolutely contrary unto sin, and as the devil is an unreconcilable enemy of Jesus Christ, or an implacable adversary in his very nature to him, so the pure and holy Jesus hates and abhors Satan ; and as the devil seeks to be revenged on Christ, so the Lord Jesus in his whole design, seeks to destroy and overcome the devil ; therefore if grace and Jesus Christ enters into the heart of a sinner, the power and dominion of Satan must be destroyed in him.

The power of sin and grace cannot rule in one and the same heart.

Also Christ and Satan cannot rule in one and the same heart absolutely.

Thirdly, I shall show you why none but Christ can subdue the devil. When I say none but Christ can, I mean no man in earth is, nor ever was able by any power of his own, or by any power short of, or besides the almighty and irresistible strength of Jesus Christ, could or can do it.

None but clothed with almighty power can destroy Satan.

1. Because Satan is set forth in the scripture to be much stronger than man, and more cunning ; and being an angel, he exceeds man in wisdom also. But what I have said, in showing what a prince Satan is, fully demonstrates this to be as I say.

The devil stronger than man.

2. Because God hath laid our help upon Christ only, as being one able and mighty to save sinners ; and to this end Christ also came into the world, "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8,

God laid help on Christ.

What need was there for Christ to come into the world to this end and purpose, if man had been able to have destroyed this strong enemy, Satan.

The mighty one to destroy the devil.

3. None but Christ can subdue Satan in the sinner's heart, because he that doth this, must first bind this strong man armed, and take away also all his armour, and what man on earth can do this ? But these things our Lord in this parable positively affirms.

He that subdues the devil must first bind him and disarm him, which none could do but Christ only.

4. Because it is Jesus Christ alone that hath subdued him, and broke his head, as it was promised to our first parents he should do ; moreover, that broken remaining power that Satan has left, none but God can destroy "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." He that hath overcome and conquered the devil he only can subdue and destroy him, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ alone hath subdued Satan.

5. None but Christ can subdue Satan, because none but he can make an end of sin and destroy death, if the works of the devil are not destroyed, the devil is not subdued : sin is the grand work of Satan, and death is the wages and punishment thereof ; now sin and death, none hath nor could destroy but Jesus Christ, and this he hath done, and took our nature upon him to this end, "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death,

He that cannot destroy sin and death, cannot destroy the devil.

and deliver them, who through the fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage," Heb. ii. 14, 15. Where sin remains in its full power, there the devil lives and reigns, and death also triumphs over all such sinners, they are dead in sin, and liable to eternal death: and since none can destroy sin and death but Jesus Christ, none but he alone can destroy the devil.

He that destroys the devil, destroys his image in the sinner's heart, and stamps the image of God therein.

6. None can destroy Satan, but he that destroys and utterly spoils his image, and stamps the image of God in the same soul: but this is done by Christ none: can any man utterly deface and spoil the image of Satan in his own soul, and form the image of God in himself? What mortal will affirm that? besides man lies spiritually dead in sin, naturally even slain at Satan's feet, and what can such dead and lifeless creatures do against the strong man armed, can they subdue this terrible enemy?

APPLICATION.

1. From hence we may infer that there is cause enough why we should fear the power and malice of Satan, so as not to think he is a small or weak enemy or fear him so as never to make head against him, by any power of our own.

2. We from hence also may infer that it is no wonder the world is so spoiled, overcome, and blinded by the devil, you hear what a strong and subtil enemy he is.

3. Moreover we infer from hence, that this world is an evil world, a dangerous and perilous world, because it hath such a multitude of strange and malicious devils in it, who go up and down and defile all places. O! who would desire to live in this world! we live here not only among men, like the devil, but also among devils, amongst multitudes of devils.

O! admire and praise the holy and ever blessed God for sending a Saviour, such a Saviour, such a mighty Saviour as Jesus Christ is, into this world, none but a Saviour clothed with almighty power, could save us from this strong man armed, or subdue and vanquish the devil: and indeed from hence it appears, that Jesus Christ is God because none but the most High God could destroy Satan, the god of this world, and from hence Christ is able to save all fly unto him, "he is mighty to save, until one stronger than he binds the strong man," is a mere man, stronger than Satan? or is any besides the Most High God able to bind Satan, and throw him out of his palace?

Christ in his life, and by his death destroyed the devil.

Quest. How hath Christ destroyed, or conquered the devil.

Ans. By death, he by death destroyed death and devils also. Christ subdued Satan in his life, this enemy set upon our Lord; but was utterly put to flight in the combats he had with him, nay, by his spotless life and painful death, our Lord destroyed sin, the work of the devil, and answered all the demands of the law; also by his death and resurrection, "he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly," Col. ii. 15.

How Christ hath disarmed the strong man.

2. By taking from him all his armour. (1.) He has spoiled and divested him of all his power, bruising and breaking his head: sirs, the strong man is wounded, he is a maimed devil now. (2.) Jesus Christ hath out-done the devil in wisdom, all Satan's policy in one day was defeated, and turned into foolishness, that way he thought to have destroyed our Captain, and for ever have prevented our recovery, he himself, sin, and death, and all enemies were subdued, no doubt when Satan had brought Christ under death (to which end he entered into Judas) he thought he had done our Lord's business, and ours also, but thereby he was disarmed of that part of his armour. (3.) By destroying of sin, in the guilt power and punishment thereof, our Lord took away the chiefest of all his armour, (4.) By his perfect obedience to the law, and by bearing the penalty thereof, (which we lay obnoxious unto) he disarmed him of another piece of his armour. (5.) Our Lord disarmeth this strong man, by making all Satan's wrath and fury to turn to the good and advantage of his saints, his church and people. (6.) By sending the gospel or gracious revelation thereof, our Saviour hath scattered and expelled that darkness which the devil brought upon the world, and thereby discovereth those errors, heresies, idolatries and superstitions, that every where abounded therein, "he hath brought light, and immorality to the light, through the Gospel," 2 Tim. iii. 10; so that Satan's craft and cunning is all laid open, and himself utterly vanquished, and brought to shame, and his kingdom overthrown for ever.

Quest. How doth Christ bind this strong man, &c. and so spoil his house.

Ans. The Lord Christ doth this by entering into the sinner's heart by his Spirit he binds him, so that he can make no resistance.

2. Also by restraining Satan, or putting him into chains, that he can go no further than our Lord permits him; also what hurt soever he is suffered to do to his saints, his church, and people, our Lord makes it turn to their good, and for their profit and advantage, whether it be done more immediately by himself in those suggestions and temptations, whereby he fixeth and troubles the saints, or what he doth by his servants and diabolical emissaries. Moreover, he spoils Satan's house, by pulling of it quite down, and new building it, so that it may become a fit habitation for himself to dwell and reign in through the Spirit: by this means also sin (which is the chief goods) is destroyed, the power thereof being broken, and the poor believer delivered from the guilt and punishment thereof; also hardness of heart, ignorance, and unbelief are spoiled, which were Satan's goods, so that he hath in that soul no goods to boast of, nor a house to dwell in.

How Jesus
Christ binds
the strong
man.

O! what consolation and comfort is here.

Comfort.

1. For, poor sinners, your strong and cruel enemy Satan is overcome. Almighty Jesus hath conquered and slain him; the strong man armed is subdued, your adversary the devil is brought down, and lies mangled in his blood (as I may so say) at the foot of your blessed Saviour. What though he hath as yet possession of your hearts, cry out to the Lord Jesus Christ to give you faith, and pray him to come in to your assistance; if you get the shield of faith, and manfully in the name and strength of Jesus Christ resist him, he will fly from you; be not afraid of his power nor policy, but tell him he is a beaten and conquered enemy, that Christ the seed of the woman hath broken his head. But,

2. The chiefest comfort is yours that are believers.

1. Satan is cast out of your house; a stronger than he hath appeared for you actual relief. (2.) Your house is now new made, and, "Christ dwells in your hearts by faith," Eph. iii. 17; and by the Spirit, whose habitation you are now become. (3.) Satan can never return again to get power over you, nor rule in you; "because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4. You have through Christ overcome the wicked one. (4.) Christ is your Captain; he hath espoused your cause, nay, it is his own cause; and whenever Satan assaults you, Christ will come into your assistance, but be sure sleep not; be always on your watch, and never engage this enemy in your own strength. Remember Paul, when he was buffeted, "he sought the Lord thrice," 2 Cor. xii. 8. O! be much in prayer. (5.) Know though your own inherent grace may not be enough, yet the grace that is in Christ is; "My grace is sufficient for thee."—Let our condition be what it will, his grace is sufficient, and his love an everlasting: "We are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us."

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

UNCLEAN SPIRIT, GONE OUT OF A MAN.

SERMON V.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished: then goeth he and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.—Matt. xii. 43—45.

THIS place of holy Scripture is generally acknowledged to be hard to be understood; most expositors and annotators (I have met with.) say but little to it.

Preached
August 10,
1696.

Some call it a parable, and others a parabolical speech or a similitude.

The scope and design of this parable.

By the scope and coherence of the place, it is evident our Saviour setteth forth by it the direful state and condition of the Scribes and Pharisees, and other people of the Jews, who boasted of their external holiness, or seeming sanctity, they being not profane or notorious sinners; or as they themselves foolishly said, "Not extortioners, unjust, or adulterers, like as the publicans were." Luke xviii. 11. Yet the Lord Jesus showeth by this parable how they were deceived; for though they were delivered from that profane and debauched unclean spirit, yet was their state worse than the state of gross and wicked sinners, which is signified by the entering into them seven other unclean spirits, worse or more wicked than the first that were gone out of them.

That the words may be applied to them and other people of that generation, is evident from the sequel of ver. 45, "Even so shall it be with the people of this froward generation." Yet no doubt our blessed Saviour in this place may have reference to a man in the like state; or as Beza, *Ceterum quum spiritus impurus exierit a quopiam, &c.*, as well as unto that people who were carried away with cursed hypocrisy.

"When the unclean spirit." &c.

By the unclean spirit, τὸ ἀκαθάρτον πνεῦμα, is certainly meant the devil, called "an unclean spirit," Mark v. 8.

The parts opened, why Satan is called an unclean spirit.

1. Because he hath lost his own original purity, or clean and holy nature, he being at first created an angel of light, having like holiness before he fell, which the blessed and elect angels of heaven have.

2. Because he is so universally filthy and abominably vile in himself, and so remains, and will abide for ever, there being no possibility for him to become better, he being left and forsaken of God, without any means afforded of being purged from his unclean and filthy nature.

3. Because he is not only unclean in himself, but also defileth the hearts and spirit of all such persons who receive and entertain him, nay, all the pollution of our nature; yea, the whole nature of the human race was originally from that compliance and yielding to him by our first parents. It is this unclean spirit that hath poisoned and notoriously defiled the whole man, both body and soul in all its powers and faculties; and not the whole man only, but the whole world also. And as this is naturally the filthy and miserable condition of all creatures, so those who yield to his temptations, come to have further pollution and defilement cleave to their hearts and lives. Sin is an unclean thing, and it makes all such loathsome and abominable in the sight of God, who are overcome by it. Though all naturally are vile and filthy, yet there are degrees of uncleanness; some are worse than others, more wicked, and so more like to the devil, in whom his very image or likeness clearly may be seen.

4. He may also be called an unclean spirit, because he continually enticeth, and strives to draw men to filthiness, and to all manner of uncleanness, being an utter enemy to all purity and true holiness, enying all those who love it, and strive to promote it.

"Is gone out of a man." Not that the man was actually possessed with the devil, (as some may think,) though it is very like the Lord Jesus may borrow this parabolical speech from a person actually possessed; but he showeth hereby that all wicked men are in a mystical and spiritual sense possessed with the devil; all graceless sinners have an unclean spirit in them. Where sin predominates and rules in the heart, there the devil has possession; that heart is Satan's throne where he reigns and sways the sceptre. Satan was said to enter into Judas, and to fill the heart of

Ananias. Both these had this unclean spirit in them; the one was plagued or possessed with a treacherous devil, and the other with a lying devil. Hence it is also said, that Satan, who is the prince of the power of the air, both "worketh and ruleth in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2, 3.

Luke xxii. 3.
Acts v. 3.

"Gone out." Either by the power and force of the grace of God in its common operations he was thrown out; or else, through policy, he voluntarily leaves his house for a time, with an intention to return again with a stronger force. Some adhere to the first sense, and others to the last.

"Gone out," *i. e.*, as a carnal, profane, or black devil, for so he may be said to be in all debauched persons; and in this respect he may be said to be gone out or thrown out of the Pharisees, and other false and counterfeit professors; he may not be able to keep them any longer under the power of open and gross profaneness. And from hence the Pharisee proudly breaks forth, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican," Luke xviii. 11. Why may not Satan be expelled or forced out of his house in some degree, by the common influences of the Spirit? All gene-

rally grant that legal convictions, and the operation of common grace through the workings of natural conscience, have some considerable power in them to reform the life of a wicked person. Nor can I think Satan would yield to any soul voluntarily, so far as to let him become so much as civilized if he could help it; therefore I rather think he was forced to give place, as not being able to hold his own (in some respect,) as formerly, although whilst the creature abides in his natural state, not having a changed heart, Satan hath possession of that soul still in a great measure; and therefore he leaves, no doubt, a strong guard behind him, when he is said to go out, though they may be said to hide themselves, or retire into some lurking-holes and corners of the house, or rather of the heart. Satan cannot, doubtless, keep possession always, so far as to hold men under the power of gross and scandalous sins, or cause them to continue openly profane; such power and virtue is there in the common operation of the Spirit, or in legal convictions and workings of natural conscience, together with the help of the external ministration of God's word, and by the means of afflictions, and those severe providences and dispensations, under which wicked men may be exercised, that it may tend to make them become other men; though it cannot change their hearts, yet it may make a great change in their lives, by which means they may look like saints, and talk like saints and sanctified persons, and be taken for such too by the truly godly; nay, and that which is worse, may conclude within themselves they are converted, since their former enemy, that debauched, gross, and unclean spirit is gone out of them. I am so far of the mind of James Arminius, that man may by the means of that common help and power God affords to all in general, may leave the gross acts of wickedness, let Satan do what he can; which has been often evinced by that terror severe human laws have had on the consciences of wicked and ungodly persons. I am persuaded were there a law that he that swore an oath, or was drunk, or committed adultery, should have his right-hand cut off, or be made a slave all the days of his life, we should see men would get power over those temptations of Satan, and neither be drunk nor commit adultery.

"He walketh through dry places."

1. Satan is said in that of Job i. 7, "to go to and fro in the earth, and to walk up and down in it." Satan here speaks, saith Mr. Caryl, like a prince; therefore saith he, "Some conceive this for the prince of devils that is mentioned in this text, or Beelzebub the chief of devils." He walketh about to view his provinces and territories, from one place to another, but he doth not walk to and fro as an idle peripaterick, but to enquire, to observe, and consider, as a spy, to search all things and persons as he passeth along. Therefore,

What is meant by Satan's walking through dry places.

2. This noteth that Satan is a diligent enemy; if he hath lost a little ground, or is worsted in one soul, he will try what power and success he can find in another.

3. It shows that he is an inquiet and restless spirit, being cast out of heaven, he can rest nowhere; and if he be forced out of some men at one time, he will tempt others, nay, if the servant hath a little worsted him, he to revenge himself, will fall perhaps in the next place upon the Son; if he lose some place in his own house, he will see if he cannot get into the temple of the Holy Ghost; or, if he is forced to leave wet and filthy places, in which he delights, he will walk through dry places, and see what he can meet with there.

4. Satan's great work which he employs himself in and about, is, no doubt, to get into the heart of men to dwell, nay, rule there, and so subject them to himself, and defile and pollute them one way or other.

"Dry places, seeking rest, and finding none," i. e., where there is no water or moisture, or not enough to refresh him; he has a cruel thirst upon him, and unless he meet with that he seeketh, which is to make a prey of the souls of men, he is in a restless state, like a thirsty person who walking through dry places, can find no water. There are some sorts of men that afford Satan no content nor satisfaction; he seeketh for that oftentimes which he finds not; he is not pleased to be as a traveller, to pass through a place and stay, (as it were but for a night) but would fain find rest, i. e., have a place or heart to dwell in, and take sole possession of. I find one of the ancients, who, writing on this dark expression, speaketh thus: "So long as he dwelleth not in me, he is said to seek rest, he is grieved and vexed," &c.

What is meant by Satan's seeking rest.

1. Dry places, are commonly clean places, or places where there is no dirt or mire; and Satan, that unclean spirit, is like a swine, i. e., he delights in filthy and miry places; dry places signify his assaulting the saints, or seeking to get into sanctified hearts, or hearts renewed by the special grace of God, and thoroughly purged by the blood of Christ, in whom that filthy sink of sin and pollution, is not only dried up, but the heart is changed and made new, and so no more a house or habitation for

What is meant by dry places.

this unclean spirit, but is become the temple of the Holy Ghost, or a habitation for God through the Spirit. And these men's hearts are unto Satan, like dry places to a thirsty and restless person. For as the Holy Spirit cannot rest, nor take up his abode in filthy and polluted hearts; so the devil, that wicked spirit, can find no rest nor place of abode in renewed and sanctified hearts. And as it is no suitable house or habitation for him; so likewise believers have one dwelling in them, strong enough to keep Satan out. "For stronger (saith the apostle) is he that is in us, than he which is in the world," and again he saith, "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." 1 John v. 18. "He that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not," 1 John ii. 14. Shall not so touch him as to enter into his heart and take up his dwelling, or get possession of him any more, and therefore these men's hearts, i. e., the hearts of true sanctified Christians, I conclude are meant here by our Saviour, which are to Satan as dry places, where there is no dwelling or abiding for him.

2. As dry places are clean places; so likewise they are commonly barren places, places where little or nothing will grow; Satan is for such hearts that will receive his evil seed, i. e., suited and fit to close in with his cursed temptations, which are like to moist or miry place, such as all corrupt and unregenerate hearts are, in others that bitter and evil seed which this unclean spirit sows, will not take root. Or if it should so fall out, that through the carelessness and negligence of believers, and strength of temptations, Satan should drop some of his cursed seed in them, and it should meet with a little of the old corrupt nature (there being in the best of men an unregenerate part) yet it would soon wither and come to nothing, for their hearts are, (as I said before) no proper soil for the seed of the wicked one; therefore if he gets in a little, he is soon turned out again; so that in a word, according to the import of this saying of Christ, (as I conceive) these men's hearts are to the devil, like dry places, where he can find no rest.

3. Dry places are for the most part places least inhabited for want of water, the hearts of saints are like uninhabitable places to Satan; in them he cannot find those proper accommodations which he needs and must have where he dwells. But since he can find no dwelling here, no diabolical comfort nor refreshment, i. e., no abode in godly hearts; he saith, "I will return into my house from whence I came out," ver. 44.

What is meant by Satan's returning. "I will return." Not that he was quite routed and vanquished before; it is called still his house, he lays claim and pleads propriety in him and interest still. Therefore this man's heart was not become the temple of the holy Spirit, he was gone out, or forced out before, as a swearing, cursing, whoring, or drunken devil, &c., and this might enrage him, and move him to attempt some greater enterprise which we have already spoken to. Satan doth not love to lose or let go any strong hold he hath of carnal and profane persons; but seeing he had received some small defeat, he sets upon the truly godly Christian; like as when he was cast out of heaven unto the earth, he presently persecuted the woman which brought forth a man child, Rev. xii. 13. When he saw he could not uphold his kingdom by Paganism, nor farther execute his malice by Pagan emperors, but was routed and overcome as to that power he had, (as our late annotators observe) to let us know that he retains his malice, though he hath lost his former strength, he goes on in pursuing the church of God. Even so, I say, he having been forced to give way before as I hinted, he walks about to seek revenge upon the saints, but they being to him like dry places to a thirsty man, or as an inn to a traveller, viz., no resting place, he resolves to return to his own house, that is, the hearts of hypocritical professors, such as the Pharisees were. And this returning of his into his old house, imports (as I conceive) his coming again in another form or shape, and with a resolution to get better and more firmer and surer possession than he had before.

Now he appears as an angel of light. Nor can we suppose he had no party left in the said house when he went out. Parables must not be strained too far; we ought not to screw or make to severe a scrutiny upon every phrase; therefore we cannot think when he is said to return to his former house, or attempt afresh the false and counterfeit Christian, that he hath quite given over his designs in assaulting sanctified persons; but he cannot endure to be an underling, he is for kinging it in the souls of men, would fain reign and sway the sceptre there, and where he cannot rule and domineer, he hath no rest, nor can be satisfied. And therefore he may be said to return as an exiled prince, and lest he should be discovered, he puts on a new garb, and is now contented his captive should become religious, that so the deluded sinner might not discern him, but take him for his lawful sovereign; as if he should say, I will yield to you now; if you will be a professor and be-

come religious, ye shall, but I will dwell with you notwithstanding; here is room enough for me as a white devil, though not as a black one.

“And when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished.”

Empty, that is the Spirit of God was not there, true grace was not there, Christ dwelleth not there, that house may be said to be empty, where God and Jesus Christ are not; nor is it a hard and difficult thing for the unclean spirit to enter into such a soul, since there was no enemy strong enough to keep him out; but contrariwise, the place seems to be rather prepared and made fit for him, to take up his abode in this new religious and spiritual appearance, nay, here is not only room for himself, but the house is so empty, that many other unclean spirits more wicked than himself, may have their abode and dwelling there also. Satan saith, I will return to my house, &c. He speaks as if he was sure enough that this sinner was his own, and therefore should without any difficulty enter in, in that new disguise in which he now appears; and accordingly it is said, he findeth it empty, and also swept; but doubtless some dirt and filth was yet in some hole or corner. For like as a lazy and slothful housewife uses to sweep a little of the loose dust and filth in the open and middle of the room, and lets many secret corners lie foul as before, and may be leaves the dirt behind the door out of the public view of people: so the false and counterfeit Christian reforms his life in the sight of men; or like the Pharisees, makes clean the outside of the cup and platter, but their hearts are still polluted, and as vile as ever.

Swept, but not with a proper and fit broom; it is said to be swept, but alas it was only with the besom of legal reformation; and how far that will cleanse the unclean and wicked person, is known to understanding men; it only takes away the filth of gross and scandalous sins, therefore said by St. Peter, “To escape the corruption that is in the world,” 2 Pet. ii. 4; that is, the profane world, i. e., vile and notorious sins and pollutions.

And garnished, or painted, which may signify that seeming sanctity, moral virtue, and the common graces of the Spirit. Our Saviour elsewhere compares pharisaical holiness, to painting or garnishing of a sepulchre; “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men’s bones, and all uncleanness. Ye build (saith he) the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,” Matt. xxiii. 27, 29. And thus pharisaical and hypocritical professors may be said to be garnished, i. e., they seem glorious to men, who only judge by the outward appearance, and know not the heart; there may be a great change of life, a beautiful outside, and yet the evil and vicious habits and pollutions of the heart may still the same, and not changed. And remarkable is the phrase of our Saviour “garnished,” which we know is commonly a curious piece of art, men by their ingenuity strive to imitate nature; they will draw the face of a man, &c., with curious painting, very exact, so that it much resembles the person’s natural face, yet it is not the same, it is but a piece of paint, an artificial invention. Even so in like manner by the improvement of man’s natural parts, common grace, light and knowledge, he may appear in the view and sight of men, as a true child of God, and may talk and discourse like a saint, read and hear God’s word, nay, and pray also with much seeming devotion and piety, and may likewise bridle many unruly lusts, and gross enormities of life, and give alms to the poor, insomuch that he may very exactly resemble a true and sincere Christian, and be taken by all godly people to be indeed such an one; but notwithstanding all, it is but an artificial piece, it is but like a curious paint, or vain-glorious garnish; it is not the image of God, it is not the new creature; though it looks like it, much resembles it, yet is not the same; for the man is a mere hypocrite, a counterfeit Christian, the work upon him being only the product of natural improvements, and not the effects of the saving operations of the Holy Spirit. Nay, and Satan, though an unclean spirit, likes to dwell in such a house, I mean such a heart, thus swept and garnished, as well as in the heart of a vile and debauched person, and evident it is, that this sweeping or external cleansing with the broom of outward reformation, or the garnish of moral righteousness, common gifts and graces of the Spirit, prayer, hearing the word, partaking of the sacraments, and doing many good works, cannot secure his soul against Satan’s attempts, in order to his taking up his habitation in such person’s hearts.

After I had preached these two sermons, a godly friend who heard them, told me he had met with a treatise of a worthy author, who gives the same sense on this mysterious place of scripture, he helped me to the book which I was ignorant of, and I shall give you some brief hints of what he hath said.

What is intended by the house being empty, swept, and garnished.

Mr. Rich Allen’s *Vindictive picturis*.

“When the unclean spirit goeth out of a man,” &c. That sinners are vile and abominable, (saith he) it is from that wicked spirit Satan, that dwells in them, every sinner is a person possessed of a devil; when a little reformed, they seem for a time to be dispossessed, &c., he walketh through dry places; what these dry places may be, is not easy to determine, some by these *loca arida*, understand *loca vacua*, void, empty places, the deserts and wastes of the the earth, where he finds nobody to tempt or molest.

But could Satan, saith he, think to find rest there where was no house for him to lay his head in? would the tempter waste his time in seeking whom to devour in those waste places, where he knew well enough there were none to be found? He knows too well where sinners dwell, than to go to seek them where they are not; more like to find the devil at a market, than in a wilderness. This therefore seems not to be the sense—

Why may not, saith he, these dry places be the saints on earth, the fountain of whose blood is dried up? in whom the sun hath dried up their dirt and mire, in which this swine loves to wallow, &c., [he seeketh rest] this notes two things.

1. When the devil is gone out of any person, he is never at rest till he is gotten in again, from whence he went out, or into some other habitation where he may do more mischief, like children, like father, is said of some, so it is much more true of him, “He rests not but in doing mischief.”

2. The devil loves to dwell where he may be at rest; that is, not from work (his rest is his work) but from resistance or opposition, i. e., in carnal and unclean hearts, &c.

What is meant by Satan's finding no rest. “Seeking rest and finding none,” he goes, saith he, through these dry places, from saint to saint, from heart to heart, in hope to find entertainment, but is still disappointed; here is little rest for me, saith he, to be had, these dry places I see are no places for me, here is watching and wrestling and warring against me; so much praying, complaining against me, that there is no stay for me here—I will go back to my old habitation, and when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished, a little cleansed, a little cleaner and handsomer than when he left it. The devil can allow sinners a little re-formation; but though it be a little cleansed and garnished, yet it lies empty still, there is no tenant hath taken it up, though the devil went out, Christ was not let in, but there it lies void for the next that comes.

Then he goeth and taketh seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Beware of a returning devil; the devil at his return often makes sevenfold worse work than before he did. Allen's godly fear, p. 213, 214, 215, 216.

He modestly offers this as his thoughts on the place, and I find others confirming by some brief hints the same things. I thought it not amiss to recite this passage of his, as a farther confirmation of the exposition I have briefly given you of this dark place of scripture, not doubting but it is the sense and meaning of our Saviour.

Doct. I. Take two or three points of doctrine. Observe.

1. Satan is an unclean spirit. As God is the Author and Original of all true holiness, so is Satan of all sin and wickedness. And as God's nature is pure, so the devil in his nature is impure; all purity proceeds from God, and all sin proceeds from Satan; God strives to promote the one, and the devil labours to promote the other, as God's kingdom is set up in the world, and maintained by holiness and spiritual sanctity; so the devil's kingdom is set up and upheld by sin and filthiness. As God by his Spirit dwells in sanctified hearts, so the devil dwells in polluted and sinful hearts: and as Christ makes that man or woman holy and clean where he makes his abode; so Satan makes those souls where he takes up his dwelling, unclean and abominably wicked. Moreover, as he who is truly sanctified and made holy,

John viii. 44,
1 John iii. 8,
12.

is said to be of God; so they that are wicked and ungodly, are said to be of the devil. All those who are spiritually and truly gracious are like to God, or bear some resemblance of him; and all unclean and wicked persons are like to the devil. These things considered, no marvel Satan is called an unclean spirit.

Doct. II. 2. All profane, notorious, and ungodly sinners are in a woful state, the unclean spirit is in them, their hearts are Satan's habitation.

See the foregoing parable. The heart of man was not originally Satan's house, nor hath he any just right or property to it; it is his by usurpation and conquest, as men yield up themselves to him, and entertain his temptations. Man, both body and soul, is the Lord's, he is his creature; nor ought he to suffer any to dwell in him, much less to rule and sway the sceptre over him, but the holy God. But as all men as they come into the world, have wretched and cursed natures, through original depravity; so ungodly men actually

have cast off God their lawful and only sovereign, and have embraced the wicked one, they have received, and do subject themselves to Satan, that unclean and filthy spirit, he is king and lord over them. The devil hath got possession by craft, he enticed our first parents to open the door to him, they gave him the first entertainment, it was then he took possession, and thereby at once corrupted all that are in the house; I mean, all the faculties of the soul to such a degree, that they all naturally side with Satan, and Rom. viii. 7. are for him, and are filled with enmity against God, and oppose and resist his Spirit, and rebel against the light. Wicked men had rather be under the tyrannical government of the devil, than to be ruled and governed by Jesus Christ, and from hence it is no wonder they rather choose to have wicked earthly rulers and tyrannical kings to be over them, than to be subject to a prince who is an enemy to wickedness, tyranny and oppression. This shows the blindness and miserable state and condition of all wicked and ungodly men. We may further note also,

Doct. III.

2. That Satan may lose some ground in sinner's hearts, he may seem to be gone out of them, and they may become sober and civilized, and yet may be in the gall of bitterness, and their hearts notwithstanding may be still Satan's habitation.

Let these men change their lives, and become other men in the view of the world; alter their course of life, yet they are miserable; Satan has spiritual power and dominion over them, he has a strong party in their hearts, when he seems to be gone out, and knows they are his still, and owns them as his dwelling-place. When he cannot meet with entertainment in other places, when saints afford him no encouragement, but displease and defy him, and their hearts are as dry places, he can nevertheless return at pleasure to his old habitation, and there he enters and dwells. Let them change their religion, yet they are Satan's slaves still, he matters not if they leave popery and cleave to prelacy, and so become protestants in general; nay, embrace a more refined sort of people, and take upon them a more strict profession of religion, yet still they belong to him, if they are not truly regenerated and renewed in their souls; let them be Presbyterians, Independents, or Baptists, it signifies nothing, they are still the same, and under Satan's power and dominion. O how miserably are some men deceived, thinking if they are reformed and become zealous for external ordinances, and have taken up this or that form of religion, and are taken for saints by men, that all is well, and they shall be saved! How did the Pharisees glory in their seeming zeal and piety, and flatter themselves, and yet wofully blinded, and in a damnable state and condition? Note also, that,

Doct. IV.

4. Morality, external gifts, and common grace, are but like a vain paint, a mere empty and artificial garnish.

They make a fair show in the flesh, they pride it in themselves, and men praise and admire them, but what doth all this signify? they are still under a diabolical power and influence, and two-fold more the children of the devil than they were before. Nay, as I shall hereafter show, rather seven times worse than when they were openly wicked and profane.

APPLICATION.

1. A terror to sinners. Tremble you that live wicked lives, remember the unclean spirit dwells in you, and has power over you, your hearts are his habitation, he rules in you, and takes you captive at his will. If in this state you die, you are undone for ever.

2. See to it, you that are professors, lest you are also deceived. What is a reformed life without a changed heart? To cast off the gross acts of sin, will not avail you anything, without the evil habits are broke, and you renewed in the spirit of your mind. Though you seem to be godly to men, yet God knows your hearts, and how they stand affected to him, and to true real godliness. A form of religion will never save you; and though you may have got some ground against Satan, and he seems to have left you, or is gone out, yet take heed he does not return again with greater strength, and get you into stronger bonds now, than he had before. But because this will be more fully opened in the next place, I shall at present say no more to it now.

3. This also affords much comfort to God's people. Satan sets upon you, and fain he would subject your souls to himself, and take possession of your hearts, but he cannot prevail, you have got one in you who is stronger than Satan, who will preserve you to his heavenly kingdom. But no more at this time. I shall leave what I have said to the blessing of God.

SERMON VI.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, &c.—Matt. xii. 43—45.

Morning exercise Horsely-down, August 17, 1690. **OU** THE last day I opened the several parts of this place of holy Scripture, in the usual method I have all along taken in my exposition of other parables, which I have already spoken to, according to that small measure of light and knowledge the Lord hath been pleased to bestow upon me. There remains one thing further to be done, and that is indeed the chief and most material of all, which is to show you the sad state of the false and counterfeit professor, out of whom the unclean spirit is said to be gone, but yet is returned again with seven other spirits more wicked than himself. Our Blessed Lord saith, “The last state of that man is worse than the first,” Matt. xii. 45. Now in what respect a painted hypocrite, or one garnished only with common gifts and graces of the Spirit, may be said to be in a worse state than the open profane, I shall endeavour, God assisting, to demonstrate.

What is meant by seven other worse spirits. It is said, “Satan returned with seven other spirits,” &c. Seven is a number of perfection. I judge our Saviour designed hereby to show that the devil hath now got stronger hold and possession of such a person by many degrees; many unclean spirits, or worse and more dangerous sins cleave to him than before, so that he is like to be perfectly miserable. But to proceed;

The first an ignorant spirit under clearer light. First, That which renders false professors, or counterfeit Christians, to be in such a deplorable condition, (which also evidently appeared in the Pharisees, and other people in that generation, to whom primarily our Saviour refers, as the close of the 45 ver. shows) is, that great ignorance that cleaves to them, notwithstanding their common illuminations; which usually does consist in these respects following.

Hypocrites know not their woful state. 1. “They know not their own miserable state, looking upon themselves to be rich and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing,” Rev. iii. 17. As appears by that charge of the Lord Christ against the church of Laodicea, who were fallen into the like condition; they think none knows more than themselves, insomuch that they secretly condemn him who tells them how it is with them; and this rises from the consideration of that great knowledge they conceit they have above others; “But now ye say, Ye see, therefore your sin remains,” John ix. xl. If your ignorance were simple, (as if Christ should say) and not affected, or were you sensible of your blindness, then your disease would not be so incurable. But now you say you see, and you doubt not but you are in a state of happiness, and are the only people of God, and yet presumptuously refuse the way of your relief and salvation, and do not conclude you are under guilt and wrath, as indeed you are.

Men may have a changed life and no change of heart. 2. Their blindness and ignorance consisteth, in that they cannot discern nor distinguish between a changed heart, and a changed life, or between legal reformation and true regeneration. They think, because their state seems so much better than it was before, in their own apprehension, and in the apprehension of others also, their condition is good enough; they comparing themselves with themselves, beholding what a vast difference there is, or seems to be in respect of what they once were, when swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, &c., cannot but commend themselves to themselves. Once they saw themselves sinners, and called themselves so, and were ashamed of their own sinful and wicked lives; but now they are righteous in their own conceit, and so have no need of any farther work, being arrived to that state of holiness, (as they think) or that degree of piety, to that change, to that conversion, that they conclude they need not seek for any other, and yet are deceived, and in the gall of bitterness. And hereby they seem to put themselves out of the call of Jesus Christ, “who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Matt. xviii. II. Let men think what they please, certainly there is no devil like this devil. If he can persuade a man that he is whole, and not sick at all, and so needs no physician; and that when the gospel is preached to sinners, and the danger of unbelief is opened, yet it doth not affect him, nor concern him, he being become a righteous person; what hopes can there be of such a one? Alas, the ministers of Christ have received no commission to offer Christ to any but to sinners. Now these are not the

persons a precious Saviour is tendered unto, they see no want nor need of him, and therefore these are passed by, as such who need no repentance.

3. Their blindness consisteth in their ignorance of God's righteousness, not knowing what righteousness it is that will render them accepted and justified in the sight of God; and so, like the poor Jews, go "about to establish their own righteousness," Rom. x. 3, their own personal righteousness, a home-spun righteousness; they see no need to go to another, to be beheld to another.

Secondly, Their danger appears also from a proud devil that is now entered into them. Pride commonly accompanies ignorance, and this abounds in the heart of man by nature, and there it will predominate, till the soul passes through an effectual change, but it appears in none so fully, or to such a degree, as in a Pharisaical person; he cannot endure to think he is so poor as profane and notorious sinners are; what, go to his neighbour's door for every morsel of bread he eats, and for every draught of drink! no, it is below him to beg, he thinks it is enough for publicans and sinners to do so. And indeed what need he go to be fed and clothed by another, that is full, and sees his goods increased, and hath need of nothing? Faith empties the soul, makes it poor, before it fills and enriches it. But this man knows not what faith is, nor the life of it. Pride springs from an inordinate self-love, and self-flattery, are the glasses in which a self-deceived hypocrite looks, in which he appears indeed that which daily he is not. Self-love is a multiplying, yea, a magnifying glass. These never had a true sight of themselves, never saw their own poverty, and horrid pollution of their nature; it is with them, as it was with the apostle, before the commandment came, they are alive and beautiful in their own eyes.

Lucifer, as some pretend, is one of the chief of devils, who is called also the king of pride. If so, certainly he is one of those wicked spirits that entered into this person. Now what but infinite power can throw out this devil, this pride, and bring this soul to the foot of the cross, and make it strike its swelling sails to Jesus Christ, and become nothing in himself, and to hate and loathe his own righteousness, by reason of that impurity and pollution that cleaves to every best duty they do or can perform? Thus this unclean spirit raises up strong fortifications against the way of salvation, the way of faith, or going to Jesus Christ, for all, as poor and undone sinners. These enemies, in hypocritical and self-righteous persons, stand armed in the breaches of nature, (as one observes) to beat off all assaults of the gospel, and therefore the latter state of these persons is worse than the first.

Thirdly, Self-confidence may be another evil spirit that is entered into these persons, and which renders their state so bad. It is impossible to persuade them that their condition is nought and damnable: you may (as hinted before) quickly bring a vile and debauched person to acknowledge his state is dangerous, though there is no turning him from his evil course; yet he stands not upon self-justification, but rather readily yields to you; if you deal with him at seasonable time with wisdom, and tell him he is a very wretched creature; I know I am, so saith he, the Lord have mercy upon me. But the man out of whom the debauched devil is gone, is in his own eyes become another person, a seeming saint, one that hears sermons, prays, and gives alms, and yet not renewed, nor his evil habits changed. O it is no easy thing to bring him once to doubt or question the goodness of his condition, he blesses God for that help he has had to change his former course of life; "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men, nor as this Publican;" I was as bad as others, but I am become religious; I am no swearer, whore-monger, drunkard, extortioner, &c. To this purpose you have the Pharisee boasting and praising God; this renders his state lamentable with a witness. What made the foolish virgins so bold as to go forth to meet the bridegroom? Was it not that confidence they had that their condition was good? "A wise man," saith Solomon, feareth and departeth from iniquity; but a fool rageth, and is confident," Prov. xiv. 16.

Fourthly; vain-glory also certainly may be another sin this person is become guilty of. The design of God in the gospel, is to discover how vile, helpless, and wretched all men naturally are in themselves, and so to show us that we have nothing to glory in, "but that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord," 1 Cor. i. 31. But these persons glory in their seeming gifts, parts, learning, knowledge, and external privileges: they are like those of old who cried out, the temple of the Lord, or the church of God are we. Poor sinners have nothing to glory in unless it be their shame. The publican cries out, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner." But the false and self-righteous professor, like as a rich man glories in his riches, and a strong man glories in his strength, so he

glories in his own righteousness, in his spiritual attainments and seeming sanctity.

This vain-glorious person little considereth what horrid pollution abides still in his heart, for which he is accursed by the law of God, and so remains till he hath real union with Christ, and is brought under a divine change. What though he has escaped some abominable evils and corruptions of his life, since his vicious habits, and filthy nature is not changed, nor he sees not the purity of the law of God? alas, he beholds it, as only forbidding all outward acts of sin, but the spirituality of it was never opened to him, for if it had, he would see no ease of glorying in himself, but contrariwise would soon be convinced of his error and sad mistake, and behold himself an undone man, and cry out of the deceitful nature, turnings and windings of his own base heart, thoughts and affections, and that great disproportion or disagreement to the perfect rule, or how far he is from that holiness and rectitude described in the book of God. It amazed Paul, when he once came fully to understand the law, when he looked on all the parts of it, not only on the grosser sins forbidden by it, but on the rectitude, the holiness, which is required therein: when he saw the law discovered lust to be sin, and that the least lust of the heart is as palpable a breach of it, as murder, theft, or the outward act of adultery, and exposed equally to the curse of it, and so to the wrath of God: then (saith he) "sin revived, and I died," Rom. vii. 9. that is, as to any hopes of life and salvation; by that righteousness which before he gloried in, and made his boast of.

5. A spirit of formality. Fifthly; moreover, formality, it may appear to all, from hence is another evil that does attend this sort of men, or is another wicked spirit that hath possession oft heir souls. What a stir did the Pharisees make about ceremonies? how zealous were they, like some now-a-days for outward rituals and traditions of their own devising, or which are merely human? as if the chief part of religion, and the sacred worship of God, consisted in external forms, rites, and ceremonies; "And art confident (saith the apostle) that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light to them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast a form of knowledge, and of the truth in the Annotators. law," Rom. ii. 19, 20. A scheme or system of notions, a compendious model method which is artificially composed, such as tutors and professors of arts and sciences do read over again and again to their pupils and auditors: these men are commonly the chief enemies to the power of religion and godliness, and like their brethren of old, great persecutors of God's faithful and sincere children, whilst they cry up their external forms, considering not what our Saviour saith, that "God is a Spirit," John iv. 24, and seeks spiritual worshippers of him, not formal, not external, or carnal modes, bodily gestures, consecrated places, attended with glorious ceremonies, saying over a few prayers, in which are many vain repetitions, not minding whether their matter of worship be of divine institution or not, nor whether they perform their devotion in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, flowing from a rectified nature, and from sacred principles in the life and power that attends all sanctified Christian worshippers. Others of the same sort may be right in the matter of worship, seeming to hate idolatry and all superstition, yet wholly resting on the external part of religion and godliness, whose state may be as dangerous as those before named; though in this they seem to excel them, i. e., the first miss it both in the matter of divine worship, as well as in the manner of it; they are zealous for the traditions and commandments of men; as they are formal in their worship, so their form is not that form of doctrine once delivered to the saints; it is not the true form of godliness, having "a form of godliness," 2 Tim. iii. 5, not the form; it is like a mask or vizard, or appearance, an accidental form (as one observes on that place) it is a devised, or an human, may, may be an antichristian form, thinking themselves to be Christians, and the only worshippers of pretended Christ, and cry up themselves to be the church, and yet under this vizard and piety are very vicious, empty and vain; denying the power of godliness.

6. A legal spirit. Sixthly, The wicked spirit, or abominable sin that some of these men's souls are also possessed with, is legality. And though this clearly appears by what I have already said, yet I shall speak a little more fully and distinctly unto it. All that these persons do and perform, is in a legal spirit; and that I may show you what I mean by legality, in short it is this, i. e., that act and do for life, look upon themselves to be under a conditional covenant; and whilst they live up to that law or rule which they judge they are bound to observe and keep, in order to justification, they have peace, rendering the gospel and covenant of grace (by their false apprehensions of it) no better than a legal ministration or conditional covenant, as was hinted before in respect of another sort of men: for like as the Jews of old acted in a legal spirit, and sought to be justified by the works of the law, so these perform all their services and duties in the

same spirit, viz., not from life, or a divine principle of saving faith, but for life. To keep the commandments of God, and live religiously, is absolutely necessary. But then this must be done from a renewed nature, and flow from faith, it being the proper effect or fruit thereof; but to strive to live a sober and holy life, and obey God's precepts, and rest upon their so doing, and look to be accepted with God, and justified thereby, is that which too many of this sort of people do, and this is to act in a legal spirit. Possibly a man may say, I know I cannot presently keep the law, but I will do (by the help of God) what I can; and wherein I through weakness do transgress, the Lord is merciful, and I trust will forgive me. But let them remember what God saith, viz., "that he will in no wise clear the guilty." Moreover, what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that all months may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19. It is evident, as God will not forgive an impenitent person, so he will not forgive the penitent, except they believe in Jesus Christ.

Seventhly, Amongst the wicked spirits that are entered into this man, ^{7. An unbelieving spirit reigns.} namely, into this counterfeit Christian, that horrid and wicked spirit of unbelief must not be left out, for though this sin of sins is in all unconverted persons, yet it reigns and triumphs more in this sort of people than in others. Profane persons are kept up by a false faith, depending, as they will tell you, on the death and merits of Christ, though it is only cursed presumption in them; for that cannot be a true faith, which changes not the heart and life of the creature. But they believe not, by reason of love to their sins, which they not as yet willing to forego. But these believe not on Christ, because of that love which they have to their own seeming righteousness, which in point of trust, hope, and dependance, they as not willing to forego. These men place that hope on their own works and righteousness, which true Christians place on Christ, and so unbelief in them throws Christ quite away, they having no need of him.

1. What is unbelief, but an actual or virtual denial of the truth of the gospel, when men do not assent to the doctrine of it, by an act of the understanding?

2. It is a refusal to accept heartily of Christ upon the terms of the gospel, ^{Charnock.} which is opposite to justifying faith, when there is not a fiducial motion to Christ as the centre. When Christ the only foundation and chief corner-stone, is laid aside, and the need and worth of him not believed. This sin binds all the guilt of all their old and new sins upon their souls, it is a sin against the highest goodness of God, and casts contempt upon it; for never did God manifest such sovereign goodness unto his creatures, as in Jesus Christ. God hath said, there is no life, no salvation any other way, but ^{Acts iv. 12.} by the Lord Jesus. But these men do not assent to this truth, do not believe the report God hath given concerning the want of perfect righteousness and regeneration, and self-debasement, &c. Nay, they seem to contradict the will of God, by their going about to establish ^{Rom. x. iii.} their own righteousness, and so not submitting to the righteousness of God. In a word, it is a denying of Christ, and a disesteeming the price of his blood, as it also reflects on the wisdom of God, in fixing on this way to save sinners. It is an undervaluing the excellency of Christ's person, blood, and merits. As faith counts all things dung in comparison of Christ; so unbelief accounts the person, offices, and doctrine of Christ, but as dung in comparison of the excellency of self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-^{Phil. iii. 4,} sufficiency, &c. These men are the worst neglectors of the great salvation, ^{6, 10.}

they do not only neglect it, but slight and condemn it, there being in their thoughts not any need to look for salvation this way. They that sin against the law fly to the gospel, but these sin against the cure held forth and extended in the gospel. Whither must these fly, since there remains no more sacrifice for sin? If this be slighted, no other way or means is ordained for salvation. Such who refuse the covenant of grace, and depend on the covenant of works, how woful is their condition? And what hope a law often transgressed can give a malefactor, is (saith a worthy person) easy to imagine. Millions have perished by it, none can be secured by it, as none ever by it were or could be saved. At first these persons transgressed against the rule, but now they transgress against the rule and remedy too. None but unbelievers are despised by God, none but these shall taste of his wrath and divine vengeance; this is the condemning sin, this is Satan's strongest hold, hither he retreats after all, and here he keeps, as in chains, his miserable captive. "He that believes not, shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. And what is faith but a going out of a man's self to Christ for life and righteousness, as a poor wretched and miserable sinner? But these men now see not themselves to be in such a state, these are hypocrites.

Hypocrisy is opposed to that inward simplicity of the heart, and all counterfeit professors are guilty of it, though all do not act the part of an hypocrite with an intention, i. e.,

are not convinced they are hypocrites. Some deceive their own hearts, they are the grosser sort, then their hearts deceive them, therefore most to be pitied; a man may doubtless be an hypocrite, and he may not know it, he may go on in a way of duty, and do all things, as he thinks, exactly according to the letter of the word, and in uprightness, *Matt.* 23. as he may judge, and yet be unsound; certainly thus it was with the foolish virgins.

Characters
of an hypo-
crite.

Hypocrites may be nevertheless discerned, our Saviour hath given the character of them.

1. They are commonly most zealous from the lesser things of religion, i. e., for "paying tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, but neglect the weightier things of the law, judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God." *Matt.* xxiii. 23, 24. "They strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." *Luke* xi. 42. They make a stir about external rights, observation of days and meats, but to the power of religion and godliness are strangers, and experience nothing of a divine change on their souls.

2. As they lay the greatest stress upon the least things, so they are commonly partial in their pretended obedience; they lay hard things, "Or heavy burdens upon others, but they themselves will not touch them with one of their fingers," *Matt.* xxiii. 4. What they preach and press on others, they do not themselves, they will not obey Christ, nor follow him in the hardest things, nor do they obey in love.

3. They are commonly finding faults in other men, "Can spy the mote in their brother's eye, but cannot see the beam that is in their own," *Matt.* vii. 3. As it is a sign of notorious hypocrisy, and impudence, to censure and judge others for those sins which men live in themselves, so it is a sign of the like hypocrisy, to spy faults in others, and reproach them for those faults, and yet the person is guilty of worse himself. What they preach and press on others, they do not themselves, they will not follow Christ in the most hard and difficult things of religion, but pick and choose; will do some things that they like of, and not only neglect others, but quarrel with them who contend for it, and faithfully subject to Christ in it. And as they are not universal in their obedience, so they do not obey in love, nor do they obey always as sincere Christians do, as David intimateth.

4. They are generally very confident touching the goodness of their own condition, not questioning their salvation, thus were the Pharisees; they judged others were in a damnable state, but as touching themselves, did not doubt but they were the only people, and blessed God they were not as other men; whereas a true Christian is full of fears and doubts about the truth of grace received, and goodness of his condition.

5. They are vain-glorious, do what they do to be seen of men; like the Pharisees, "They love the praise of men, more than the praise of God," *John* xii. 43. Their hopes are kept up by the good opinion others have of them; they, like their predecessors, "love greetings in the markets, and uppermost rooms in feasts, and to be called of men Rabbi," *Matt.* xxiii. 6, 7. They also are subject to envy, or have their hearts rise against such, who they hear outdo them, and would be looked upon as the chiefest of men; in learning, and wisdom.

6. They are commonly very zealous to make men proselytes to their own notions of *Matt.* xxiii. religion, though may be, false and corrupt notions. But if they can but bring a person to receive their principles, and external ordinances, then they glory, though hereby he is made twofold (perhaps sevenfold) more the child of hell than before; the poor deceived wretch thinking this change of religion is a true conversion, and never looks out for any other, but speaking peace to his own soul, judging all is well within. They doubt not but they have religion enough when it doth commend them to men, and are taken for saints by saints; their greatest labour is to keep up their name and credit in religion; so that they may pass unsuspected amongst their fellow-creatures, or have the approbation of men, and if none can charge them justly with any immoral actions, they rest satisfied, whereas the greatest care of a true child of God is so to walk and labour, that he may be accepted of God, and have his approbation.

7. Self is commonly in the bottom. In all they do, they aim not at the glory of God, but have a carnal design, self-advantage, or self-applause, &c. This moves and quickens them, and animates them in all they perform in religious services; and if they miss of their end, be it what it will, they soon are weary, and grow cold and flat in their spirits, and become quarrelsome, and seek offences, and disturb the peace of the church to whom they belong.

8. Moreover, they are not the same at home, which they are abroad; not in private what they seem to be in public; may be seldom pray, either in their family or closet; or if they do, it is with little zeal, enlargement, or affection to God.

APPLICATION.

This may inform us of the cause and reason there is so great reproach brought upon religion, and on the ways of God, and on the people of God, by some who profess the gospel. Alas, many of them who are called saints, who Informat. 1. we may fear are but counterfeit Christians, such who never experienced a true work of grace; they may have knowing heads, but unsanctified hearts. And from hence it is there are so many proud persons in many congregations, who with brazen foreheads will brave it out, with impudent faces, in the presence of Christ's faithful ministers; and though reprov'd, and told of their cursed pride and abominable dresses, high and shameful towers, hateful to God and good men, yet reform not, will not deny themselves of their filthy lusts, though the name of God and religion is exposed to great reproach and contempt thereby, and the hearts of sincere Christians wounded, and mourn for it bitterly before the Lord. If they had but a spark of true grace, could they ever stand it out thus against the gunshot of heaven? How fearless do they seem under the rattling peals of thunder of heaven? They regard not the whetted sword of the Almighty, nor the bending of his dreadful bow; nor mind the arrows that are just upon the string, God being ready to send forth his anger with fury, and his rebukes in flames of fire.

Moreover, from hence it is also there are so many covetous, earthly and Informat. 2. hard hearted professors and members in churches. Alas, you may tell them of this abominable sin a thousand times over, and all to no purpose; their hearts (it is to be feared) are set upon their covetousness, they love the world more than the word, nay, more than God or Jesus Christ; and yet, under a cloak of religion, shelter themselves as if all was well, and they good Christians. And because they covet no man's goods but their own, and so are not guilty of theft, they conclude they are not chargeable with this sin of Matt. xxv. covetousness; though Christ's poor members are not regarded, the naked are 42, 44. not clothed, nor the hungry fed, nor the sick visited. They will give something it is true, but not according to the need and necessity of the poor, nor according to their ability; nor is it out of love to Christ, nor to his poor saints neither, they give what they do give, but may be to free themselves from reproach, or to quiet their own consciences. And hence it is likewise there are so many whisperers, tattlers, and backbiters in congregations, and so consequently so much trouble and disorder in our churches. Though godly Christians may be guilty of great disorders and many infirmities; yet I am persuaded, were there not many false and deceitful, carnal, and hypocritical professors, it would never be as it is. What makes the best design that ever was among us for the promoting the interest of Christ, and good of the churches, so neglected, and like to sink in the bud, but the great discouragement these sort of people lay it under? They have no mind to such a good and great work, they are for enriching themselves, and to lay into their own coffers and treasures, but not to cast into Christ's treasury. And this evil example of theirs, lays a temptation on sincere and upright men and women. What do such and such do? they are far richer than I, and they will do nothing. To these let me speak one word: why, will you do no more for God, because some who love him not will do nothing? Alas, you had need do the more. I am persuaded you would not willingly be found foolish virgins in the day of Christ. How do you know but these very men shall be found to be such, who value the gratifying of a base lust, above the discharging a holy and acceptable duty to Christ? who give more to deck and adorn their houses, and please the lust of their children, than they will give to promote the gospel, and recover the languishing interest of Jesus Christ that is in our hands. And may not this be the reason our assemblies are so thin on lecture-days? is it not because the hearts of the people are not right with God? Can godly Christians be always under the same temptation? Can sin predominate in them, and they act thus habitually to the scandal of their sacred religion? Can sin be in the affections of saints, because there are some infirmities in their conversations? Is not a true child of God quickly convinced of his fault? and doth he not straitway re-form? But this is a constant course of evil, and wilfully persisting in it; nay, and ye shall incur their displeasure perhaps, if you deal plainly with them. Sure Christ is at the door. Now the kingdom of heaven may certainly be compared to ten virgins, five wise, and as many foolish, I read the latter end of Matt. xxiv., and the beginning of the 25th chapter. Multitudes of foolish virgins, it is to be feared, are now got into the church, as Christ signifies it would be a little before his coming, whose latter end will be worse than the first.

This also reproveth those who foment such notions, and strive to distil them Reproof 1. into the minds of people, that are absurd, and tend to blind and ruin men's souls, telling them

they are in the covenant of grace, and church-members by their parents' faith, and have the seal of the covenant; yet I could never learn what it doth seal or make firm to them; for a seal, all know, usually makes sure all that is contained in the said covenant. Shall they miss of the blessings of the covenant of grace, who have it sealed to them? Alas, hereby it is to be feared, many think they are in a good condition, though never united by saving faith to Jesus Christ. Can it seal, and not seal covenant-mercies to them? Or can they perish after they are in the covenant, and have the seal of it? Circumcision was a seal it is true, "of that faith Abraham had, being yet uncircumcised." Rom. iv. 11, 12. It was not a seal of that faith which he had not, but of the faith which he had; and therefore it could not be a seal to his male-infants of the righteousness of their faith which they had, being yet uncircumcised, because they had no such faith before circumcision, as to believe in God, and to have it imputed to them for righteousness, as had Abraham their father, to whom circumcision was only called a seal of the righteousness of the faith, "which he had, yet being uncircumcised, and that he might be the father of all them that believe," ver. 1. It was a seal to him of the latter blessing as well as the former; for the promise that he should be the heir of the world, the apostle shows was not through the law, nor in or through circumcision, nor had any that dignity conferred upon them but Abraham only, which clearly shows circumcision did not appertain to the covenant of faith.

Reproof 2. Likewise it may reprehend another sort, who tell the people they were made "the children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," in their baptism, or rather rantism. O the danger of this pernicious doctrine! How many flatter themselves with the hopes of heaven from this false foundation, thinking they sucked in the true faith, and true religion, with their mother's milk, and were made Christians by a priest's scattering a little water on their faces when babes, though they live in all manner of horrid sins, and are enemies to the life and power of godliness? This is a way of making Christians which Christ and his apostles never taught; and it is a healing of the hurt of the people slightly, taking them off from seeking after grace and true regeneration; for if they were made true Christians then, regenerated then, doubtless their state is good; and so it is to be feared, thousands of them conclude, and never doubt of their salvation.

Reproof 3. Moreover, it reproves all who rest on morality; who, because they live a sober life, and pay every man his own, doing justly, &c., conclude all is well, yet look after no other religion. And it also as much reprehends those who boast of their knowledge and spiritual attainments, they conclude their state is good, because they are members of a true church, and have been baptized indeed, and break bread, read and pray in their families, and discharge all other external duties of religion, but rest wholly upon these things, and never were brought to be poor in spirit, nor obtain real union with Christ, but are ignorant of the faith, of the operation of God. What means the pride of some? their earthiness, contention, whispering, backbiting, want of love, divisions, &c., shutting their eyes at further light, and discovery of truth? O look about you for the Lord's sake, lest after all your high profession and hopes of heaven, you do not at last drop down to hell.

Lastly, It reproves all such nice and scrupulous persons, who seem to make it their chief business to render all odious who are not of their own fantastical humour; women must not wear a bit of lace, &c., nor a gold ring, nor men wear a periwig, though never so short and modest, (and advised to do it by able physicians, for their health's sake) because the apostle saith, "It is a shame for a man to wear long hair;" therefore they run into extremes, and cut their hair close to their ears, and so disguise themselves, and censure others as guilty of great abomination. (who will not imitate them) as if the main points of religion lay in these foolish formalities and niceties, and as if none were to be taken for godly Christians, but such who are just of their height, and length, and breadth, and conform to them in these smaller things (that may be lawful notwithstanding what such say;) and render those odious, who are better than themselves, even as such who hate instruction, and cast God's word behind them, &c. These men seem to bear the exact image of the Pharisees of old! and though they thus strain at a gnat, yet at the same time seem to swallow a camel. For one of this sort will be found, it is to be feared, guilty of horrid lies and slanders, backbiting and reproaching his neighbours, seeming to be filled with malice and envy, rendering a great body or multitude of godly Christians odious, whom Christ loves, I am persuaded it would be better with the churches, if many were severed from them. But O how seldom have any been dealt with, either for pride or covetousness! as if it were not possible to find out such offenders as well as others.

Reproof 4. Both God allow of nothing for ornament

We say all inmodest and fantastical garbs and dresses are both some, and to be abominated.

Moreover, it sharply reproveth those preachers whose great business it is to **Reproof. 6.** bring men into a visible profession, and make them members of churches, whose preaching tends more to bring persons to baptism, and to subject to external ordinances, than to show them the necessity of regeneration, faith, or a changed heart. For the Lord's sake take heed what you do, if you would be pure from the blood of all men. We too often see when people are got into churches, they conclude all is well; and when conversion is preached, they do not think it concerns them, but others who are openly profane; and thus they come to be blinded, may be to their own destruction; and if their blood do not lie at some of your doors, it will be well. I am afraid some now-a-days like the Pharisees, may be said to compass sea and land to make proselytes, but when made, they are twofold more the children of hell than before, as our Saviour intimates.

It may also put us all upon a strict examination of our own hearts, lest we **Examinat.** should be found some of these false and counterfeit Christians. And that we may clear ourselves in this matter, consider.

1. Were you ever thoroughly convinced of your sinful and lost condition **Sincerity** by nature, and of that horrid evil there is in sin? Did you ever see sin as the **described.** greatest evil most hateful to God, not only of the evil effects of sin, but also of the evil nature of sin; not only as it has made a breach between God and man, but has it also defaced the image of God in man, and made us like the devil, filling our minds with enmity against God, godliness, and good men.

2. Is there no secret sin lived in and favoured, the evil habit never being broke? Is not the world more in your affections, desires, and thoughts, than Jesus Christ?

3. Are you willing to suffer and part with all that you have, rather than sin against God? Do you see more evil in the least sin, than in the greatest suffering?

4. Do you as much desire to have your sins mortified as pardoned, if so, it appears you are sincere, and no hypocrite; and thus I close with this parable.

THE
PARABLE
OF THE
BARREN FIG-TREE OPENED.

SERMON VII.

He spake also this parable, a certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

Then said he unto the dresser of the vineyard, behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none, cut it down, why cumberest thou the ground?

And he answered, and said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it,

And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, thou shalt cut it down.—Luke xiii. 6—9.

In speaking unto this parable I shall in my usual method,

1. Open the scope of it.

2. Explain the terms.

3. Observe several points of doctrine, and prosecute them distinctly, as the Lord may assist me.

4. Apply the whole.

1. In the first verse of this chapter, our Saviour takes notice of Herod's cruelty.

2. He also mentioneth that fearful judgment which befel eighteen men, on whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them.

The scope of the parable opened.

3. And from hence he exhorteth them all to repentance, showing that they might not be greater sinners than others who suffered such things; and though perhaps it might be their sins that brought those judgments upon them; yet if those to whom he preached did not believe in him and repent, he shows that they must expect far worse punishment, even eternal wrath and vengeance to be poured forth upon them; think you (as if our Lord should say) that your state is good, because ye are "Abraham's seed," and enjoy many external church privileges, and are spared, and God doth not execute present judgments upon you, no, no, this will do you no good, since you are a company of barren, and unprofitable persons; though you are planted in the Jewish church (which was then the vineyard of God) and trust that that you are righteous, and the only happy people, yet are you likely to perish eternally for all this; and now to convince them of their great danger in this respect, he brings in this parable.

"A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard," &c.

1. From the scope of the parable thus opened, we may note,

Doct. 1. That temporal judgments inflicted on some persons, should excite others to fear God's divine wrath and vengeance. Alas, some are ready to cry out, O what wrath, what judgments are fallen upon such and such persons! and thus bewail their condition, when perhaps, though they suffered on earth, yet might be happy for ever; and, at the same time these very persons (who seem affected with the state of those who suffered temporal judgments) are in a far worse condition as to their eternal state; for evident it is, that many gracious persons have been born and endured most severe punishment on earth, as the blessed martyrs who are now glorified in heaven. And many others also have borne bitter things here, though not by martyrdom, as holy Job, &c.

Some that suffer great punishment here, may be eternally happy.

As a trial of their faith, and other graces; and some for their sins, &c.

Doct. 2. No persons ought to be rash to censure others on whom temporal judgments befall. There is no knowing either love or hatred by anything that is under the sun.

Dost thou hear of any judgment fallen on such or such a man. Tremble, for thou knowest not but in a short time, as bad, or worse may befall thee; every judgment which falls upon any person, calleth aloud upon all sinners to repent, lest they also perish; and that not only on earth, but also in hell for ever; thou art a sinner, and perhaps a greater than such who were taken away by sudden death, or in an unusual manner with a fearful stroke; and God is angry with thee as well as with them, and may make thee an example of his wrath and judgment, as he hath others; if not, yet be not rash to judge them, nor be thou an idle, or careless spectator of the theatre of God's judgments. So much as to the scope of this parable.

Secondly, We shall proceed to explain and open the parts and terms contained in it.

1. "A certain man;" by this certain man is meant, or intended the great God; God is sometimes called a certain king, also sometimes a man, yea, an husbandman; "my Father is an husbandman," Matt. xxii. 2, John xv. 1. Though God be a Spirit, immense, infinite, of and from himself, and incomprehensible, yet he is sometimes compared to a man that hath a vineyard, "that had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard."

"A vineyard;" by vineyard is here meant the church of God; and wherefore the church is compared to a vineyard, we have in opening other parables showed; but yet take a few things upon this account here.

1. A vineyard is a select, or choice piece of ground taken out of other common ground, designed by the owner for some special use.

Even so God hath taken his church out of the field of this world, or from the rest of mankind, who lie barren, like the waste wilderness, for some special and peculiar use and design.

2. A vineyard is walled, or fenced in, so is God's vineyard, "he made a wall about it," Isa. v. 1, 2. The church of God is "a garden enclosed," Cant. iv. 12, and not only the church in general, but every member thereof particularly is walled in. "Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about all that he hath on every side," Job i. 10. The church (and every particular believer) hath many enemies, and are in the midst of dangers, why else need there be a hedge or wall about them; alas, none in the world are more envied and spited, and exposed to danger than God's people are by Satan, and wicked men, therefore God walls or hedges them in on every side. And,

1. God himself more immediately protecteth them, or is a guard to them by his special providence, by his power, wisdom, love, care, and faithfulness.

2. He employs his holy angels to protect and preserve his church, and all that dwell

therein; "the angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear him," Psal. xxxvi. 7. What a glorious guard had the prophet Elias round about him, when in great danger. Angels are compared to fire, and they are as a wall of fire round God's people.

3. By a wall, the church like a vineyard is severed or separated from the world; the constitution and discipline of the church, makes it distinct from the rest of mankind; many confound the church with the world; but what saith our Saviour, "ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world," John xv. 19; they are commanded to separate themselves, in respect of church-state worship and discipline from the world, "come out from amongst them, and be separated saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you," &c., 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; again he saith, "be not conformable to this world," Rom. xii. 2; that is, in point of worship, and in human traditions, or in fantastical fashions, and evil customs.

4. A man greatly delighteth in his vineyard which he hath walled in, manured, and sowed with precious seeds, and planted with precious plants, as vines, fig-trees, &c. So the Lord greatly delighteth in his church, which he hath made a peculiar people to himself, and sown with holy right seed, and planted with trees of righteousness. "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah, for the Lord delighteth in thee," Isa. lxii. 4. The church he calls his portion, "Israel is the lot of his inheritance," therefore cannot but take great delight in them; and from hence he is said to dwell in them, and walk in them," 2 Cor. vi. 16, as a man walks up and down in his vineyard, being pleased therewith.

A vineyard of a noble person he esteems as his choicest possession. Kings have had their vineyards, we read of Solomon's vineyard (and how Ahab was in love with Naboth's vineyard) and so hath the King of Heaven and earth; and it is his own, he bought it with a great price, and therefore highly values it.

5. A man bestows great pains upon his vineyard, he plants it, dungs it, waters it, and weeds it, and thinks nothing too much to lay out upon it to make it fruitful. Now the holy God in respect of cost and pain that he has laid out, and been at with his vineyard, far exceeds all that ever had a vineyard; no vineyard was ever purchased so dear, nor planted with choice and precious plants; it was brought with blood, the blood of his own Son, Acts xx. 28; his only-begotten Son, and sown with the graces of his own Holy Spirit; so that God may well say, "what could I do more for my vineyard which I have not done," Isa. v. 1, 2, 3. —

6. He that hath an excellent vineyard, appoints one to be his vine-dresser to prune it and purge it, and to cut off superfluous branches.

Now God hath chose and appointed the Lord Jesus Christ to be his vine-dresser as chief, and under him faithful ministers whom he employs to labour in his vineyard.

Had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, not only one, but many; yet one, and many of that sort; it may be feared that are barren or fruitless. by this fig-tree is meant all barren and fruitless persons, (who sit under the means of the gospel, especially such who are members of the visible church; this fig-tree I say signifies all barren and mere formal professors of religion.

A fig-tree plauted, &c. Quest. But why doth Jesus Christ compare professors of religion to fig-trees.

Ans. 1. He may allude to the practice of such who had vineyards in the land of Canaan, in which they frequently plauted, not only vines, but fig-trees also.

Why professors are compared to fig-trees.

II. It may be because a fig-tree that brings forth ripe and good figs, requires much heat of the sun, or must grow in a hot climate.

So professors of Christianity cannot thrive as to bring forth ripe and good fruit, but under the divine and warm influences of the Sun of righteousness, and the blessed gospel of God's grace; as in our cold climate, no fig-tree bears ripe figs, so in those regions where the gospel is not preached, and the Sun of righteousness shines not, but being only under the influences of natural light, bring forth no spiritual and saving fruit, no gospel fruit, nothing but the fruit of morality.

III. Because no tree (as naturalists observe) is commonly more fruitful than the fig-tree.

For the first year they are planted (as my author notes) they commonly bear fruit; they bring forth fruit sooner than other tree.

2. But if they bring not forth fruit, the first, second, nor the third year, it is observed there is but little hope or ground to expect they will ever be fruitful trees.

Even so if men are not changed, converted, or renewed, in the beginning of the preaching of the gospel, or when it is first preached to them, it is rare if they ever be converted, or if not in the beginning of their days (provided they are under the means of grace) there is but little hope or ground to believe they ever will be converted; very few who have long sat under the powerful preaching of the gospel, if not converted, ever afterwards are converted, or if not in their youth; it is rare if they are when they are old, though perhaps some may, but it is not usual, or a common, or ordinary thing: for them which God calls at the third hour, he doubtless seldom calls at the eleventh hour.

IV. A fig-tree is a tree full of sap, and draws much moisture from the root, and from the fatness of the earth.

So true Christians are full of divine sap, or have much grace in them, and also daily draw fresh virtue from Christ, and from his word, and holy ordinances; hence it is said, "that the trees of the Lord are full of sap, they flourish like trees planted by the water-side," Psal. civ. 16, Psal. i. 3.

V. A fig-tree bears choice fruit, figs are of a pleasant and feeding nature and also have most sovereign qualities in them to assuage and break a hard and dangerous swelling; it is said they are excellent good to break and heal a plague sore, and indeed this is confirmed by the word of God, for when Hezekiah was sick (as it is thought) of the pestilence, he was healed of his sore by figs: "For Isaiah had said, let them take a lump of figs and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover," Isa. xxxviii. 21. True, some would have this to be only a sign, of his recovery, and not as if figs had such a powerful virtue in them. But others upon good ground conclude, figs have an excellent virtue in them for breaking a hard swelling, though a greater blessing might then attend that plaster than usual.

Ask physicians, and they will tell you of the quality of one sort of figs.

Brethren, the fruit which believers bring forth, is most choice and precious fruit in the sight of God. For,

Spiritual fruit, choice fruit. 1. Faith, O! what an excellent grace or fruit of the Spirit is that, it is called "precious faith, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us," &c., 2 Pet. i. 1, more precious than gold, it is sweet to the taste, nay, it makes such things that are very bitter in themselves, to be very sweet and pleasant to the soul; as bitter afflictions, trials, and temptations.

2. This fruit revives and comforts the fainting spirits of a poor Christian. "I had fainted, unless I had believed," &c., Psal. xxvii. 13.

3. Without faith we cannot taste any sweetness in God, we cannot taste how good the Lord is, nor how precious Jesus Christ is, for he is only precious to them that believe; to you that believe he is precious, not to others.

4. No man can have any true peace in his own soul, without he hath saving faith in Christ; we must first have grace, and then peace.

5. No changing heart, no true brokenness of heart, no cure for the plague of a hard heart, no cleansing the leprous soul, without faith, "they shall look unto him whom they pierced, and shall weep and mourn," Acts xv. 9; Zech. xii. 10; they shall look, &c.; that is, they shall believe in Christ, and then mourn and grieve for sin; all godly sorrow for sin proceeds from faith in Christ.

6. No communion with Christ without faith, there is not any fitness in unbelievers for that divine fellowship; the heart of man naturally is full "of enmity against God," Rom. viii. 7. and can see no cause of joy or rejoicing in him; such cannot savour the things of the Spirit, who believe not.

7. Faith is an earnest of glory, and therefore it is a most excellent fruit.

8. Such who bear this fruit may know that God loved them from everlasting; it is one of Christ's love-tokens, all that have saving faith, have Jesus Christ, or an interest in him, and shall certainly be saved.

2ndly. What excellent fruit is love, love to God, love to Christ, and love to his people, as also humility, patience, temperance, this fruit pleaseth Christ; grace breaks the hard heart, and a heart puffed up, and swelled with pride and vain glory; grace cures the plague of sin, the plague of unbelief, and earthly-mindedness.

Fig-trees bear fruit all the year. V. Fig-trees bear fruit all the year, when some figs are ripe, other are green, it is seldom but fruit may be found on some fig-trees; so the saints and people of God bear fruit continually in the summer of prosperity, and in the winter of adversity, they cease not bearing fruit: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: For he is like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her

roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in tears of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit," Jer. xvii. 7, 8.

Again it is said, "the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon, those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God, they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing." Ps. xc. 12, 13, 14.

VI. There are some fig-trees barren, they are not of the right kind, but are a bastard sort of plants, which only have the name of fig-trees; not the nature of fruitful fig-trees.

So there are some professors, though they are planted in Christ's vineyard, yet they are barren or fruitless persons, they are not indeed true Christians, true believers, but mere counterfeits, professors, that have the name of spiritual fig-trees, but not the nature, never were made good trees, and therefore never produce or bear good fruit, but are like some branches in a vine, that bear no fruit, for though these are grafted into Christ's mystical, i. e., into his visible church, and so are said to be in Christ, that is by a visible profession, yet never had any internal union with Christ, nor ever received the Spirit, the bond of that union, from whence faith proceeds, for faith properly is the fruit of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit is infused, and faith is produced, or springs up as the flowers from the seed which is first sown.

"Planted in his vineyard," it is not said who planted this fig-tree in God's vineyard. The Lord Christ planted it not, because it was utterly void of fruit; "Trees of the Lord are full of sap, and they do and shall flourish in his vineyard, to show that the Lord is upright, he is our rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him," Ps. xc. 15.

Note, ministers may plant trees in Christ's vineyard, that God never planted there: they through ignorance of men's hearts and states, or through carelessness, may take into the Church such persons that never were truly converted, but these will not stand long there, "Every plant my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be plucked up," Matt. xv. 13.

2. Yet this word planted, denotes that this person was got into the church and looked like a true spiritual fig-tree, i. e., a true believer, or like a godly Christian, or was in show and appearance a saint; ministers and churches may be deceived, and baptize and receive hypocrites into the church, cursed Judas was once planted in God's vineyard, and a Simon Magus was baptized by Philip, Acts iii.

Some profess themselves to be what they are not, but deceive themselves and others. Satan is subtle, and he craftily teaches some persons to counterfeit the true Christian.

"And came and sought fruit thereon."

1. God takes notice of every particular person that is planted in his vineyard, there is not one member of the church but his all-seeing eye is continually upon.

God takes notice of the fruitfulness of every saint.

2. God expecteth fruit in such that are planted in his church. He looked that it should bring forth grapes, not wild grapes, not the fruit of the flesh, but the fruits of the Spirit; not to see them lay the reins loose on the neck of their lusts, and inordinate affection, not pride, ambition, gluttony, backbiting, whispering, &c., not feeling themselves without fear, not the daubing themselves (as one observes) with the lust, provoking fashions of the times, to walk with stretched-out necks, naked breasts, frizzled foretops, wanton gestures, gorgeous apparel, mixed with gold and pearl, or decked with costly array; not earthly mindedness, covetousness, strife and envy; but love, faith, meekness, humility, temperance, liberality, brotherly kindness, charity, and abhorring all iniquity, even avoiding all the appearances of evil, and discharging all pious and holy duties.

Jude 12.
Bunyan.

3. If there be but one soul, one member in the church that is fruitless, God will soon find that person out; "he saw there a man that had not on a wedding garment," Matt. xxii. 11.

He came to see the guests, he looks this way and that way; "all the ways of men are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all their goings," Prov. v. 21; no person can hide themselves from his sight.

Thou fruitless fig-tree, thou barren professor, dost thou hear this and not tremble? God is come seeking fruit; will thy bare profession, thy knowledge of the principles of religion, satisfy the great God? will the notions of truth in thy head, thy talking and disputing serve thy turn? thy hearing the word, or this and that minister preach, sit as a judge to censure them, and catch at any mistake; or to commend their sermons when they please thee; I say, is this all the fruit (think you) God looks for? God will have fruit, precious fruit from thee; it is this he comes to seek and find on thy branches.

But found none, sad case! Hearken, O thou barren soul, God says he found none; what none at all? I must tell thee, if thy fruit be not right fruit, God looks upon it to be no fruit; if it be not such fruit that spiritual fig-trees should bear, it is no fruit in his account.

It is not the fruit of good words only, but the fruit of good works; not the fruit of discoursing well, talking well, but the fruit of walking well, having a holy and pious conversation.

2. May be some hasty fruit thou didst bring forth, thou mightest have a fair and promising beginning, didst show much zeal, and much love and affection for, and to Jesus Christ for a short time, but thy goodness was "as the early cloud, and as the morning dew, it passed away," Hos. vi. 4. &c., xiii. 3, at first thou seemest hot, but are soon cold.

3. There is a fruit, saith honest Bunyan, among professors that withers, and so never comes to be ripe, a fruit that is smitten in the growth, and comes not to maturity; and this is reckoned no fruit, &c., some make a show of a promising crop, they blossom well, but the blossoms drop off, or it is blasted with the east wind; I mean by Satan's temptations they decay, or a worm breeds in their blossom that eats out the heart of the flower and blossom of profession, i. e., some cursed sin or another gets into their hearts, and they presently wither, and die away.

4. There is the fruit of common grace and spiritual gifts, the gift of knowledge, the gift of prayer, perhaps the gift of prophesying, or preaching; this fruit they may bring forth, but God accounts these no fruit.

5. Or perhaps there is in these the fruit of morality, but not the fruit of regeneration; something which looks like grace, saving grace, but it is no such thing; for this fruit is often found on wild fig-trees, such that grow in the common field of this world, many heathens have brought forth such as this, and many persons who never were planted in God's vineyard, do bring forth the fruit of good manners, i. e., they may be just and faithful in their dealing or tradings in the world, and not guilty of any gross acts of immorality, but this God accounts as no fruit; this is nothing but what the ground may bring forth naturally, I mean no other fruit but what a mere natural man by the help of the light of nature, and by the power of natural knowledge, and natural conscience may produce, who never received a principle of saving grace.

6. Or they may bring forth untimely fruit, fruit that falls off before the proper season, "as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs," Rev. vi. 13, so these are like the stony ground, they "hear the word with joy," Matt. xiii. 20, 21. And anon, or before they are well rooted, their fruit falls off as soon as the sun rises and shines hot, or as soon as tribulation, and reproaches, and persecution arises because of the word, they are offended, moreover, perhaps other of this sort may delay bringing forth fruit until the season of grace is over; some sow the seed so late, that it never comes to perfection; so some repent too late, defer believing, and closing with Christ, till the summer is ended; and so their fruit is untimely fruit; the foolish virgins went to buy oil when it was too late; Matt. xxv. 9, before they were ready the Bridegroom came, and they and their fruit were rejected.

"Then he said to the dresser of the vineyard, these three years I come seeking fruit, but find none."

What may be meant by the three years of God's seeking fruit.

Some by these three years, understand the beginning of the promise made to Adam, and the preaching under the law, and the giving out of that ministration.

2. The second year, the preaching of the prophets.

3. The third year, the preaching of Christ and his apostles; but I think this is far fetched, and not meant by these three years.

Others by these three years, understand the whole time of our blessed Saviour's preaching and confirming his doctrine by miracles, which was about the space of three years; but this also I shall pass by.

By three years I understand is meant that time God is pleased to afford to a people, or to a single person; a certain time being here mentioned, to denote an uncertain.

1. The first year may denote the beginning of the means of grace which God affords to men and women.

2. Year the proper time that fig-trees bear fruit, if not the first year then it is expected that it brings forth fruit the second year.

3. Or it may imply, that God expecteth sinners should bring forth quickly after they sit under the means of grace.

4. Moreover it may denote that the means of grace may not be of long continuance.

5. Also it may signify God's patience, he waits one year, two years; nay three years,

and yet finds no fruit; some divines note that usually three years after any person are under the means of grace, they bring forth fruit, or else there is but little hopes of them.

“Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground.”

God will not always bear with fruitless professors, this cutting down may refer to several severe acts of God’s justice.

1. God may direct his speech to his Church, and to the subordinate vine-dressers.

Whom God commands to cut down, and what is meant by cutting down.

Cut it down, by excommunication pass the righteous censure of the church against this barren, carnal, and unprofitable professor; deliver him up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

2. Or God may speak unto Jesus Christ, the grand vine-dresser smite his root, let him wither, and his seeming fruit die away, even as our Lord smote the barren fig-tree, and said, never fruit be on thee any more for ever.

3. Give him up unto his own heart’s lust, leave him to himself, withdraw all motions of the Spirit, and convictions of conscience, and let him perish for ever.

4. Leave him to delusions, God sends some strong delusions, that they may be damned, because they received not the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved.

This is a fearful way of cutting down, O how many have in this nation of loose and barren professors been thus cut down, they having had no more than a bare profession of religion, the mere shell; have been left to cast contempt upon the blessed ordinances of Jesus Christ, calling them low and carnal ordinances, carnal forms, and empty shadows.

5. Or Christ may cut them down by death, or cut them off in the midst of their days. I should now proceed to the reason why the Lord commands this unfruitful tree to be cut down, why “cumbereth it the ground; this is the cause, it is a ground cumberer, but shall now close with a word of use.

1. Let such who are planted in God’s vineyard, tremble who are not fruitful in grace and holiness, the church will be no sanctuary to such persons.

2. We may infer from hence, that some persons who are in Christ’s vineyard, were never planted therein by the hand of God, for such whom he planteth are fruitful trees, trees full of fruit.

3. Men may have leaves upon their branches, nay, some seeming fruit, and they may seem to grow and flourish for a time, and yet nevertheless may not bring forth the true and saving fruits of the Spirit.

4. We may also infer from hence that though men may take some professors to be sincere, whose hearts are not right with God; yet long it will not be before God discovers them, and his wrath manifested against them. The barren soul shall not stand long in God’s vineyard.

SERMON VIII.

He spake also a Parable, a certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, &c.— Luke xiii. 6—9.

I CLOSED the last day with these words, “cut it down.” I shall now proceed to the reason which seems to be given why this barren fig-tree is cut down, viz., “Why cumbereth it the ground.”

1 Doct. God is greatly offended or displeased with barren professors, nay, with all unprofitable persons, who under the means of grace, cumber the ground.

2 Doct. That the evil and danger of barrenness is very great.

A little to the first of these, God is displeased because it is a fig-tree, it is not a bramble bush, but a fig-tree, though not of the right kind, i. e., a professor, but no true believer; it is not a thorn nor a thistle, from such God looks for no such fruit, he expected no spiritual fruit from profane persons; do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. What fruit can God look for from swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, carnal worldlings, or the like, nothing can be expected from these and such as these are, but the grapes of Sodom, or cursed and abominable fruit.

From whence it is, or why God is displeased with barren professors. Isa. v. 2—5.

3. God may be displeased because it is a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, possibly a

fig-tree may be found in a hedge, or to grow wild in a common field, (as our Saviour saw a fig-tree by the way he went) but this was planted in his vineyard; there may be many professing persons amongst the ungodly; in the field of this world, I mean in the false church, that may not be as yet transplanted into God's vineyard, and perhaps such that may not be so barren of good fruit, as some members of a true church of Christ, where no barren tree, or fruitless professors ought to be; now God finding such a one in his vineyard, he is greatly displeas'd.

3. Because they seem to frustrate his expectation (to speak after the manner of men) "I looked that it should bring forth grapes," Isa. v. 3—5. Doth a husbandman look that such plants, such trees which are planted in his vineyard should be fruitful, on whom he bestow'd much pains; and is it not a great disappointment to him to see any barren or fruitless there?

4. God may be displeas'd because such barren persons are a disparagement to his vineyard. What, such a fig-tree in the king's vineyard, he doth not use to plant the worst sort of plants in his vineyard, but most choice and precious plants; such that are of the right kind, and of great worth and value. That one tree may not disparage another, nor the whole vineyard, it being a vineyard well manur'd, weeded, watered, and pruned; where also a multitude of choice trees are, that bring forth fruit plentifully.

5. Because it abuseth his patience also, this may be another reason why God is offended, "These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, but find none." I have long waited to see whether it would bring forth fruit or not, and I am now quite wearied out, I have exercised much patience and long suffering, towards this man, and this woman, but all is in vain.

6. To come to the reason which seems here laid down, why cumbereth it the ground, this denotes,

I. It is good for nothing, it yields no profit; so this barren professor brings no honour to God, no credit to religion, nor to the church; but is a shame and reproach to God, his ministers, and vineyard.

II. But this is not all meant hereby, it cumbereth the ground, i. e., another good tree, a good plant might grow where this tree stands.

Unfruitful trees, or unfruitful professors, such which are scandalous in their lives, may hinder some hopeful plants from coming into the church or vineyard of God; their barren and scandalous lives may prevent them.

O saith one (that may be is well inclined) what a proud man, and proud woman is that? See after what manner they go, what a dress the woman wears, and how conceited the man is; are these saints? are these members of such a church? I see no difference between them and others.

Again, what a vain and frothy sort of persons are others that are amongst them; seldom any pious, or gracious words proceed out of their mouths, but they seem as loose and wanton as any people; do you not hear how full they are of idle jestings and frivolous talk, God deliver me from such professors as these, I will not come amongst them.

And, saith another, see how they among them indulge their children in pride, idleness, and vanity, and connive at their sin, and they regard not their parents, but are disobedient; and yet are born with others (that they look upon to be of the world), who have their children in more subjection, and educate them better than these do.

And saith another, there is such and such men that are members of such a church, and behold how earthly, how covetous, and worldly they are. They pursue the world like other men, as if their very hearts were in it; away with them, for there is no difference, I will not come among them, they are cruel to their poor servants, and make more slaves of them, and let them not have what is necessary and convenient for them, have no mercy nor bowels; also see what a father that man is to his poor son, he would have him work, but hardly will allow him either meat to eat, or clothes to wear.

And then there be others among them who are deceitful and false in their dealings, there is no trusting them, for they will gripe and pinch you in their trading, if you are not aware of them, they will break their words and promises at every turn.

And there are others also that are idle, and negligent in their callings, and so bring themselves and their families to want and poverty, that they become a charge to the people, and because the church will not uphold him in idleness, they vilify the congregation.

Saith, another and I know some others of them that pray not in their families, and perhaps not in private either, their religion is all abroad in the church, there is none at

Barren professors abuse God's patience.

What is meant by cumbering ground.

The hurt scandalous and barren professors do, is unto God's vineyard.

home; shall I come into such a church, into such a vineyard: thus they cumbered the ground; but God forbid there should be such among you, my brethren, I hope better things of you, though I thus speak; yet it is well if there are none such in this and other churches; for no doubt where no barren trees are in God's vineyard, but it is thus, and this is the sad effect of their evil lives.

And as they cumber the ground in general, so they cumber some part of it in particular.

I. They cumber poor ministers by their cross and peevish spirits, alas, they cannot tell how to carry it towards them, this too often they find as the sad effect of their spirits and behaviours.

Barren professors cumber ministers.

II. They also cumber and grieve the spirits of their pious parents; how do they mourn to see their children that profess religion, walk unsuitable, and not as becomes the gospel; what is a greater joy to godly parents than to see their children walking in the fear of God, as John speaks of his spiritual children,

And also godly parents.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth," 3 John 4. But on the contrary, what a perplexity is it to them when they walk loosely and are vain, and carnal; what grief was it to Isaac and Rebecca his wife, to see their son Esau to act like a profane person, and taking to wife one of the profane Heathens, and "Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, which were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebecca," Gen. xxvi. 34, 35; they were grieved at his marriage, foreseeing the sad effects of it; besides knew it was a breach of God's law, and for which he punished the old world; but afterwards we may see it was a sore encumbrance to these godly persons, "and Rebecca said to Isaac, I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth, if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, &c., what good shall my life do to me," Gen. xxvii. 46; also what a cumber was it to the mind of Eli to see his sons who were priests, to act and do so wickedly in Israel, and how did God trouble him, because he did not restrain his sons from those abominable deeds of darkness. See 1 Sam. ii. 30.

III. These barren fig-trees also are grievous, and do cumber the minds of all pious and serious Christians, members of the same church; they are even ashamed to hear of their pride, passion, earthliness, idleness, and of their woful omission of religious duties, and frequently neglecting God's public worship, and of their undue hearts, fallings out, and abasing their fellow members, or of their whisperings and backbiting of one another, and thus some part of the vineyard is most lamentably encumbered with these persons.

Barren professors cumber pious members of the church.

IV. But this is not all, these barren fig-trees are a sad encumbrance to the whole congregation, or the whole vineyard, what troubles do they bring upon the church in their discipline; were it not for this sort (I mean barren professors) what sweet peace and concord would there be in all the churches of the saints.

Barren members cumber the whole vineyard or congregation.

V. Moreover, and besides all this, they are cumbersome unto God himself; what saith the Lord, "they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them,"

They are cumbersome to God himself.

Isa. i. 14. I am able to bear, suffer, or endure them no longer; God speaks after the manner of men, they are a burden or cumbersome to him. "I will ease me of my adversaries," I will cut them down, they afflict and encumber my mind, they have worn out my patience, my goodness, my long-suffering, "behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves," Amos ii. 13.

VI. They are troublesome to the Lord Jesus Christ, they grieve and afflict his Spirit, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you," it is said he "looked upon them, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts," Mark ix. 19; doth it not (think you) trouble a vine-dresser to see such plants, such trees that he hath dug about, dunged and pruned, still to remain barren and fruitless; why so it troubles the Lord Jesus, the spiritual vine-dresser to look upon thee, O thou barren fig-tree, O think of it.

They are also troublesome to Jesus Christ.

VII. They are also barren to the Holy Ghost, they also cumber or grieve the Holy Spirit, they quench the Spirit, may, vex the Spirit of God; "In their afflictions, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them, and carried them all the days of old; but they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them," Isa. lxiii. 9, 10. The Holy Ghost strives with them, but they resist his motions, and rebel against the light, and instead of bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, they bring forth the fruits of the flesh.

Barren professors, a burden to the Holy Ghost.

Barren persons cumber godly families.

Lastly, (as to this) I might add, they cumber the family, if it be a godly and pious family where they live; if the wife be a fruitless tree, or barren of that which is spiritually good, being froward, peevish and passionate, how is the mind of the godly husband cumbered, and prayer neglected, and hindered by the means of those incumbering thoughts that afflict him upon this account, so it is if the husband acts unbecomingly a man professing godliness, the godly mind, and spirit of the wise is sadly encumbered.

If it be a servant that professes religion that is unfaithful, how doth he encumber the spirit of his master or mistress, or if the master or mistress who are professors, and yet walk in an evil way, (which perhaps is only known to their servant, who is a godly and gracious person) what a trouble is it to such a servant, putting him or her upon a temptation to conceal his master's or mistress's wickedness for his peace sake, though may be thereby he comes to loose his peace, by conliving at sin, which he ought not to do.

Barren fig-trees keep off the influences of the sun from other trees.

And as the barren fig-tree thus encumbeth the whole vineyard, and each part thereof, so also it cumbeth the ground, in that it keeps off the influences of the sun from other trees which grow next unto it.

Even so the barren and unprofitable professor hinders or keeps off the sweet influences of joy, and comfort of communion from gracious persons, they being grieved and disquieted at their carnal, scandalous, and unfruitful lives; for as nothing tends more to greaten and sweeten the communion of godly persons, than the satisfaction they have in each others true piety, so nothing tends more to embitter and spoil their comfortable communion, than the thoughts (and just cause of fear) that some amongst them are unsound, barren, and unprofitable persons, having no sincere love to Christ, nor to his dear children.

Barren fig-trees or barren professors draw that moisture away that might feed and nourish good Christians.

VIII. Moreover, the barren fig-tree cumbereth the ground in that it sucks, and draws much of the moisture of the earth which might tend to feed and nourish some fruitful trees.

So some barren professors who are poor, and cannot live without the charity of the church, do rob or draw away part of that supply from the godly poor, who (though they are industrious according to their ability) yet by reason of age, sickness, or some other distressing providence, cannot subsist without the charity of the church, (I charge no person, neither let any think in my public speaking after this manner, in this, or any other like case I direct my words particularly to them.) for if I knew any guilty, I should take another way, even lay their evil directly before them: but as there were some in the primitive churches that worked not, but were idle drones, that lived upon the honey which the painful bees gathered, taking up a profession for bread, or following of Christ for loaves, so it may be feared, that there are too many such who get into churches in these days.

“And he said, Lord, let it alone this year also.”

Barren professors spared through Christ's intercession.

1. Note that barren souls are spared through the prayer and intercession of Jesus Christ, “he made intercession for transgressors,” Isa. liii. 12. How did he pray for those that put him to death: you barren souls hear, and take good notice of these words, see by what means you are spared, and who it is that keeps off the fatal blow, when the axe of divine justice is ready to cut you down. O hold, justice hold, stay thy hand, Lord let yet this sinner alone, and that sinner alone, one year longer, saith the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Note that God is slow to anger, or slow to wrath, not willing presently to cut down barren and unfruitful persons; how long did he wait on Israel of old, even forty years (saith he) “was I grieved with that generation,” &c., and it was some hundred of years before he cut them down, and cast them utterly off.

3. Observe that Jesus Christ intercedes for a little longer time before God cuts down barren persons, one year more after three years were gone and no change, no fruit found, but as loose and as carnal, and unprofitable as ever.

4. We may also infer that there is cause to fear that some who have been unfruitful for several years under gracious means, or under the labours of a painful ministry, will never become fruitful fig-trees; you heard, that bare not the second, nor the third year, seldom ever are fruitful, yet upon the use of other means, such that Christ can, and sometimes doth use, it may be made fruitful.

5. Moreover, it appears from hence that Christ spares no cost, nor pains, in an ordinary way, to make barren persons fruitful; “what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it,” Isa. v. 4. He speaks of digging about it, and dunging it: he will use the most likely means in order to make it fruitful; he will open the root touch

the sinner's conscience, he will see to remove the earth or worldly spirit which lies too close to the heart or root of this tree, and perhaps thereby also discover the worm that is at the root, or some beloved lust that spoils its growth, and makes it barren.

6. But if after all means that Christ useth, fruitless persons remain still barren, are still unbelieving, still impenitent, still unholy; justice will at last in wrath cut them down; vengeance will at last overtake all unprofitable and fruitless professors.

7. Moreover, we may infer that God will leave all persons who sit under the means of grace, under the sweet shinings and waterings of heaven, especially such who are planted in his vineyard, without excuse; they of all men shall justify God when he executes his judgments upon them; what will such have to say, when God deals with them here whilst in this world, in his displeasure, or in the great day when he brings them to the tribunal of Jesus Christ?

“ Lord, let it alone this year, this one year also.”

O what a kind, patient, and compassionate intercessor is the Lord Jesus Christ, and what love and affections hath he to such sinners whom he sees are in a perishing condition; where the axe of God's wrath is up, Christ steps in to hold God's sin-revenging hand. O my father, let this and that man live one year longer, O turn away from this thy anger, I will yet see what may be done. My brethren, Moses in his praying for barren Israel, was a type of Jesus Christ. “ And the Lord saith unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great people.” *Exod. xxxii. 9, 10.* But how did Moses plead with God to turn his anger away. “ And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people;” nay, he cries, “ If thou wilt forgive their sins; if not, blot me I pray thee out of thy book which thou hast written,” *ver. 32.*

Certainly our blessed Mediator far exceeds in compassion the typical mediator, whose love to God's glory, and the honour of his name, and the good of his people, was very great; O my Father, let this sinner be spared a little time, if it be but one year, and I will try what fresh corrections may do; may be, the rod may work more upon them than my word hath hitherto done, and tend to make their barren hearts to become fruitful. I will also stir up my servants to awaken them by a more sharp and searching manner; but if after what I purpose to do, by the strivings and operations of my word, Spirit, and rod, they are made fruitful, well, but if not, thou shalt cut them down.

“ And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down,” *verse 9.*

I will when all I purpose to do, is done, intercede for those unfruitful persons no more, and then be sure, my brethren, such persons are undone for ever: if Christ once will stand up to plead with God no more for them, and exercise no more patience towards them, nor use no more means to do them good, but leave them to divine justice to cut them down, they must perish for ever.

Thus I have briefly opened the parts of this parable.

Secondly, I shall observe one or two propositions, from one or two of the principal parts thereof.

“ Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none,” &c.

Behold! This is a word of admiration, as well as a word that calls for attention and observation: and also a word of lamentation, and of commiseration.

Behold! wonder! I, even I, the mighty God have taken pains with this and that person; I have found means to humble them to discover their sins, evils, and barrenness to them, and then come year after year, to see what fruit they bring forth, and behold, this I have done and yet I find no fruit. From hence note,

1. Doct. That it is matter of wonder, and cause of grief and lamentation, to see men planted in God's vineyard, or sit under the blessings of his house and ordinances, and yet be barren or unfruitful, and not cut down. In speaking to this I shall,

1. To prove the truth of the doctrine.

2. I shall show whereiu this wonder lies, or in what it consists, and why it ought to be observed with lamentation.

1. As to the proof of this truth, see what God saith on the like occasion by the prophet, “ Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me,” *Isa. i. 2, 3.* God would have the heavens and the earth wonder and be astonished at the sins and barrenness of the Jews, or church of Israel, and to weep, lament, and mourn over them, “ Why should ye

be stricken any more? why should I use any more means with them to make them fruitful, who after all I have done, bring forth nothing but wild grapes," ver. 5.

Moreover, it is said that our blessed Saviour marvelled at the unbelief and hardness of the hearts of the Jews, to whom he preached, and among whom he wrought such mighty miracles. "And he marvelled because of their unbelief," Mark vi. 6; his divine doctrine being delivered with such power and authority, and his miracles and works so amazingly glorious and wonderful. And in another place it is said, "he looked about with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts," Mark iii. 5. Here both the admiration and sorrow of our Lord himself is expressed, because of the sins, unbelief, and barrenness of these persons.

Many such like texts I might mention, but what I shall speak under the next general head will further prove this.

Secondly, I shall show you wherein this wonder doth lie, and the cause of observation and lamentation doth consist, viz., that such God takes so much pains with, and waits so long upon, that they may become fruitful, and yet after all are barren.

From whence that barren professors may be held with wonderment.

1. Is it not strange it should be thus, considering the barren earth which is dugged up, and dunged, and watered with rain from heaven, becomes fruitful, and answereth the pains and cost of the husbandman. Moreover, trees which are planted in a fruitful soil, being well pruned and purged, commonly become fruitful. But many professors and members of the visible church, though they like ground dug, and dunged by Jesus Christ and the blessed God, remain barren; and though they are planted in the vineyard, on a very fruitful hill, and abundance of gracious means used, and much patience exercised, in order to make them fruitful, yet after all, are like a barren fig-tree, or a vine that brings forth wild grapes. Sirs, is it not strange that God should plant "a noble vine, wholly a right seed, and yet any should be turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine," Jer. ii. 21. The Jewish church was of God's own constitution, and the first plants choice plants, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, &c. But what strange plants were found in it in after times, how barren and unlike those first planted? the like might be said of the gospel church, and gospel plants. The many showers that fall from heaven, makes the hard and barren earth fruitful and tender, but all the divine showers of the world, and heavenly doctrine, makes not the hearts of many professors fruitful or tender, but they abide as hard and as barren as ever. Again the inanimate creatures answer the pains used, so do irrational creatures also they readily obey and yield to the wills of their owners, they in their kind do what can be expected of them; but mankind rebels against, and refuseth to comply with the will of God, and answereth not his cost, pains, and expectation. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

2. Is it not a strange thing, and to be wondered at, to see men value a name to live above life itself, or to esteem a cabinet of very small worth above a jewel that is of an inestimable value? or to see men professing themselves to be wiser than others, or excelling in wisdom, to value or prefer the shell above the kernal, or it is not strange for men to hear that sentence of death is passed upon them, and know not but it may be executed in less than four-and-twenty hours, yet fear nothing, and though they have a pardon offered them, yet slight it, will not take hold of it.

3. Is it not strange that men should sow tares, and yet believe they shall reap wheat? the barren professor sows to the flesh, and yet thinks to reap to the Spirit; notwithstanding, what Paul positively affirms to the contrary; or is it not strange to see men rather believe the devil and their own deceitful hearts, than to give credit to what the holy God and Jesus Christ, say and testify.

Wonder, O ye heavens! to behold the creature to abuse the Creator, abuse his infinite wisdom, grace, love, patience, and long suffering, yea, and contemn the sweet enjoyment of his love and favour, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away, for the sake of an empty world, or mere vanity.

5. Behold, the king courting a beggar, and is denied! Behold a physician, who shed his own blood to cure the wounds of his enemies, waits at the door, and yet the miserable wretch there lets him stand all night, and refuses to apply that blood, the virtue of that blood to heal his wounds; but chooses death rather than life.

These things are to be considered with great wonder, and all the folly and evil hinted, meet in such persons mentioned; whom the holy and jealous God useth most gracious means to make fruitful, waiting upon them year after year, but still observing they bring forth no right fruit; he at last cries, cut them down, and yet they fear him not, but go on

in the evils of their hearts and ways, until they are indeed cut down and sent to hell.

But to proceed to another proposition.

2. Doct. That the reason why some barren professors are no sooner cut down, is by virtue of Christ's intercession; but yet at last when no means will do, but the signs and plagues of barrenness remain upon them, they are cut down with dreadful vengeance.

1. In speaking to this, I shall show that barren persons in the church of God, with other sinners that are borne with so long, is through the intercession of Jesus Christ.

2. Show why Jesus Christ intercedes for barren and unfruitful persons.

3. Show who they be that are in danger to be cut down with dreadful vengeance.

4. Apply the whole.

Some say it is Christ that only is the chief vine-dresser, that says, stay yet this one year also; but others think it refers to his faithful ministers, who are employed under him to be his vine-dressers.

But certainly the Lord Jesus is chiefly meant hereby, though it may comprehend his ministers also, who with Moses of old, entreat God to exercise patience towards unfruitful professors and impenitent sinners.

That our blessed Lord doth intercede for sinners (as well as for believers) this parable fully doth evince; besides it is said, he prayed for such (or leastwise for some of them) that put him to death, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34.

Moreover, it is said, "he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for transgressors," Isa. liii. 12.

Secondly, why doth Christ intercede for sinners.

1. Because he died for them; he that laid down his life for them, be sure will not refuse to pray for them; he that bled for them, will no doubt plead for them.

2. Because he ever lives to make intercession with the Father, and it is by virtue of his intercession that the merits of his blood are applied, and become effectual to poor sinners; he intercedes, that faith may be given to such that believe not, as well as that it may be increased, strengthened, and not fail in such in whom it is already wrought. "Them I must bring," &c., John x. 16, that is, all that are given to him, and one way (I have elsewhere showed) he useth in seeking his lost sheep, is by his intercession.

Aaron, when he went into the holiest of all, bore the names of all the children of Israel upon the breast-plate of judgment, and intercedeth also for the people, when guilty of great offences; and this signified the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath before him, and in his memory all the names of God's elect, whether called or uncalled.

3. Because Christ knows that if he intercedes not for sinners, or pleads not for them, one sinner could not live a moment longer; indeed, the lives of all men are continued as the fruit or effects of his interposition and gracious mediation, and when he ceaseth interceding for any people or particular person, vengeance falls upon such a people and person immediately, and no doubt but many temporal judgments are kept off, and prevented by Christ's gracious intercession.

4. Because without Christ's intercession, the gospel is neither given to a people, or nation, nor continued to them; nor is, or can the gospel (or means of grace) become effectual to any person or people, without Christ intercedes in the case: for as all grace, my brethren, was purchased by Christ, so it is given forth by virtue of his intercession to the Father. The Lord Jesus doth not only say, Lord, let this and that sinner alone this year. (but if they belong to him) he also prays and intercedes for grace, or a blessing upon the word and ordinances, that so they may believe and be renewed, and eternally saved.

5. Because some barren persons the Lord Christ knows are in the election of grace, indeed who of them were not vile and barren before quickened, called, and made fruitful; and hereby also he leaves all men without excuse. My brethren, the sins, unbelief, and barrenness of wicked men, is the material cause of their damnation.

Thirdly, I shall show you who they are, that are in danger to be cut down with dreadful vengeance.

1. Such barren persons are in danger who have had great favours showed them; yea, more cost spent on them, and labour taken with them, than many others ever had; and yet after all remain barren, carnal, and unbelieving.

What wonderful favours did God show the Jews above all people in the world?

He gave unto them his covenant, the law, ordinances, and promises; nay, I may say all he had to give, or bestow under the dispensation to such who were a people constituted

Ministers as well as Christ himself, pray that barren persons may be spared a little longer.

Why Christ intercedes for barren sinners.

What professors are in danger of being cut down.

a national, and typical church. Pray read the 105th Psalm. The apostle shows also, that unto them were committed the oracles of God, &c., Rom. iii. 2; and, saith the Psalmist, "He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel, he hath not dealt so with any nation, and as to his judgments they have not known them," Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20.

And hence the Lord said, "What could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? and yet after all God did to them, and for them, they were barren, and brought forth wild grapes, and therefore at last were cut down with vengeance.

Moreover, what cost and pains was Christ at with them, to whom he preached, and among whom he wrought such wonderful miracles; these were said to be exalted up to heaven, but they remaining barren, see what our Lord says; "And thou Capernaum which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell." Matt. xi. 23. Compare this with what the apostle saith, for the "Earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursings, whose end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 7, 8.

2. Such are in danger who wear out the patience and forbearance of God, when the Lord having waited long, as he did on the old world (a hundred and twenty years) and yet they are barren, abominable, or unbelieving, these are near cutting down. God waits not only one year after three were gone, but many years, and all is in vain, well "now (saith he) I will arise, I will devour at once, I will exercise patience no longer, I have used great means, and have borne so long that my patience is now worn out, "cut them down, why cumber they the ground."

3. When God withdraws all means of grace from a people or person, when his Spirit being grieved, may vexed, will strive no longer with them, but they "are given up to their own heart's lust." He sometimes says, as he said to Ephraim of old, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone," Hos. iv. 17.

You, my ministers, let those sinners alone, your words shall have no effect upon their hearts, and my Spirit let them alone, do not reprove them, nor move them to repentance, nor to seek after Christianity more, and God may say to conscience also, let the reins lie loose upon the neck of their lusts, and rebuke them not when they sin; certainly when God deals thus with any sinners, they are near cutting down with vengeance. God threatened his people of old, that "He would not punish their daughters when they committed whoredom," &c., Hos. iv. 14. What can be a worse sign of God's wrath, than quietly to let men alone in a sinful and Christless state? For,

That which follows or attends this judgment is, "hardness of heart, blindness of mind, and a seared conscience," 1 Tim. iv. 3; the Holy Spirit being utterly withdrawn, they Heb. vi. 5, 6, fall under the plague of hardness of heart, and it is then impossible that they should be renewed again to repentance, being left to judicial hardness, these fall upon this into a deep sleep, yea, sleep the sleep of death; and it is much, if this sort do not become enemies to the people of God, and mock at religion, being filled with malice and spite against Jesus Christ, and tread under foot the blood of the Son of God.

APPLICATION.

You that are barren professors, tremble. O how dismal and dangerous a thing it is to be a sinner in Sion, or to be in a dying and withering condition; you know not where your partial apostacy may end.

Be exhorted to try yourselves, and prove your own work, O know if possible how things are between God and you; it may be God's axe is up, and Christ yet cries, Lord, let it alone this year also; you may have but one year left to get an interest in Christ, to get faith and a changed heart; nay, may be much of that year is also gone; what will you do when God begins not only to shake the tree, by stretching out his hand by sickness, but proceeds to give the fatal blow, and cuts you off by death, "or take thee away with his stroke, then a great ransom cannot deliver thee," Job. xxvi. 18. Fruitless vines and fig-trees are fuel for eternal burning, they shall be thrown into the fire.

3. Comfort, to you (though you are decayed,) who are true believers; there is notwithstanding all that hath been said, a word of comfort to you, God will revive you, and restore your souls, and heal your backslidings, and love you freely. You shall take root downwards, and bring forth fruit upwards; you shall be purged, to be made more fruitful; you are not of that sort "that draw back to perdition, you are ordained to go, and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain," Heb. x. 39; if therefore any that hear

me this day are not under barrenness or decay, but to revive, they have cause to praise and magnify God for ever.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

TWO SONS BID TO GO INTO THE VINEYARD.

SERMON IX.

But what think you, a certain man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not, but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise, and he said, I go sir, and went not, whether of them twain did the will of his father, they say unto him the first. Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.—Matt. xxi. 28—31.

To open the scope of the parable.

1. I shall explain all the parts of it.

2. Note one or two things from thence. 3. Apply it.

1. The scope of this parable, it is evident it is to show what deceit and hypocrisy was in the Pharisees, and that some great sinners were in a better state and condition than they, see ver. 31. “Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.”

2. To discover that self-righteousness in persons seem to promise fair, and to be ready to do the will of God, who only do but pretend to do it; and such who are great sinners, who by their profane lives declare an averseness to God and religion, and so seem to say they will not go into Christ's vineyard, yet God's grace soon changeth their thoughts and purposes, and they repent, and go.

Or it may refer to the Jews and Gentiles; the first sought after righteousness and found it not, the other sought not after it, yet found it.

1. By the certain man is meant the Lord Jesus Christ.

Parts explained.

2. By the vineyard is meant the church. Why the church is compared to a vineyard is explained in other parables.

3. By the first son is intended the publicans, or such who are great sinners, gross and scandalous sinners, or according to some, our Lord means the Gentiles.

4. By the second son is meant the pharisees, or moralized and self-righteous persons, or the Jews.

5. By coming to the first and second son is meant God's gracious approaching unto them in the dispensation of the gospel, and offers of pardon and free justification by faith, or the tender of Christ.

6. By bidding them to go and work in the vineyard, is meant their doing the work, and will of God, or accepting of Christ, and entering themselves into a church.

7. To-day, refers to the present time, not to delay the doing of it.

8. The first that answered I will not, but afterward repented, &c., refers to the publicans and harlots, or profane persons, or of those of the Gentile nations, who by their evil lives, and horrid wickedness, say they will not enter into covenant with Christ, or obey his voice, nor go into his vineyard, or believe and do his will, and work; for though none perhaps, will say thus with their mouths, yet all ungodly persons speak thus by their work, and in their hearts; but afterwards being convinced of their great wickedness, they repent of their folly, and do believe in Jesus Christ.

9. The second son said, I go, sir, namely the pharisees, and other hypocrites, and formal professors, by their outward profession, and fair pretences to religion; these seem to say, we go sir; they promise fair, but their hearts and lives being unsanctified, they do not what the Lord doth require, and look for at their hands.

10. By the kingdom of heaven here may refer both to the gospel church, and to the kingdom of glory; some conclude the last only. "Verily I say unto you, that the Publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you."

Our Saviour doth not hereby intimate that the Pharisees, and such like persons, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven afterwards, or as if great sinners go to heaven first, and that they shall follow after, but by these words he means,

1. That some publicans and profane sinners should go to heaven, and not many of these Pharisees, and self-righteous persons.

2. It doth imply that great and notorious sinners are more likely to be prevailed with to receive Jesus Christ, or are sooner wrought upon than self-righteous ones are.

Question, why are they called sons, both sorts being in their natural state?

Ans. Metaphors and parables, I have told you often, do not run on all four; yet all men by creation are the sons of God, and upon that account, they may be so called.

Thus having briefly opened the several parts of this parable, I shall take notice of one or two points of doctrine.

1. Doct. That Pharisæal and all self-righteous persons are in some sense in a worse condition than the open profane, the latter being sooner brought to believe in Christ than the former.

Two things I purpose to do in speaking to this proposition.

1. Show the character of a Pharisæal person.

2. Give you the reason, why open and profane sinners are sooner brought to believe in Christ, than self-righteous ones, who have a sober, and moral honest life and conversation.

The marks of a Pharisæal person.

See the parable of the Pharisee and Publican opened, where their character is more largely opened.

It was not enough among the Jews to be called a pharisee.

1. They are such that think better of themselves than they think of others. "And he spake a parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others."

They are such who have a marvellous opinion of the goodness of their own hearts and state, they trust in themselves (or have much confidence in respect to the safety and happiness of their condition) though never changed, or renewed by the Spirit and grace of God; and hence the Pharisee broke forth and said, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican," Luke xviii. 11; and therefore,

2. The Pharisees were the most precise and devout sect that was among the Jews, and were esteemed by all men generally godly and holy persons; brethren, to be a Pharisee was not then a name of reproach, but rather an honourable thing, as appears by Paul's words, when he was charged before the council; "after the most strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee," Acts. xxvi. 5. Also at another time he cried out in the council, "I am a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee," Acts xxiii. 6. Had it been a name of reproach, he would not have pleaded thus for himself; even so all pharisæal persons may be generally looked upon to be very good and godly men and women, and be much esteemed of by the people; they may not only commend themselves, praise themselves, but others may commend, and praise them also; it is not enough that a man may pass among others for a devout and good Christian, who only judge by appearance. O say some people, if this man be not a godly man, and doth not go to heaven, "Lord have mercy upon us." What, not this man, that prays morning and evening; that hears and reads sermons, and is very charitable, and is guilty of no horrid crimes, as others are. And shall open profane persons, or publicans and harlots, go into the kingdom of heaven before such?

3. The Pharisees, notwithstanding all their seeming religion and godliness, were corrupt in the matter of God's worship, and had also corrupted the commandments of God by their traditions, Matt. xv. 3, 6. They had a great veneration for their own rituals and traditions of their fathers, yet rejected the law and precepts of the law, and the doctrine of the gospel also; they were like some now-a-days among us, who cry up such service that is of human composition, (as more divine and secret that any part of God's holy worship) of such things that God hath directly commanded. It is noted that some of the Jewish robbers said, that he sinneth as much who eateth with unwashen hands, as he that lieth with an harlot.

4. They were very proud, hypocritical and self-confident, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men," &c., Luke xviii. 1. But yet in seeming they would be thought to ascribe all their pretended attainments to God, though they held the power of man's will, yet would not own it, or appear to assume the glory of their holiness unto themselves; as the

Arminians at this day seem to ascribe all to God, when their doctrine leads them directly to glory in themselves; they made their boast of God, as such that knew his will. See Rom. ii. 18. "Behold thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God. "And knowest his will, and approves the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law."

"And are confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness," ver. 19.

"An instructor of the foolish, and teacher of babes," &c.

They would be thought to be the only true minister of God's word (like some in our days) who account all other foolish teachers, yet are very ill men, and a covetous generation, as the Pharisees were.

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you devour widow's houses, and for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation," Matt. xxiii. 14.

Secondly, I shall show you why self-righteous persons are not so soon brought to believe in Christ, as those who are openly profane or scandalous sinners.

But let me promise one or two things before I proceed.

1. Let it be considered that in respect of God nothing is hard, he can as soon, and as easily convert a Pharisee as a Publican, or an honest, civil and sober woman, as a common harlot: it is all one to God with whom all things are possible, to change the heart of a rich man as a poor man; yet our blessed Lord saith, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mark x. 23.

In what respect Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven sooner than Pharisees.

2. Therefore let it also be considered that our Saviour speaketh after the manner of men, in respect had to the subject to be wrought upon, who are so wofully blinded through self-love, pride, and conceitedness; that there is more probability of the conversion of a great scandalous sinner, than of a sober, moral, and self-righteous person.

3. It is also so in respect of the revelation of God's word, Christ saith, "Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before such," or rather than such, because God leaves such proud, and self-righteous ones, as a just judgment, to themselves: great sinners are converted when the other sort are left to themselves, and fall into hell, and so perish for ever.

4. Moreover this appears to be so by our own experience, we see now (as it was in the gospel days) that many great sinners are converted and do believe in Jesus Christ, whereas multitudes of sober and self-conceited persons are never moved to seek after Christ and salvation by him.

Quest. Well, but what is the cause of this, and why is it thus?

Ans. It may be occasioned from that great blindness and ignorance of these Pharisical persons, it is hard to persuade them that their state is nought, or that they are in no better a condition than the vilest sinner in the world; what pray often, read, hear sermons, give to the poor, pay all men what is their due, are no swearers, liars, adulterers nor extortioners and yet say that their condition is nought, nay worse than the condition of publicans and harlots, how can this be?

Self-righteous person's state worse than the open profane.

1. I answer, are they guilty of no sin, have they not broken the holy law of God, or violated the precepts thereof? is there no lusts in their hearts, no covetous desire, no wrath, anger, or malice against their neighbours; it is plain that the Pharisee principally refers to the duties of the second table, when he boasted of his own righteousness; can that law justify that person whom it accuseth and condemns, and lays under its fearful curses?

Besides have not these very persons violated the precepts of the first table also, and that in a lamentable manner.

Have they no other God but the Lord? do they worship him only? viz. believe in him, trust in him alone; do they love him with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their strength? do they love him above father and mother, son or daughter, gold or silver? alas, if they do not thus, they are transgressors of the law, and are found guilty by it before God, and will God, do they think, destroy the sanction of his holy law, and make himself a liar to acquit such guilty ones? hath he not said "he is cursed that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them," and that he will by no means clear the guilty?

2. Can man's own moral, legal, or inherent righteousness justify him at God's bar, or is there any one who can be justified in the sight of God by the righteousness of the law?

O how blind are these poor wretches, that they see not the necessity of one to fulfil the righteousness of the law for them?

2. This brings me to the second reason why these people are so hardly brought to believe and be converted.

The cause why pharisaical persons are so rarely converted.

It is because they see not that absolute necessity of Christ to save them. Can you persuade a man that feels no sickness, no disease, to go to a physician presently lest he dies? for what saith he, I am not sick, I feel no pain, no illness, I ail nothing.

Can you persuade a rich man who hath his bags full of silver and gold, to go a begging to his neighbor's door? no, no says he, let the poor go a begging, such who haveing not to supply their wants and necessities; as for me I am rich, and increased with goods, and Rev. iii. 17. have need of nothing; I know not that I am poor; miserable, wretched, and naked, neither will I be persuaded to believe such is my condition, I am not like this publican.

3. It is because Satan, the god of this world hath blinded their eyes, so that the gospel is hid from them. The devil, my brethren, hath more power over these to blind their eyes and to deceive their souls with vain hopes of heaven, than he hath over such who are notorious sinners; O how easy is it for him to sway and turn them the way the bent and bias of their hearts leadeth them.

Mankind being born under a covenant of works, is persuaded naturally that it must be by his own righteousness he must be raised, since his fall was by his own unrighteousness; that which we have in ourselves an inclination to do, we need not much persuasion to perform.

4. Because self-righteous persons, whilst they so continue, are not called to believe or to come to Christ, and because such that Jesus Christ calls not, will find it hard, nay impossible to come to him. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Matt. ix. 13. No, no, they are sensible sinners which Christ is to be offered unto. "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost," Luke xix. 10. And who are they? even publicans and harlots, or such who are convinced of their woful condition, or such who find the weight and burden of their sins, and are undone in themselves; this was spoken concerning the conversion of "Zaccheus, the chief of the publicans," Matt. xi. 28. It was the lost sheep, the lost groat, and the lost son that was sought after, they are the sick who need a physician, the hungry soul that needs food, and the thirsty soul that needs drink, and the naked soul that wants clothes, and the polluted and filthy person that needs the fountain to wash in; so it is the poor, lost, sin-sick sinner, who sees his filthiness, that wants a Saviour, and to such only ought Jesus Christ to be tendered to; and indeed none else will receive him.

Not that I suppose any can come to a thorough sight of their sin and misery until they are convinced by the Holy Spirit.

So much shall serve to show why self-righteous persons are so hardly brought to

Why loose and scandalous persons are sooner converted than self-righteous ones. Premise.

believe in Christ.

Secondly, I shall in a word or two show how it comes to pass that open, loose, and scandalous sinners are sooner wrought upon, than the proud Pharisee.

But by the way, let none of these think themselves to be at present in a better condition than the sober or civilized person; I mean, whilst they remain wicked, or continue in their sin, for damned they will be, unless they are born again, or are regenerated, see 1 Cor. vi. 9. Luke xiii. 3. Nay, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all such. O what is more abominable than open wickedness; moreover such wretches oftentimes pull down national judgments, are the same of any people who profess Christianity, and ought to be punished by the judges. God encourage our reformers, and perfect the reformation that is happily begun. But why do these then go into the kingdom of heaven before the other sort?

1. I Answer, because these have no such seeming grounds to deceive them, or false foundations to build upon, they cannot (I mean, pretend to any righteousness of their own, seeing their consciences condemn them (as guilty of horrible crimes) before God; the law cannot (they must needs think) relieve them who break it every day, therefore it is easy for these to be convinced that they are lost and undone sinners; hence Satan hath other baits for these.

1. He persuades them that God is merciful, and will, if they acknowledge their sins, forgive them, though they daily live in those sins which they do confess, and seem to bewail.

2. He tells them also that Jesus Christ died for sinners, and they need not doubt but they shall be saved, though they find not, experience not, the fruits and effects of his death in their own souls; thus are great sinners deceived by these, and such like suggestions?

3. But if neither of these baits will catch them, then he persuades them that they may find mercy at the last moment, and from thence they defer (many times) the work of faith and repentance till sickness and death comes; and though these baits are not so powerful and prevalent as those are (I before mentioned), yet were it not for these cutting snares and devices of Satan, we might hope to see more of this sort to embrace Jesus Christ, than indeed we do. But how to counterwork Satan as to those baits and devices of his, I purpose to show in the application; but to proceed, great and scandalous sinners are sooner wrought upon than self-righteous persons.

II. Because it is the design of God, and apparently his absolute purpose, to magnify his own sovereign grace in calling, pardoning, and saving of great sinners. Christ commonly acquainted or made known himself to this sort, hence the Pharisees reproached our blessed Saviour for keeping company with publicans and sinners. "This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15; that is, great sinners, the chiefest of sinners. David doubtless well understood the design and purpose of God in forgiving great sinners, which made him cry, "Lord, forgive mine iniquities, for they are great," Psal. xxv. 11.

III. Because deep convictions of sin are more likely to seize upon these notorious sinners than others, when made sensible of their abominable evils, and how they have violated and transgressed the law of God, and then also considering how Jesus Christ is offered to sinners as sinners, and that God's arms stand wide open to embrace such "that have done as evil things against him as they could," Jer. iii. 5; this must needs tend to melt them into tears of godly sorrow and grief for their iniquities. Brethren, conscience cannot be so soon blinded in these, as it is in sober and moral persons; when a pardon is freely offered to a self-condemned and abominable traitor, and stout-hearted rebel, that hath conspired the death of his gracious Sovereign, this tends to break him into pieces. Conscience being made use of by the Lord in conviction, will flatter no man so far as it is enlightened by the word and Spirit of God.

IV. Because God will magnify his grace in the free pardon of sinners in their own sense and feeling, shame and self-abhorrence; this is one reason doubtless why the Lord is pleased to work upon great sinners; they shall see their filthiness, and loathe themselves in their own sight, when God receives them into his arms of mercy, that they may admire his infinite grace and goodness to them, and know it is not for any goodness or worthiness that is in them, that he doth vouchsafe pardon upon them. "And they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations," Ezek. vi. 9. And again, saith the Lord by the same prophet, "then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations," Ezek. xxxvi. 31. "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you, be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel," ver. 32. People that are proud and exalt themselves, or have high thoughts of their own worthiness, are left of God; but great sinners are brought quickly to shame, confusion, and self-abhorrence, and deep humiliation. But so much at this time.

God seeks to magnify his pardoning grace in the sight and sense of sinner forgiven to his own glory.

SERMON X.

But what think you, a certain man had two sons, and he came unto the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not, but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise, and he said, I go, sir, and went not.—Matt. xxi. 28—31.

I shall now proceed to a second point.

2. Doct. "And he said, I go, sir," &c., note from hence, that some persons seem, pretend, or in appearance do obey God's call, and close with Christ, but really and truly do it not. In speaking to this truth.

1. I shall show you who these are, or how they may be known. 2. Apply it.

Who they
are that say
they go, and
yet go not.

1. They are such that pretend to religion, and that make a profession of it, like as the pharisees did; these seem to say, we go, sir, but it is but in show or appearance only; they are not truly religious, they do not those things which God requires of them: it is not every religious duty which a man may be found in, that demonstrates him to be a true Christian; no, not the discharge of every external duty commanded of God. Religion lies not simply in an outward profession, but in faith and the love of God; it doth consist in a holy trust and dependance upon Jesus Christ, and in having the heart brought into a blessed conformity to the power of true godliness; having the image of God stamped upon the soul; therefore all that say they go, and yet do no more but make an outward profession of godliness, or subject to some external precepts, do but pretend they go to work in Christ's vineyard, for really they do it not.

2. Such that come under some convictions of sin, and upon it reform their lives, do many things; thus it is said of Herod. "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and holy, and he observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly," Mark vi. 20. They may reform their lives as to some gross acts of sin, and have a reverent esteem of Christ's true ministers, and hear the word with some seeming joy, but still harbour in their hearts some principal lusts which they will not part withal; they like Herod keep their Herodias, are never brought to loathe, and leave their darling sins; but so far as they act in a reformation of life, they seem thereby to say, Sir, I go, but they in truth go not.

3. Such go not that only act, and do many duties under legal terror, or fear of present or of future wrath; who, when the storm is over that was raised in their souls, their seeming zeal and affections presently cool in them, and in a little time become as bad, or worse than they were before, as we find in the same Herod, who did not only cut off John Baptist's head, but did deride our blessed Saviour when he was brought before Pilate.

The Phari-
sees said we
go, but went
not.

4. Such that act in religious duties for life, or according to the tenure of the covenant of works, thinking by their own performances and obedience to obtain the favour of God, not being ever convinced of the necessity of the righteousness of Christ; trust not, depend not, or believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they might be justified by faith only; but from a principle of self-love, cleave unto their own righteousness, or trust in themselves that they are righteous. The people who act thus, do but say, we go, sir, but go not. The Pharisees were those who said, I go sir; these, no doubt, our Saviour means by this son.

Some say
they go sir,
but it is but
a little way,
so far as suits
with their
interest, &c.

Moreover, all such say, we go, sir, but it is no farther than will suit or stand consistent with their own carnal hearts, ease, and self-interest. They may be convinced of the doctrine of free-grace, and that it is by Christ alone that they must be justified, that is, by his obedience, (as it is apprehended by faith alone,) yet never received Christ by an act of saving faith; they are willing to receive him as a priest to atone and make their peace with God; but are not for receiving him as a king, so as to subject in heart and life to his authority, and yield universal obedience to his holy precepts. These seem to present Christ with a paper wherein their own terms are contained, viz., how far they will go, or how far they will follow him; this sort cannot so deny themselves as to receive Christ as a prophet, to hear him "in whatsoever he says unto them," Acts iii. 22, 23. They cannot deny themselves, and "take up their cross and follow him," Matt. xvi. 24, 25, fully, and suffer reproach or outward loss for his sake; for alas, the world still is the great idol which is in their hearts, which they fall down before, and are therefore great idolaters; for to love ourselves, our own honour, gold and silver, or anything above Jesus Christ is idolatry.

Some say
they go, but
their time is
not come, it
is too soon
for them to
close with
Christ.

6. Such that take up a resolution to follow Christ at another time, it is not to-day when Christ calls, but they say we go, *i. e.*, we will believe, we will repent and follow Christ, and become religious when we have a more fit and convenient season, or have got rid of some worldly business and incumbrances; there is something of greater moment in their eye at present, than to close with Christ; they are like unto the man that our Saviour bid to follow him. "But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," Luke ix. 59. Let me live at home and please my father, (as if he should say,) and stay until he is dead, that I may not be dispossessed of my inheritance; but after my father is buried, and I am possessed of my estate, I will follow thee.

7. One said unto our Saviour, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," Luke ix. 57. This man was a Scribe, see Matt. viii. 19. "And Jesus said unto him, foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Here is a person that seems to offer his service to Christ; he says I will go. I will follow thee, but it was no doubt before he had well weighed the matter, and considered, or counted the cost; this man takes up a sudden resolution unadvisedly; may be, he met with some heat in his affections, or transport of joy by hearing of Christ's gracious words, and beholding the wonderful miracles he did. Doubtless, by our Saviour's answer, his heart was not right, his resolution was either bottomed upon some sudden flashes, or from his curiosity, or hopes of meeting with some outward advantage, but saw not the difficulties he might expect to meet with, if he did indeed follow Jesus Christ.

See the parable opened of a man building a tower.

Thus some say we go, *i. e.*, as soon as their affections are warmed under an awakening sermon, they with much seeming zeal may become members of a church, but after a while finding what they are likely to meet withal, they faint, and are sorry they make such a rash profession, or perhaps they have stately houses, and are honoured among men; but when they find Christ hath no house, no land, no outward preferment for them, but contrariwise do see they are like to lose the love of their friends, and have all that is dear unto them in this world exposed to loss, they repent, and though they said, we go sir, go not; they hold not out the whole journey, but look back.

APPLICATION.

1. How do many persons deceive themselves, thinking they do that which they do not, and are that which they are not, and say they go when they go not; believe, or think they are Christians, when indeed they are no better than mere carnal worldlings, and utterly without one saving dram of grace in their hearts.

2. Let such that are sober, and that in all moral virtues seem to excel others, look to it, since so many of this sort, do but thereby deceive themselves, saying, we go sir, but go not; they, it may be feared, do not know what it is to go into Christ's vineyard, like some servants, who, when commanded to do such or such a thing, say, I will do it sir, but through ignorance do something else of a quite contrary nature to what was commanded. Christ bids them believe, that they may be justified and saved; but they either rest upon a false faith, or upon a sober and moral life, not knowing what true faith is, nor the righteousness of God is.

3. We also infer from hence what a woful condition they are in, who deceive their own souls by present promises of what they will do, and what they will become hereafter, whereas, alas! they know nor what a day may bring forth.

4. Let ministers and churches learn wisdom from hence, and take care who they receive into communion, lest they take some in who are only under some sudden convictions, and raised and warm affection, and so unadvisedly offer themselves for communion, who never received Jesus Christ into their understanding, nor came to be of a sound judgment; for this is but like a sudden land flood that soon glides away; they, in heat of affections, say I go sir, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, but do not first sit down to count the cost; are quickly cooled in their love, and return again to folly.

But to proceed to another point of doctrine, from the answer of the second son, who said "I go sir, but went not." I observe from hence.

3. Doct. That present promises touching future faith and holiness, seldom end in real performance.

Three things I purpose to do here.

1. Show you from whence it is that some persons do make present promises, touching future faith and holiness.

2. Show you why, or from what cause it is that these present promises seldom end in real performances.

3. Apply it.

1. They may make these present promises from those common convictions and illuminations of the word and Spirit of God; the light of convictions may be so great in their hearts, in respect of sin, as to the guilt thereof, and their present danger thereby, that they can do no less than purpose and promise what they will do hereafter. We read of some that "were once enlightened, and had tasted of the good word of God," &c., Heb. vi. 4, 5; who never were savingly enlightened nor renewed by the grace of God

Why some make present promises touching future holiness.

1. These may be convinced by the law of God that sin is a great evil, and that they are great sinners; certainly Judas saw this, the guilt of sin may lie heavy upon their consciences.

2. They may see that if they die in this condition, they are likely to be undone for ever, and therefore from hence they may come under great terror

Fears of hell stir up some

to say, we go for fear of wrath and eternal punishment, and they may have some abhorrence of sin in respect of the guilt thereof, but not abhor the act, nor the filth of sin.

Now from hence secretly they resolve, purpose, and promise to close with Christ, and become new creatures before they die, therefore an accusing conscience may stir up men to say, we go sir.

3. They may make these promises from the nature of an accusing conscience, for when a man's conscience is awakened, it will terrify him fearfully, yea, it will never let him rest, but lay on such lashes, and gripe him so sorely, that unless he doth something to appease and still his offended conscience, he cannot well bear it. Conscience, brethren, will spare no man when it is awakened, according to its light, though it is true, it is very subject to be misled for want of a right guide, or true light in the understanding, and from hence may perhaps be pacified, and become more still and quiet by those promises a poor sinner may make conversion unto God hereafter; it is therefore to still and quiet conscience, more than to please God. It is not because sin is against God, contrary to his holy nature, and a breach of his holy law; but because it is against them, disquiets and torments them, they find it is against their present ease and future happiness, exposing them to eternal wrath and vengeance. And from hence they promise they will leave and forsake it, and become new creatures.

4. It may be the effect of some sore affliction or judgment that these persons may be under. God may lay them on a sick-bed, and seem to shake them over hell, and then they like some seamen when in a storm, may promise what they will do, and how well they will live for the time to come if God will spare them at this season; but when they are raised up and delivered from their present fears or dangers, they forget all their promises which they before, when distressed, made to God: so much as to the first thing.

Secondly, Why do these promises seldom end in real performances? What should be the reasons of it?

1. I answer, it is from the grand agent that stirs them up to make these promises, which is the devil no doubt. Satan fearing he is in some danger of losing them, by finding what fear and trouble doth attend them, that he might blind their eyes, and deceive their souls, puts them upon the making of these promises of amendment of life hereafter.

Brethren, the devil cares not what promises sinners make to become good and virtuous hereafter, if he can hinder them from closing in with Christ at present.

Beloved, pray remember that to-morrow is the devil's time, I mean it is the time he chooses for sinners, but God's time is to-day. "Go work to-day in my vineyard," to-day if you will hear my voice harden not your hearts," Heb. iii. 7, 8.

"While it is called to-day," ver. 13. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow," Prov. xxvii. 1. "Behold, this is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. But this time Satan likes not of, he is for another time, it is too soon, saith Satan; indeed he is for no time, he would have the sinner in hell before he sets about this work, and therefore strives to deceive the soul, by putting it upon resting on promises to close with Christ hereafter; certainly such promises will come to nothing that the devil stirs up men and women to make.

Secondly, Present promises, resolutions, and purposes, touching future faith and regeneration, seldom end in real performance.

Because the end and design of such persons that make them is abominable.

1. For evident it is, their design and purpose is to be wicked and ungodly at the present, for what can be the purport of these promises else? certainly they who do not resolve to turn to God till to-morrow, purpose to abide enemies to God to-day; now if this be so, it appears that these people sin at present with full purpose and resolution of soul. Brethren, that rebel that tells his sovereign he will lay down his arms hereafter, doth thereby positively declare that he will at present remain in his rebellion.

This being so, can any think that God should ever bless or succeed such promises, since the design and purpose of the man that makes them is so vile, abominable, and hateful to him? what can be a greater aggravation of sin, than to sin with full purpose and resolution?

2. Because it argues that these persons have but a partial work upon their hearts, their hearts are divided; for though their judgments and understandings may be somewhat enlightened, yet their wills are not bowed nor subjected to the obedience of Christ, nor

Men may say, I go Sir, under some sudden afflictions.

Satan may stir up sinners, when they are awakened, to make promises touching future faith and repentance.

are their affections changed. Balaam no doubt had much light in his understanding, (though not savingly enlightened) "He hath said which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open."

"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel," Num. xxiv. 4.

Hence he desired to die the death of the righteous, but it is evident he was a wicked man, his affections being never changed; the apostle saith, "He loved the wages of unrighteousness." Brethren, this discovers these men to be hypocrites, and these promises and purposes arise from their base and filthy hypocrisy. Conversion is never fully wrought until the whole soul in all its faculties is brought under the power of Divine Grace; but alas, how often is it that the conscience of men may be convinced, and much enlightened, when their wills and affections remain under the influences of sin and Satan.

3. These promises seldom end in real performances, because they are made directly in opposition to the divine precept, and holy will and command of God, who says, "To-day if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts; go to-day and work in my vineyard," Heb. iii. 15.

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day will bring forth," Prov. xxvii. 1.

Certainly God will never assist a man to perform such promises that are made in contempt of his authority, and in opposition to his express command. Shall men presume to contradict the Almighty God; besides he hath positively declared, that such whom he called, and they refused, and would have none of his counsel, that when they call upon him, he will not hear? Prov. i. 24, 25.

4. Because such promises and purposes are made only in the strength of the creature, for surely they must needs suppose they have power to do those things at any time, that trust in their own purposes, promises, and resolutions what they will do hereafter; and do not presently, or in God's time go, whose assistance they may expect if they come in his time; but that help and aid which he hath promised them to-morrow, or for the time to come; and what is any creature able to do of himself? True, the Arminians by their doctrine intimate men are endowed with power to repent, without any special or supernatural grace; which notion may put people upon undoing temptations, even to delay, or defer the great work of regeneration until sickness, or death comes, or until they are grown old; for if they have such ability or power as they say, men are subject to conclude, that they may have the same power to-morrow, which they have this day. But O take heed, it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps; "without me you can do nothing," John xv. 5. Faith is not of ourselves, "it is the gift of God; it is if God, peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Tim. ii. 25. But God hath said, he will not give them that grace, who did refuse to hearken to him when he called, nay, and God doth often withdraw the influences of his Spirit from such that reject his offers in his own time; and evident it is, that they resist and grieve the Holy Spirit in its motions, strivings, and operations to-day, and put him off with vain purposes and promises: we may do well to observe what the Lord saith, "My Spirit shall not always strive with men." And what can a man do when the Spirit of God hath done striving with him?

Present promises made in a man's own strength are never performed.

5. Because the life of man is so uncertain, and the most of these persons are cut off in wrath before that time is come, when they purposed to make good their promises of faith and repentance. O how many are lost, and are now in hell, who made such promises as these are? It is just with God to cut them off, they wilfully rejected his great and gracious tenders of grace in the proper season thereof.

APPLICATION.

1. From hence we may perceive what the reason is, that so many people are left of God, who content themselves with present purposes and promises touching future holiness. I am persuaded the devil this way, I mean by this subtle device, destroys more souls than by any other whatsoever. Therefore for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of your precious and immortal souls, beware of him; O take heed that you rest not satisfied with such promises; say, sinner, in thy heart when such thoughts rise in thy mind, this is Satan, it is he that puts me upon making these promises, thereby to deceive my soul.

2. This may serve also to reprehend, and sharply to rebuke, all such persons who flatter themselves with such purposes, who say, "I go sir," when they go not, or who think they do the thing which Christ commands them, when it is far from it; he commands them to believe for righteousness, and they rest upon doing, or upon a sober moral life. Christ

says, "he that believeth not, shall be damned." Mark vi. 16, but though they believe not, do not go out to him, and rest upon him, yet by their works and inherent holiness, they doubt not but they shall be saved, and that they fully thereby answer his requirement.

Exhort. 3. Let me exhort you all that are yet in your sins, to close with Christ this day, and not to delay it until another time; and that I may the better prevail with you, take a few motives.

MOTIVES.

Powerful
motives to
sinners not
to delay
closing with
Christ.

1. Consider the shortness and uncertainty of your lives; you are not lords and keepers of your times; no, no, your times are in the Lord's hands; many a candle hath been put out before half burned, many a fair flower cut off before its withering time was come; what a multitude of short and small graves may you see.

2. Now you have an opportunity in your hands, "Why is there a prize in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it," Prov. xvii. 16. If you had an opportunity to-day to get one or more, thousand pounds, and you are told this is the time, it is to-day, would you defer the looking after it till to-morrow? or would a condemned criminal that hath a promise of a pardon, if he looks after it to-day, delay it to another time? O that sinners from hence would see their folly.

3. It is great folly, and very dangerous, to defer the matters of our eternal happiness. Because if you neglect the present time, you may lose the day of your visitation; the day of grace may be shorter than your lives, as appeareth concerning Jerusalem. "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thy eyes," Luke xix. 42. Sirs, your days in this world may be lengthened out, and yet the day of grace may be past with you.

4. Because moral indisposition to close with Christ, may be more increased to-morrow than it is to-day; sin is of a hardening nature; if a man as soon as taken sick, looks out for, or sends for a physician, there may be more hopes he may be cured, than if he should neglect any means until this distemper hath got greater power, and his natural strength is wasted. It is easier to break a colt and bring him to the saddle, than it is an old horse that runs wild in the wilderness; a young plant is sooner plucked up than an old tree. To speak after the manner of men, all know that these things are so, though it is true God can as soon subject the rebellious will of an old sinner as one that is young; yet since this is the Lord's time, viz., even to-day, from what I have said, you may learn wisdom.

5. Delay not the time, in regard of Satan; for if you put Christ off with flattering and deceitful promises to-day by the devil's instigations, he knows what great advantages he may thereby gain; that devil that binds you to-day with withs, may bind you to-morrow with cords and fetters of iron: the old man increases in his strength in sinners, as well as the new man doth so in believers.

6. In regard of spiritual judgments, which may make the new birth not only difficult, but impossible, open sins God usually punisheth with visible judgments, but wilful neglects of the day of grace he commonly punisheth by spiritual judgments. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed," Isa. vi. 19. Which terrible passage (as one observes) is no less than six times repeated in the New Testament. See that fearful text, "In thy filthiness is lewdness, because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee," Ezek. xxiv. 13. Because I have purged thee, that is, I have made use of means to purge thee, or I have purged thee from some gross acts of wickedness; but still thy heart abides vile and filthy; all future means to cleanse thee shall be taken away, no sermon, no conviction, no affliction shall ever have any effect to humble thee. "I the Lord have spoken it, and it shall come to pass, and I will do it," ver. 14, as you have it expressed in the very next verse.

Quest. What shall we do to prevent this great danger, of delaying or resting on present promises, touching future faith and repentance?

1. Answ. I answer, be persuaded and made sensible that it is the devil which stirs you up to make these promises, and so to put Christ off, and grieve the Spirit; know assuredly it is Satan out of a design to ruin your souls, by cheating you of the day of your visitation.

2. Consider that he that puts you upon making these promises to-day, to repent and turn to the Lord hereafter, will put you upon making the same promises, and resting on like purposes to-morrow, and so till death overtakes you, and your souls are lost for ever, for be sure the devil to-morrow will never come, it will be still to-morrow.

3. Consider that thus to delay this work, is rebellion against the Lord, nay, and that you do secretly resolve and purpose in your hearts to continue in your rebellion, and that these promises (as you have heard) do imply no less; therefore you sin with a resolution and purpose of heart.

4. Consider that it is not in your own power to believe and turn to the Lord; it must be done by the Spirit of God, by his help and by his assistance; and therefore it must be done in his time, and before his Spirit hath done striving with you. Call to mind that text, "My Spirit shall not always strive with men," Gen. vi. 8.

5. Pray earnestly. "A man cannot receive anything unless it be given him from above," John iii. 27. Look up to heaven, remember God's absolute promises, "I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh," Ezek. xi. 19. This is a promise made to such that are, and have been great sinners: it is not made upon any conditions to be performed by them; therefore how do you know but God may do this thing for you, therefore plead this promise with God.

6. Labour to be sensible of the corruptions of your nature and polluted hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. It is perverse, and it will supplant you if you take not heed. There is nothing so false and so deceitful as the heart of man, and in many ways doth deceive: and this way also, even by your making of these false and deceitful promises.

7. Endeavour to observe the motions of the Holy Spirit; "The wind bloweth where it listeth." Mariners observe the wind, and when it serves, they hoist up their sails. Do not quench nor grieve the Spirit, because he is the only Agent in your conversion; all that are born again, "they are born of the Spirit." A man may reform his life by the power of natural light; but no man can thereby change his own heart, nor form Christ in his soul; regeneration is a new creation, not the work of the creature, but of the Creator. "Not born of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God."

8. Attend diligently upon the word of God, and upon all the means of grace; it is good so be there where God usually worketh upon men's hearts; faith comes by hearing, and hath not God that way wrought upon many sinners that were as bad as thou art?

Consolation. This may tend much to the comfort of such that would not rest contented in making promises to work in God's vineyard, but as soon as called, immediately they obeyed that call.

They did not delay, but made haste to keep God's holy commands. It is a sign they were beloved before time, because drawn by love to Christ in time; the gospel came not to them "in word only, but also in power," Thess. i. 4, 5; which shows that they were elected to salvation. So much to this parable.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

MAN CASTING SEED INTO THE GROUND.

SERMON XI.

And he said, So is the kingdom of heaven, as if a man should cast seed into the ground. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up he knows not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of itself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.—Mark iv. 26—29.

THE Evangelist Mark only hath recorded this parable, and if in opening it, we have respect to what goes before, it may hold forth,

1. That such persons who would not be deceived, ought to take care what doctrine they hear. "Take heed what you hear," ver. 21. Or what seed it is that is sowed in your

hearts, and also they ought to take heed into what ground the seed falls, for according to the nature or quality of the seed will the product be; if the seed be not good, or of the right kind, the fruit will not be good.

2. Moreover, take heed what you hear, as to the measure or quantity of your hearing; for if God sows plentifully, or measure forth abundantly unto you, he expects increase accordingly; and likewise to the frequency of your hearing. "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you, and you that hear shall have more." O see that you are much in hearing; if we measure unto God much of our time, in hearing with all care and diligence, (provided it be his own word) and receive it into our understanding, wills, and affections; God will measure forth full mercies and divine blessings unto us, for it is doubtless the improvement of our time, and the means of grace our Lord doth here refer unto, "For he that hath, to him shall be given," &c.,

The scope of this parable. 2. Therefore one design of our Lord in this parable considering what precedes, is to show the great blessing that attends a faithful and diligent attendance upon the preaching the gospel.

3. To show how insensibly the seed of the word takes root, and springs up in the hearts of such that receive it, and also to discover unto ministers that they should not be over concerned if they see not the fruit of their labours presently, the whole success of it being from God, and to assure them, and those that hear the word in a right manner, a blessing shall attend them in the end.

4. Moreover, to show his disciples that the gospel should have success, and prosper in the world, and prepare all where it came for the great harvest-day.

"So is the kingdom of heaven."

The parts explained. By the kingdom of heaven is meant God's providential dispensation, or administration of the gospel.

"If a man should cast seed on the earth."

Who the man is that casts in the seed, and also what is the ground. A man, the man may primarily refer to the Son of Man, for it is Christ "who sows the good seed," Matt. xiii. 8. But since the Lord Jesus sleeps not, I conclude our Saviour refers here to his ministers; for the man that casts seed into the ground, is said to sleep night and day, and rise. Besides, the Lord Jesus knows how it grows and springs up, though ministers do not.

"Into the ground."

By the ground is meant the hearts of men, as is showed in the parable of the sower, which I have opened.

"And should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up." &c.

What is intended sleep night and day. By sleeping and rising, I understand is meant ministers taking their natural rest, waking and rising, night and day; like as a husbandman, when he hath sown his seed, he is not over concerned about its rooting and springing up, but leaves the success of his cost and labour unto God.

"A husbandman knows not how the seed he hath cast into the ground springs up, it is a mystery in nature; as no man knows how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child, no ministers know not how, or after what manner the word of God takes rooting, and springs up in the hearts of sinners. The secret and hidden operations of the Spirit are known by us, but are mysteries of grace, and known only unto God.

"For the earth bringeth forth of itself."

In what sense the seed may be said to grow of itself. That is, without the help of the husbandman, or any human power, yet not without the influences of heaven; both in respect of the shining of the sun, and the falling of the dew and rain from above. Man adds nothing to its growing up, nor should be solicitous about it. So Christ's ministers having done their part, they may (with other men) sleep or take their quiet rest, though not without looking up to God for a blessing upon their ministry, nor without an expectation of increase.

"First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn."

The blade first appears, but it takes root before that, for where the seed takes no manner of root, no blade ever appears to spring up; by this we may perceive how gradually the work of God's grace goes on upon a sinner's heart, that receives the seed thereof. A minister cannot quickly discern it, no, nor the person himself; he fears the work may not be begun in his soul, there is so much corruption and filth in his heart, and such great darkness in his understanding, but yet he bears up in a visible profession, and in that the blade doth consist, for what is the blade of the seed, but a profession of religion?

"Then the ear, and after that the full corn."

In the ear is the substance of the corn, though at first it is tender, yet there is the fruit, though not yet come to maturity; so grace is wrought in a believer's heart, in whom the seed is sowed, though yet it is but weak, and wants time, or the heat of the Sun of righteousness, to strengthen the habits and exercise of that grace, that so it may come to a farther maturity, or by degrees perfected like corn in the ear.

What meant by the ear and full corn in the ear.

“But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle because the harvest is come.”

When the fruit is brought forth, that is, when it is fully ripe, then the husbandman, viz., the blessed God, by death gathers his saints unto himself; for by putting in the sickle, I understand death is meant; and as the harvest in another place is called the end of the world, so the end of the world may be said to come on them that God takes away by death; God will not cut down any of his people until they are fully ripe, and fit to die. Thus having briefly opened the several parts of this parable, I shall observe one proposition from the whole, viz.,

What is meant by putting in the sickle.

Doct. That the seed of the word sown in the heart of a hearer, insensibly takes root, and springs up, and gradually grows to full maturity.

In speaking unto this,

1. I shall lay down one or two explanatory propositions by the way of promise.
2. Show how or after what manner the seed springs up, and grows in a sinner's heart.
3. Show why, or by what means it is in its springing up not quickly discerned.
4. Apply it.

First take two previous propositions.

I. First, that the seed of the word doth not take root in the hearts of all persons that hear it; the seed that fell on the high-way side took no root, and our Lord told the Jews, “And ye have not my word abiding in you,” John v. 38; and again he saith, “My word hath no place in you,” John viii. 37, or no rooting in your hearts.

The seed roots not in all hearers.

The reasons why the word takes no root in some may be,

1. Because they watch not against Satan, who is said to catch it out of some men's hearts, “Then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart,” Matt. xiii. 19. The devil hath many ways to catch the seed out of the hearts of men that hear the word (as I have showed in explaining the parable of the sower.)

Why the seed roots not in the hearts of some hearers.

1. He sometimes puts the word out of their hearts, by filling them with earthly thoughts; many perhaps whilst they hear the word, have their minds and thoughts running upon the worldly concerns, and they give way to Satan in those suggestions, to such a degree that they can give no account of what was delivered by the minister.

2. Satan may also catch it away by keeping them ignorant of the word; they understand not what they hear, neither do they know the necessity of endeavouring to understand it; and that they are this sort that Satan steals the word from, is evident by what our Saviour saith, “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then comes that wicked one and catcheth it away,” Matt. xiii. 19. He understandeth not the doctrine of the gospel; he knows not the end and purpose of the ministration thereof, nor the necessity there is of receiving Jesus Christ, nay, knows not it is the word of God, but looks upon it to be no more than the word of a poor man by whom it is delivered.

3. By persuading them that they have received the word already, and that it is rooted in them, that the person need not trouble himself any farther, but only to hear the word preached in order to edification or farther growth, and not in order to the implantation of grace in his heart; now from all these certainly Satan catcheth the word away, so that it never takes root in them.

4. The devil doth thus chiefly keep such that hear the word from believing in Christ, who is the sole object and chief treasure of the world; Satan cares not how often men hear the word preached, if he can keep them from believing or flying to, or depending upon the Lord Jesus, by an act of true and saving faith; he will never hinder a man from hearing; let him go and hear a sermon every day, if he finds the person propounds no more to himself than only to hear and to rest upon that, and sees not, knows not the necessity of faith, to receive or embrace the Lord Jesus in the promises.

II. Prop. That some persons in whom the word hath taken some rooting, and the blade also appears, yet in a little time it dwindleth away and comes to nothing; and the

reason of this our Saviour shows is because the ground was not good, but either stony or thorny, (as you have formerly heard). My brethren, a heart not thoroughly broken or ploughed up by the conviction of the Spirit; or where the weeds are not rooted up, nor the evil worms destroyed; the seed brings forth no fruit unto perfection, for in them the love of riches and cares of this life, choke the word.

Secondly, I shall show you how, or after what manner or by what means the seed springs up. So insensibly it springs up and grows, that not only ministers may not know the seed hath rooted in this or that person's heart; but (as I hinted,) it may not be quickly discerned by themselves, yet their seed appears to have taken rooting.

How it appears that the seed springs up in such in whom it is rooted.

Good inclinations and desires created in those in whom the seed is rooted.

1. As to the means by which it is known, most evident it is, that the word preached, in the first place, lets the light into their dark hearts about the spiritual state of their souls, and the way by which they came to be lost, and how recovered out of that woful condition; so that the things of another world take up their thoughts, which before they regarded not. "The entrance of thy words giveth light, understanding to the simple," Psal. cxix. 130.

2. Though the rooting is insensibly done, and not known to them, and yet the springing up appears, by the Spirit's creating in their hearts good desires and inclinations, even such that they never found or experienced before in such a nature, nor in such a degree; they now love the word, love to hear it; before a short sermon seemed long to them, they had no love to it, nor a desire after it; but now it is otherwise, they have spiritual inclinations, thoughts, purposes, and desires in their souls, and talk of heavenly things, yea, love to discourse about Christ and the things of Christ, their minds beginning to be spiritual. "They that are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 6. They also grow weary of their old company, and choose to converse and keep company with holy and pious persons, or such who fear God; and by this it appears the seed of the word springs up in their hearts.

3. It gradually grows up, and further appears by the sense they have of the great evil of sin, and corruptions of their hearts, the longing after a thorough change both of heart and life. Certainly, where this is found and experienced, the seed hath taken root and springs up, (whether it be discerned by them or others, or not,) as the effects of their receiving the seed, and of the rooting of it.

The word springs up in them that panteth for it, and love & esteem it above gold.

4. It is, or may be farther known by that vehement thirst that comes upon them after the word. "I opened my mouth, and panted for thy word." The word is certainly received, if the person prizes it, thirsteth after it, and longs for it, and rejoiceth when he meets with it, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that hath found great spoil," Psal. cxix. 162. It is beyond mountains of prey to them, and well may such rejoice that find the pearl of great price, or find life, find a discharge from death. "I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food," Job. xxiii. 12. Or that food that sustains my natural life, (which is more valued than food that tends to make life comfortable to us,) therefore I love this commandment above gold, yea above much fine gold, and not only so, but the word is sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb," Psal. cxix. 162; Psal. xix. 10.

5. Nay, when the word is rooted and springs up in the heart, that soul cries out for Christ, being fallen in love with Jesus Christ. My brethren, there are two things that clearly show the word is rooted in the soul of a sinner, and begins to spring up.

Where the word is rooted and springs up that soul falls out of love with sin, and in love with Jesus Christ.

1. When the person is fallen out of love with sin, with all sin, and as it is the plague of his heart, and the greatest evil, and will never be reconciled to it any more, but can say, I hate vain thoughts; and with Paul, "The evil that I hate, that do I. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom. vii. 14.

2. When he is fallen in love with Jesus Christ, and cries out, I must have Christ or die; what is my life to me if I have not Christ? the rooting of the word, is the rooting of the sinner in love to Christ. "If ye see my Beloved, tell him I am sick of love," Cant. v. 8. If you know Jesus Christ, or meet with him, or pray to him, pray for me; pray tell Christ, one that you know longs for him, pants after him, will die or swoon away if she have him not to be her Christ. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night," &c., Isa. xxvi. 9.

6. When the soul embraces Christ in the arms of faith, even by that faith which works by love, and resteth wholly upon him and hath no confidence in the flesh, but throws itself as an undone and heavy-laden sinner upon Christ, and finds inward peace, or rest and satisfiacion.

7. And also upon this he takes Christ's yoke upon him, as he is directed to do, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28, 29; well, and what more? "take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," ver. 29. That is the yoke of obedience. Some pretend they obey Christ's invitations, they come to him, rest upon him, they receive Christ as a priest, who hath atoned for their sins, and paid their debts, but they do not obey his precepts, or will not take his yoke upon them. In these the word may have no rooting; but if the person readily yields universal obedience unto Christ, or takes him not only as his Saviour, but as his Sovereign; and because he loves the Lord Christ, will keep all his commandments; deny himself, and taking up his cross, and follows him whithersoever he goes; no doubt but the seed of the word is rooted, and springs up in that person's heart.

Thirdly, I shall show you why the seed of the word sown in the sinner's heart, may not be presently discerned by a minister of Christ, that it is rooted in his heart. He may not know it, but may be ready to say, I have laboured in vain, &c.

1. It may live (as other seed oftentimes doth) under the clods the soul hath received it, but the world is as a great clod of earth, and it hinders the man from discovering what Christ hath done for his soul; or perhaps some corruptions bubble up, which makes him think there is no saving work begun yet upon his soul; but he is ready to say (with Rebecca in another case) "If it be so, why am I thus? O I am a vile creature, what a polluted heart have I! what base thoughts, nay, blasphemous thoughts have I! there is certainly none so bad as I, and thus corruption (or the sense of it) keeps the seed of the word or faith from being discerned by the person himself, who also keeps all to himself, and will not discover what strugglings he has within, for some time.

From
whence it is
the seed
sown doth
not some-
times pre-
sently ap-
pear to have
sprung up.

2. The seed of the word may be rooted, but the person's soul may fall under some sore temptation of Satan, which fills him with fears and doubts; for commonly when first a sinner receives the word, Satan sets upon him; it is one of the principal times or seasons that he waits for. How many young converts hath he assaulted and furiously set upon. As he was at Joshua's right hand to resist him (when he was engaging in a great work for God) so he opposeth and resisteth all that first set their faces Sion-ward.

3. Perhaps a cold pinching storm may come upon the seed soon after it is sown, and make the very blade to wither (as oftentimes is observed); so a storm of opposition may be raised against a person in whom the spiritual seed is sown; the poor sinner is awakened, and begins to make a visible profession of Jesus Christ; but lo, on sudden a wife raises a storm of opposition against the husband, to hinder him from proceeding any farther, or parents upon an awakened child, son or daughter; or an opposition may be made by some evil and unbelieving neighbour, who may not only reproach him, but dissuade him as much as possible, and may lay such stumbling blocks in his way that may stop him for a short time from declaring what God hath done for his soul.

A cold
pinching
storm may
cause the
blade to
wither.

4. Besides the operations of the Spirit are compared to those of the wind, which are sometimes very undiscernable. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but knowest not from whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit," John iii. 8. Sometimes the wind blows very strong, and hath strange effects, most visible effects; but at another time it blows so insensibly, that you can hardly discern it at all: so how strongly did the Spirit operate on those Peter preached his first sermon unto, upon the coming down of the Spirit, when three thousand were converted, and presently cried out, What shall we do? But at other times the Spirit blows like a small breath of wind, and its operations are not soon discerned.

5. May be the blade of profession may not appear quickly, or be presently discerned, by reason the person's faith is small and weak, like a grain of mustard-seed, and the soul from hence wants courage to tell others what God hath done for it. "Come to me all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul," P'sal. lxxvi. 16. But God hath in a wonderful manner appeared to him and wrought in him, he had a strong faith; but saith a weak believer, I would gladly tell the minister, (under whose ministry God hath wrought upon me,) my experiences, but I am ashamed; I fear I shall be able to say nothing, my faith is so weak, and my fears and doubts so great and strong in me.

6. A minister may not be able to discern that the seed is rooted, and that the blade that springs up, is the product of the seed sown in good ground, or in an honest heart, because the blade sprang up in the stony and thorny ground, and showed at first to be the right blade, (or that which springs out of the good ground). Well, says he, I know not what to

think nor what to say, I hope the work is a saving work that is begun on this and that person, but I must wait and see whether it will abide the sun's scorching beams, and cold storms of winter; for hypocrites may say as much as they have said, I must see what the walks, and the humility, and constancy of these persons will be, and how they carry it under those changes they may meet with, or pass under, in the course of their lives. I have known, saith he, some when apprentices, very zealous, who have come to nothing; when they came to set up their trades and were married, they soon withered, and lost all that religion they made a show of.

APPLICATION.

This parable may be of use. 1. To ministers. 2. To sinners. 3. To believers.

1. We may infer from hence, that the faithful ministers of the gospel are Christ's seed-men, they cast the seed into the ground, and must not regard either wind nor weather, but preach the word in season and out of season. Moreover, according as they sow, they may expect to reap; if they sow plentifully, are very laborious and constant in their work, they may see increase through the blessing of God accordingly.

2. They also may learn from hence to be satisfied in a faithful discharge of their ministry, let the effect thereof be what it will; they may sleep and rise night and day as other men, and not be over solicitous about the success of their labours, the issue of all lying in the special blessing of God, and God accepteth of them. "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." God will be glorified in such who hear and believe, in respect of his free grace; so that unto them they are a savour of life unto life: And to each that believe not God will be glorified in his justice, to whom they are a savour of death unto death, for thereby he will leave them without excuse in the great day; and to themselves they may say (with their great Master) "Though Israel be not gathered, I shall be glorious;" God will glorify them, they shall shine as the stars for ever.

Ministers are acceptable to God.

3. They may also expect success, though it does not appear presently, and therefore in the morning sow the seed, and in the evening not to withhold their hand, because they know not which may prosper. However, it shall not be in vain, "for as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not hither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, &c.; so shall my words be that goeth forth out of my mouth: It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the things whereto I send it."

Secondly, to sinners,

1. Let them see what sort of ground they are, and cry to God to make their hearts tender, and fit soil to receive the seed.

2. Also consider what it is they propound to themselves in hearing the word, and also what the cause may be why the seed takes no root in their hearts.

3. They may likewise learn from hence to be much in hearing, and also to look up to God, or cry to him to open and prepare their hearts to hear and receive the word.

Thirdly, to believers.

1. They ought to bless God that hath given them an hearing ear, and seeing eye, and an understanding heart, when others in hearing, hear not, and seeing see not, neither do they understand, "it being given to them to understand the mysteries of kingdom of heaven, but unto others it is not given," Matt. xiii. 11.

2. Also you ought to try and examine yourselves, and see whether the seed revives and grows, yea or no in your hearts, if not, to enquire what the reason of it may be; it may be feared that some grow more in the head than in the heart; more in pride than in humility.

3. Also let us all remember the harvest day will come, and since God affords us ripening weather, the warm shinnings of the sun, and showers of heaven; what cause have we to praise and magnify the riches of his grace, for many nations have not the word at all; the seed is denied them, and others have not fruitful seasons: the sun shines not on them, nor have they such fruitful showers as we in this city and nation have. But woe to them, whether professors or others, who oft received this rain, &c., and yet bring forth nothing but briars and thorns.

THE
SIMILE
OF
EVERY PLANT GOD HATH NOT PLANTED.

SERMON XII.

But he answered and said, every plant my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.—Matt. xv. 13.

THE occasion of this simile rose from what precedes in ver. 12.

“Then came his disciples and said, Knowest thou not that the pharisees were offended after they heard that saying,”

So the design of our Saviour herein is,

The scope of the simile.

1. To show the sad state of the pharisees, who, though they were so nice and strict as not to eat with unwashed hands, yet had unwashed or filthy hearts and lives.

2. That what plant the blessed God hath not planted, though they may remain for a time, yet they shall be rooted up in the end. In speaking to this,

1. I shall open what our Lord may mean by plants.

2. Raise some points of doctrine from hence.

1. Every plan. By every plant may be meant.

1. Every doctrine. 2. Every practice. 3. Every person.

1. Every doctrine, that is not of God or a truth of God, though asserted and maintained with great confidence by men of corrupt principles, though it hath stood a long time, and thought to be an undoubted truth, yet at last it shall be rooted up, and be manifested to be an error, and so be cast off and disowned for ever. The Pharisees held many pernicious doctrines, “Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” Mark vii. 7. But all their evil notions and traditions were in a few years rooted up; and so in the end shall all the evil plants of false doctrines, and errors of these perilous times; the glorious light of the gospel (which will shine forth in the latter days) will root out all the Popish, Socinian, and Arminian errors, with Quakerism, and all other evil plants of false doctrine whatsoever.

False doctrine evil plants.

2. Every practice, i. e., whatsoever is practised as a truth of God, or as an ordinance of Christ, or whatsoever he appointed not, as are ceremonies introduced into the worship of God; that are none of his institution but is merely human, shall be rooted up. Together with all acts of voluntary humility, such as Paul speaks of, “which things have a show of wisdom and humility, and neglecting the body, not in honour to the satisfying the flesh,” Col. ii. 23. Many of which acts of pretended humility, are in several orders of men in the Popish Church, and have appeared in others also in this nation; Roger Crabe is not forgot. Not long since this Crabe strove to delude divers poor people, taught them to abstain from eating of flesh, and to feed his herbs and roots.)

Evil practices and traditions of men, bad plants.

3. And every person, that is, every one who seem saints, or profess themselves to be Christians, or plants in God's vineyard, that are not sincere or true believers, or plants of God's planting, shall be rooted up; though they may have stood and gone for good Christians a great while, yet they shall be cut down, and cast into the fire at last. From hence

He lived first at Chesham in Buckinghamshire.

Hypocrite plants, not of God's planting.

note.
1. Doct. That there are some plants that God never planted, which shall be rooted up.

2. Doct. That those plants that God hath planted, shall never be rooted up.

In speaking to the first of these.

1. I shall show what is meant by planting, and also show who planted them, and where those plants may be planted.

2. Run the parallel between natural and mystical plants.

3. Show why those plants which God hath not planted shall be rooted up.

What planting doth denote. 1. Planting is setting or putting things into the ground, whether they are trees, herbs, or flowers. So mystical planting denotes the transplanting (in a spiritual way) this or that person.

1. From a course of open profaneness into a visible profession; they leave their old course of life, their old company or companions, and also they leave the people and their worship among whom they before walked.

And they may be planted in a visible church of Christ, or be set in God's vineyard, and be called his plants. "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plants," Isa. v. 7. True, these were plants of the national church of the Jews, they grew up by generation as they sprung from the loins of Abraham by Isaac, lineally, and were none of them transplanted to a better soil, during the time of the standing of that church-state; but some of them were removed when the gospel congregational church took place, and was constituted by our Lord and his apostles in the primitive time.

Quest. Who is it that plants people in the gospel church?

Who plants persons in the gospel church. 1. Answ. If they are gracious men and women, God planted them there. Our Saviour shows some are planted by his heavenly Father, who is called a husbandman, &c. John xv. 1. "And the Lord added to the church daily such that should be saved." Acts ii. 47.

Ministers are planters. 2. Gospel ministers may be said to plant them also, "I have planted, and Apollon watered," 1 Cor. iii. 6. God honoured Paul to be a great planter in his gospel church; ministers are said to plant by preaching, when God gives the increase, or blesseth their ministry to the conversion of sinners. But,

II. I shall run a parallel between an external planter, planting; and a spiritual planter, and spiritual planting.

Why ministers are compared to planters. 1. A planter, is one instructed into the mystery of that art, he has wisdom and skill in planting which others have not; so a minister of Christ is one God hath taught the mysteries of the gospel unto, and hath endowed with wisdom, spiritual and ministerial gifts, and graces which others have not. Paul shows when Christ "ascended on high he gave gifts to men," Eph. iv. 8. that is, to fit and qualify them to be spiritual planters, or preachers of the Gospel. Human learning and knowledge of the tongues cannot make men ministers of Christ, but they may be ministers of man's making only, or be national ministers, but not be Christ's ministers. Though the knowledge of the tongues are very useful to ministers, and such learning is not to be condemned, provided no stress is laid upon such learning, rendering it absolutely necessary, or that it is sufficient to make men ministers of Christ. It is a good handmaid, but a bad mistress.

Spiritual preachers must have a regular call. 2. A planter must have a call by the owner of the vineyard, or be in an orderly way empowered by the chief and great Planter, before he is allowed to plant in his vineyard; so every minister must be called and regularly empowered, or ordained a pastor or a planter by the rules of the gospel, before he is, or ought to be allowed to preach and plant persons in God's vineyard. "How shall they preach except they are sent," Rom. x. 15; that is, unless they receive a regular call and authority from Christ so to do.

With what instrument gospel planters do their work. 2. A planter must have fit and proper instruments to do this work; so ministers have the gospel, which is an instrument of God's power in the hand of the Spirit, by which they work and plant sinners into Christ, and in his church. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation unto all that believe," &c., Rom. i. 16. The gospel is also called "the ingrafted word, which is able to save the soul," James i. 21. Sinners by it through the Spirit are grafted into Christ, or obtain union with him; it is done instrumentally by the word preached, but efficaciously by the Spirit.

Ministers do not know what kind of plants they planted in God's vineyard. 4. A planter doth not know infallibly the difference there is in plants, he may think a plant is of the right kind, but may be mistaken; so a minister knowing not the hearts of men, may think this and that person is a true person, is a true plant, a sincere convert; but may be deceived as Philip was in Simon the sorcerer, who (it is said) "Believed, and was baptized," Acts viii. 13.

5. A skilful planter knows that a wild, ungrafted tree never bears good fruit; no, it must be removed and grafted with a better kind, so ministers know that an unregenerated man, who only grows out of the wild olive tree, I mean the first Adam, cannot bring forth good fruit; every sinner must therefore be transplanted, by being renewed, and must by the Spirit be grafted into Jesus Christ; and as every twig a planter designs to graft, must be cut off with a sharp knife, and presently grafted in the new stock, so must sinners by the word and Spirit (which is sharp as a two-edged sword) be cut off from sin, the love of this world, &c., and immediately be grafted into Jesus Christ. "They were pricked in their heart," Acts ii. 37; this is the work of the Spirit in conviction.

Every grafted plant bears no good fruit

6. A planter observes the proper season for planting, as when the ground is prepared and made soft by the showers of heaven; so do ministers observe the season of planting and sowing the seed of the word, even when God hath prepared the hearts of sinners, and made their spirits tender by the divine rain.

A planter observes the proper season of planting.

VII. A planter doth not only plant, but also water. So ministers do not only preach for conviction and conversion, but also for consolation, and building up, that believers may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Plants must be watered.

2 Pet. iii. 18.

VIII. A planter greatly rejoices to see his plants grow, thrive, and bear much fruit, but he knows this is from God alone. So a minister rejoiceth greatly to see the saints (that he hath instrumentally planted in God's vineyard) to grow in faith, love, in humility, in knowledge, and in all the fruits of righteousness; but all the increase of his labour he says, with Paul, is of God, "but God gave the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 6.

Planters rejoice to see their plants fruitful.

So much as to planters; I shall speak a little farther as touching plants.

Plants must be well rooted.

1. Plants must be well rooted that bring forth fruit; so must Christians be well rooted, "Ye being rooted in love," Eph. iii. 17, there must be a rooting in Christ, rooting in faith, rooting in love, rooting in humility, rooting in the doctrine of the gospel, or else they will be soon plucked up, or blown down by every wind of doctrine.

2. Plants must be pruned and purged also, though this is chiefly God's own and more immediate work. "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth that it may bring forth, more fruit," John xv. 2. By mortification and sanctification God purges his saints, he purgeth their conscience from dead works. "He purgeth the filth of the daughters of Sion." By his word he purges them, and by his Spirit he purges all; by the rod, or by trials, losses, and crosses, and persecution, he purgeth them also.

3. Some plants who promised well, prove barren and good for nothing: so some spiritual plants prove naught and barren like the fruitless fig-tree, they seemed to have much zeal, love, and faith for a little time, but lo, by-and-by they are offended, and "whither away," Matt. xiii. 21, and come to nothing.

4. Plants that wither, proving utterly barren after waiting three or four years, are rooted up or cut down; so such church members or professors, who prove loose, carnal and utterly barren, after long patience, God roots up or cuts down. "These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and found none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? Again, it is said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away;" John xiii 2. And then they being withered, are cast into the fire and burned.

Barren persons after long waiting are rooted up or cut down.

Secondly. Why shall every plant God hath not planted be rooted up?

1. Because they are wild plants, plants never transplanted out of the evil and corrupt root, I mean the first Adam, but remain dead in sin and trespasses; being of the works of the law, and so remain under the curse, and being not made good trees, cannot bring forth good fruit.

Why every plant God hath not planted shall be rooted up.

2. Because all plants that God hath not planted, have no right to be planted in his vineyard; the gospel church consisting (or ought to consist) only of renewed or regenerate persons, they are only such God adds to, or planteth in the gospel church. True, in the legal and typical church of Israel the carnal seed of Abraham were planted, and had a right of church membership, and privileges as such; but that church-state is dissolved, old things being gone, and all things now are become new. The gospel being congregational, ought wholly to consist of such who are made new creatures.

3. Because they do but cumber the ground, (as is showed in the parable of the barren fig-tree) they are prejudicial or injurious to God's vineyard, and a great reproach and scandal to religion, exposing the name of God to contempt, with his ways and ordinances; is it not an unbecoming sight to see a crab-tree grow in a king's vineyard, or briars and

thorns planted there? would he endure to behold them set and grow up amongst his rich and costly plants and excellent flowers, that are of great worth both for pleasure and profit? why these are like "crab-trees, briars and thorns," Heb. vi. 6, 8; and therefore it is a shame they should be suffered to grow in the vineyard of the King of heaven and earth.

4. Because they are good for nothing but for the fire, or to be burned, being rotten-hearted hypocrites. "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but transgressors shall fall therein," Hos. xiv. 9.

USE.

This may inform us what just rebuke such will one day meet with from God, who bring in or plant the carnal seed of believers in their pretended gospel churches; be sure such plants, of which the New Testament congregations do not, nor ought not to consist, are plants that God never planted, but the carnal seed of believers, as such, I mean little babes, according to the constitution of the gospel church ought not to be admitted as members thereof; though some of the children of believers are in the election of grace, and of such belongs the kingdom of heaven; yet it is not known which of the children of believers are elected to salvation; besides baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of mere positive right, and none but such who do believe, and make a profession of their faith, being regenerated persons, ought to be received or admitted to either of those ordinances, or be members of the church of Christ. Faith and repentance being required of all that ought to be baptized and planted in the gospel congregations, by virtue of Christ's great commission, and the practice of the apostolical churches.

Matt. xxviii.
18, 19.

See the sim-
bol now is
the axe laid
to the root of
the trees in
Book 1.

Rom. vi. 3, 4.

They must be such that are dead to sin, and raised by the operation of God, to walk in newness of life; all that are to be baptized ought to have the inward spiritual grace, who have the outward sign or symbol of it given unto them.

2. Let hypocrites (or such persons who are not sincere) who are planted in gospel churches, tremble; for since God planted them not there, they must and shall in a short time be rooted up.

3. This may also show what care ministers and churches should take about planting people in their congregations, lest they receive such persons who are none of the plants of the Lord, nor such that bring glory to him: but contrariwise, greatly dishonour him, and are a reproach to his churches, and to his ways and ordinances.

But to proceed to another proposition.

2. Doct. All the plants which God himself hath planted, shall stand and never be rooted up. This truth, my brethren, is clearly implied in this simile.

In speaking to this, I shall briefly do to two things.

1. Show what kind of plants they are that God hath planted.

2. Show why they shall never be rooted up.

First show what plants they be.

Wh at kind
of persons
they be that
are God's
plants.

I. The plants God hath planted are truly grafted into Jesus Christ, they are united by the Spirit unto Christ, who is a living stock; it is one thing, my brethren, to be planted into Christ's vineyard, and another thing to be planted or grafted into Christ, who is the true olive-tree.

See the par-
able John
xv. 1, 2.
opened.

II. The plants of God's planting have the Spirit of God in them, the Spirit is indeed the bonds of our union with Christ, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9; from hence also they are quickened, they have life in them, as well as they are united to a living stock, and

not only life in them, but are spiritual and lively also (all other plants I showed you are dead).

III. The plants God hath planted, have holy habits planted in them, and thus they become good trees, good plants, their vicious habits are rooted out, they have changed hearts or are regenerated persons, or such that are born again; they are "new creatures," John iii. 3, 5; have new qualities, new desires, new affections, and so are holy and heavenly plants. Every grace of the Holy Spirit is planted in them, as "Faith, love, hope, humility, patience, temperance, sobriety, meekness, and brotherly kindness," 2 Cor. v. 17. And these things render them to be lovely plants, and plants that God's own right hand hath planted, which shall never be barren nor unfruitful, 2 Pet. i. 8.

IV. And from hence it appears, they have the root of the matter in them, from whence all their fruit springs up, and grows in them, even all the fruits of obedience and good works. "Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in him," Job. xix

28. Our Lord shows that the stony ground hearers, "had not root in them," Matt. xiii. 21. But believers have Christ in them, who is the root of the matter, the root of faith, love, &c., they are rooted in Christ: but note from that passage in Job, to censure a godly man, is a kind of persecution. "Why do you persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" Job xix. 22. God hath power to judge and censure us, he knows our hearts; but man doth not and therefore ought not to pass any rash judgment, or not judge any good man's state, as to censure him as an hypocrite, though many great afflictions and unusual trials, and manifold infirmities may attend him, yet they may be good plants, holy persons in God's sight.

Question, What is meant by the root of the matter?

Answer, Christ primarily, as I hinted, is the root of the matter, Christ, as God is the original root and Mediator, the root in whom we are planted by the Spirit; yet, as Mr. Caryl notes, habitual grace may be said also to be the root of the matter, or that first grace that is infused into the soul: or, as others, sincerity the root may be uprightness of the heart; be sure such have the root of the matter in them.

Question, why is it called a root, or the root of the matter?

Answer, because a root is a hidden thing, it lies deep in the earth, and out of sight; so the Spirit and the habits of grace are hidden things, and lie out of the sight of men; we read of the hidden man of the heart, our life is a hidden life.

2. A fruitful root tends to make a fruitful plant, and greatly feeds and strengthens it: so we being rooted in Christ, borne by this root, springing up out of this root, we are made fruitful Christians, and obtain strength: it is for want of being rooted in Christ, or want of the habits of grace, that other plants are soon rooted up, wither, and come to nothing.

3. It is hard to root up a tree that hath a deep root, but yet that may be done; but a believer being rooted in Christ, he is such a deep and hidden root; none, neither sin, the world, nor devil can root up this root, nor hinder the sap from feeding those plants that grow out of this root.

V. The plants of God's planting are full of heavenly juice; "the trees of the Lord are full of sap, the Cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted; they are full of the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, of faith, zeal, &c., they are fruitful plants. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit," John xv. 5. They are holy men and women, they are called trees of righteousness; not carnal, proud, covetous, contentious, or quarrelsome persons; no, such show they are not plants of God's planting. Gracious persons are known by their holy lives, as trees are known by the fruit they bear, "That they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified," Isa. lxi. 3.

VI. They are plants that never cease bearing of fruit, their fruit fails not, their faith, their love, their zeal, their good works, their obedience, their piety, shall continue, and also they shall bring forth fruit in due season, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither &c., P'sal. i. 3. Some bring forth fruit for a short time, but their fruit fails, and their very leaf withers, i. e., they fault in their outward profession, and cannot keep up in outward duties of religion; but the plants of God's planting, "They shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in years of drought, neither cease from yielding fruit," Jer. xvii. 8.

Secondly, why shall not the plants of God be rooted up?

1. Because they are ordained to bring forth fruit; what man will root up a very fruitful tree that always is fruitful. Now, as you hear, such plants are the plants of God's planting; neither indeed can it be otherwise, by virtue of Christ's ordination, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain," John xv. 16. How should such plants be ever rooted up that are ordained to eternal life, and also are ordained to bear fruit, and that their fruit shall remain.

2. Because they are (as you heard) planted in Christ, united by the Holy Spirit to the Lord Jesus, and so grow out of the root and offspring of David, "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. Only Christ ever lives, their root lives, their head lives, and therefore the trees, the plants, that grow out of this root shall ever live also; and the members of such a head must live; for shall the head live for ever, and the members die; abhor the notion that some men assert; Christ lived on earth that we might live; he died also that we might live, and rose from the dead that we might live, and now lives, in heaven, to intercede for us that we may live; and therefore none of these plants can be rooted up, but must live for ever.

This is spoken to the exposition of the parable of the sower. What the root of the matter is.

Why it is called a root

Why God's plants shall never be rooted up.

3. Because the love of God is everlasting and unchangeable to all these plants, nothing "can separate us from the love of Christ, nor from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord," Jer. xxxi. 3. Besides, (as I hinted) they are members of Christ's mystical body. Can he lose a limb of his body, a member of his body; no, certainly, he shall have a perfect body, and therefore they cannot be rooted up, Rom. viii. 35, 39.

4. Because none can pluck them up, no enemy can root them up, as God will not, so sin, the flesh, the world, and the devil cannot, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither can any pluck them out of my hand. My Father that gave them me, is greater than all and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my father are one," John x. 28, 29, 30. Doth the Father love them with an eternal love, and hath Christ bought them, redeemed them with his own blood, and bath the Spirit renewed and sanctified them, and shall they after all this be rooted up? will God suffer sin to do it, or Satan to do it; no, sure, if they sin, "they have an Advocate with the Father;" their sins are satisfied for, and are forgiven for ever.

5. The prayer and intercession of Christ prevents their being utterly rooted up. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Our Lord hath prayed that all that the Father gave him, may be where he is, &c., and he hath undertaken also to bring them all to heaven, and must lose not one; therefore they cannot be rooted up, and finally perish.

APPLICATION.

I. I infer that no doctrine is more comfortable than the doctrine of final perseverance. See you that are believers, that you are not drawn away from the belief thereof by men of dark minds, who understand little of the nature of the covenant, of the love of God, nor of the suretyship of Jesus Christ.

Exhort. But, O, see you show forth the praises of this God, who with his own hand hath planted you in a fruitful hill.

Trial. Examine yourselves lest you should not be plants that our heavenly Father hath planted.

That you may not be deceived, have you received the Holy Spirit?

1. It is a soul-illuminating spirit, what light have you?
2. It is a soul-humbling spirit.
3. It is a grace-implanting spirit.
4. It is a soul-assimulating spirit, it forms the image of God in the soul.
5. It is a soul-sanctifying, and sin-mortifying spirit.
6. It is a soul-rooting, and a soul-establishing spirit.

Comfort to believers, or to these blessed plants. My brethren, the corruptions of our own hearts cannot, shall not root us up; Satan by his temptations cannot root us up; poverty, necessity, reproaches, nor persecution cannot root us up; deceivers nor delusions cannot root us up; "This our Lord shows is impossible, for if it was, they would deceive even the very elect," Matt. xxiv. 24. The habit of grace can never be lost; though you fall, yet you shall rise again; notwithstanding your fears, your doubts and deceitful hearts, and the snares of the world, you shall stand. I will conclude with the words of the Psalmist, "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon, those that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright, he is our Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him," Psal. xcii. 12, 15.

THE
PARABLE
OF THE
UNJUST STEWARD OPENED.

SERMON XIII.

And he said unto his disciples, there was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

And he said unto him, how is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.—Luke xvi. 1—5.

THE main scope of this parable only is to be attended to, or what our Saviour chiefly designed hereby. Many godly and atheistical persons have vilified our Saviour, and contemned the holy Gospel, from what is said by our Lord, in commending the unjust steward, through their ignorance, not considering for what he commended him. Our annotators say that Hierom thought this a very obscure parable, and that Julien, the apostate, and some of the Heathen philosophers, from hence cast reproach upon our blessed Lord and his holy doctrine, as if he commends an unjust action of a wicked man.

Parables, my brethren (I have often told you) have their disparities; our Lord doth not commend the unjust steward for his injustice (whom he brands with the odious character of an unjust steward, in which no doubt he refers to his last acts of injustice, as well as to any of his former acts) but for his care, or great wisdom in providing for himself for the future time, when put out of his stewardship.

In speaking to this parable I shall,

1. Show the chief design of it, and wherein it is full of instruction unto us.

2. Show the divers disparities that are therein.

3. Open the parts thereof, and also what follows about what our Lord speaks, concerning the mammon of unrighteousness.

1. One chief thing (as I hinted) I conceived is to show, that it is part of great wisdom in men to provide for the time to come, or for an endless eternity, by the example of the unjust steward, who took care to provide for his future subsistence (when turned out of his stewardship) whilst he was in this world.

The design
or scope of
the parable.

2. To show that his disciples and all men are but stewards of all the good things they have, whether they are spirituals or temporals.

3. And to let us also know that we must all be called to give an account of our stewardship, and if we are unfaithful, we shall have a sad account to give one day.

4. Moreover, from what follows in this chapter, our Lord shows what a great duty it is to improve worldly riches to our own profit, or to the advantage of our souls, and that such who are unfaithful in and about a wise improvement of such things (which are the less) should God give them true riches, they would be unfaithful in and about the things which are the greater.

Secondly, I shall show you, that there are several great disparities, so that this parable much differs from several others.

1. There is a great disparity in that the Lord and his steward, had distinct, particular or separate interests to carry on; the Lord's interest was one, and his steward's another; and whilst the steward sought to advance his own interest, he injured his master, or prejudiced his; for whilst he made use of his master's goods for his own profit, he could not in so doing add to his master's advantage, but the contrary.

Disparities
in this pa-
rable.

But the Lord Jesus, and all his servants have but one spiritual interest, to manage or carry on in the world: and whatsoever we do, or can do truly tending to enrich our souls,

doth also tend to advance Christ's interest and his glory; and that which tends to Christ's honour, or to the advancement of his interest, cannot tend to enrich us, but rather to undo and ruin our souls.

2. The men of this world many times get riches and grow great in an unjust and unrighteous way (which our Lord here condemns); but no person can get true spiritual riches in an unjust way, or by using any unlawful courses. Some are overmuch righteous, denying themselves of the use of God's good creatures, and neglecting the body, under a pretence of righteousness and religion, and this is to seek to be spiritually rich in an undue or unlawful way, as the Papists vow a single life, and their Friars beg and go barefoot, &c. Moreover, in our time there arose a sect that lived upon herbs and roots, and would wear no woollen garments, nor hats, unless made of straw, and all under the show of righteousness, religion, and self-denial. But these things being but a-piece of voluntary humility, and not commanded of God, is the ready way to become miserable for ever, rather than to be truly spiritually rich, and can no ways tend to make men truly happy.

4. The friends that the unjust steward made for himself, was by his own craftiness, and in an unrighteous way meriting their friendship; but no man can any way, no, not by the highest acts of justice or mercy, merit any thing of God, or deserve his love and favour, or procure his friendship, for all we are and have is the Lord's.

5. Nor can any friend which a wicked man can obtain, or make for himself, receive him (when he fails or dies) into everlasting habitation. But he that obtains God to be his Friend, and Christ to be his Friend, when he fails, they will receive them into an everlasting habitation, or dwelling-place in heaven; so that in these respects consisteth vast disparities.

Thirdly, I shall open some of the chief parts of this parable that seem most obscure.

"And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely."

Some think these words refer to the Lord of the unjust steward, who when he heard how craftily his servant had acted for himself, commended him; but certainly the words refer to our blessed Lord, he spake these words and commended him; not for his injustice, or for defrauding his master, no (as was hinted), for that act he utterly condemned him, by calling him an unjust steward; but for his taking care in providing for a time to come, when turned out of his stewardship, or when he failed and foresaw a time of need would come, and he being not brought up to hard labour, "could not dig," and "to beg was ashamed;" but would notwithstanding provide for a future time of wants and straits, and to provide for such a time he commended him; but the way he took to do it, he condemned, saying, "the children of this world," &c. that is, earthly men, who regard not eternity, or wicked men, such as this unjust steward was, who make no provision for their souls, "are wiser in their generation, than the children of light;" that is, than the children of God, who are called "the children of the day," or of the light, being born from above, and called "out of darkness into marvellous light."

How wiser? our Lord shows, i. e., "in their generation," that is, in their business or about earthly things, they are more wise (as if our Lord should say) in providing for the

body, or how to live in this world, than the children of light are to project ways, and so endeavour to promote the glory of God, and the profit and comfort of their own souls.

"And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness."

1. By mammon of unrighteousness, (I conceive) is meant worldly riches, called unrighteous mammon, because of those manifold evils, snares, and temptations they expose men unto that have them.

"Make to yourselves friends of," &c.

The friends who we are bid to make unto ourselves, are such (it appears) that are able when we fail, to receive us into everlasting habitation; and evident it is, that none can do that, but the "Glorious Three in One," the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or ever adorable Trinity.

"When ye fail," &c., that is, when ye die; for it is then that all God's faithful servants are received into that eternal dwelling-place above.

But the difficulty seems to lie in these words, i. e., "make unto yourselves friends." Can any make God and Jesus Christ their friends? no, not that any can merit his friendship, or by doing any thing to deserve such friendship, that is impossible, because "when we have done all we can do, we are unprofitable servants." Besides, by bestowing our earthly goods or treasure on the poor, we do but give that which is our Lord's own, we are but stewards of all things we have, and therefore cannot oblige God, or make him our

The parts
opened.

What
friends they
are we make
by worldly
riches.

friend thereby, "And of thine own have we given thee," 1 Chron. xxix. 14. But nevertheless in distributing of earthly riches to the poor saints, or to further and promote the interest of Christ our great Master, God declares how well he accepts it at our hands, and it is so well pleasing to the blessed Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit, that they will show themselves our friends in the time of our necessity, even as our Lord shows that such who lose all for his sake, or part with all they have in love to him, that such that have "an hundred fold in this world, and in the world to come everlasting life." Though not in specie, yet in worth or value; that which is an hundred-fold better than that we part with; and this as an act of friendship, or an act of love and infinite kindness, though not of merit: God hath promised to reward all the services of his people, though they are not rewards of debt, but of grace.

Christ calls them that do the will of his Father, his brother, his sister and mother, not that we can make him to esteem us as his friends and dear relations, by procuring such favours as one man may procure or purchase kindness of another, but only to show it is as acceptable to him as if we could deserve at his hand: so that one great design of our Saviour in this parable, is to press his disciples to charity, by showing that nothing they lay out, or part with of their substance, will redound to such advantage and profit to them, as what they part with for Christ's sake, either to the poor, or for the promoting of his interest in this world.

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful in much," &c., ver. 10.

The riches of this world are the least of our Master's goods, and such that are not faithful in distributing them as God requires, our Lord shows will not be faithful in improving of spiritual gifts and endowments; such that neglect his poor, or will not improve their external talent of worldly riches, to the glory of God, and good of his church and people, will not improve their time, and the opportunities the Lord gives them in his service and holy worship, in order to his honour, the credit of religion, and their own spiritual profit, peace, and comfort, or that he who loves not his brother whom he sees daily, loves not God whom he sees not.

"And he that is unjust in the least is unjust in much."

Though among men it be not universally so, yet commonly it is so, and all men conclude that he that is unjust in small matters will be so in greater things were they intrusted in his hand; and who will trust him with great things that proves unfaithful in small things; therefore he that is unfaithful to men, or to his poor brother, will not be faithful to God in discharge of his duty in the great things of his worship, name, and glory, by improving those gifts or spiritual talents received.

"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

1. Unrighteous mammon is here opposed to the true riches. Some think by true riches is meant the gospel and the ministration of it, which Christ will not commit to men, who are not faithful in distributing of their earthly riches to those great ends God hath commanded, or that will be only for themselves or love themselves, or not regard the church of God, nor to feed the bellies of the poor. Will Christ commit the treasure of the gospel and care of the souls of his people unto such? No sure, for if they improve not worldly riches that way he has appointed, who can think they will be faithful and full of thought about the improvement of the true riches, and in taking care of the souls of his people.

But others rather think by the true riches, our Saviour means special and effectual grace, which, say they, is of all the true riches; and if taken so, then it teacheth this truth, that God is justified in the denying of his special grace to those who do not make use, or duly improve those common gifts and graces they are entrusted with, and so the damnation of men will be just, because they do not make use of that light, gifts, knowledge, and abilities they have received of God. Our annotators seem to take it thus, but not as if God will try all men about the improvement of common grace, before he will give special, as some corrupt persons have imagined; and hath obliged himself to give special grace to all them that faithfully improve common gifts, grace, and abilities, and that the only cause why some have not the one, is because they improve not the other; as if grace were procured by natural improvements, or grace depended upon nature or God's will, upon the will and the faithfulness of the will of the creature. This error I have in opening other parables sufficiently detected.

How many great sinners hath God suddenly, as an act of sovereign grace, effectually called, who never improved any of those common favours and abilities God entrusted them with. Nothing that sinners can do can oblige God, or be a motive to him to give his special

The riches of this World the least of our master's goods.

What meant by true riches.

grace to them; no, he only acts from his own love and sovereign pleasure, in giving himself and his Son unto poor sinners. I shall leave my reader to take which sense of these he best approves; perhaps there may be another sense given, that differs from both these.

“If therefore ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own,” ver. 12. Some read, “If you have not been faithful in things that are without you, which are little, compared with things that are within you.”

But I conceive our Lord in these words,

The riches of this world are not a goodly person’s own, but another man’s.

1. Shows that the riches of this world are not ours, or not his disciples; they are more properly another man’s, that is, the earthly man’s; they are his riches, his portion. The riches of this world were not purchased for the saints, nor promised to them as part of their inheritance; no, but the true riches, spiritual riches and righteousness: and if God gives us some of the earthly man’s portion, which is not our own proper riches, and we are unfaithful in improving

that, what ground have we to expect God will give us more and more of our own riches, *i. e.*, more faith, knowledge, peace, and joy in believing, though purchased for us. It is no doubt mentioned here, as a powerful argument or motive to distribute freely, or plentifully part with our worldly riches to the uses God calls for.

“That which is another man’s.”

2. It may refer to the poor, for wealth put into the hands of rich saints is the poor’s.

(1.) They are Christ’s stewards, into whose hands he hath put all the relief he designs for his poor members, as the proverb is, “The poor man’s belly is the rich man’s barn.” Rich men must not say their gold and silver is their own, no, it is Christ’s poor; they by his ordination have right to it.

2. Riches for the sake of the poor are given to them that have them; our Lord foreseeing many of his people would be poor, and not have to supply their own necessities, puts a supply for them of what they need into this brother or that sister’s hand, that so they may have what they need. (3.) Our Lord commands the rich to hand out of what he hath entrusted them with unto the poor, and tells them also they are but his stewards, and that he will call them ere long to give up their accounts; and thus worldly riches in the hands of Christ’s stewards, may be said to be other men’s, and not that which is their own.

Now having according to the small light received, opened what seems difficult in this parable, I shall proceed to take notice of one or two propositions from the scope or chief design of our Lord herein.

1. Doct. That the servants of Christ are but stewards of all the good things that are in their hands, whether they be temporals or spirituals, which they ought to improve; and shall be called to give an account of their stewardship.

I shall very briefly in speaking to this truth.

1. Show what things they are intrusted with that are not their own.

2. Show why they ought with care to improve whatsoever they are intrusted with.

1. All earthly good things as riches, health, time, parts, opportunities, or any outward accommodation, saints are stewards of; and must improve to the glory of God, their own good, and the profit of others. “Both riches and honours come of thee,” 1 Chron. xxix. 12. These are our Lord’s goods, of which you are stewards, and of which must give account.

2. All spiritual goods, *viz.*, the gospel and ministration thereof, spiritual knowledge, gifts, grace, the worship of God, and his ordinances, promises, providences, and care of God’s holy temple or vineyard; all these things we are intrusted with, and must be accountable to Christ for, as his stewards.

Why we must improve all things.

2ndly. Why must we carefully improve all things that are in his hands.

And first of earthly things.

1. Because whatsoever we have put into our hand, (1.) Of temporal good things, it is to advance the honour of our great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, and to refresh, comfort, and support the whole household where we are placed; like as Pharaoh made Joseph the steward of his house to feed them all with bread, or to hand it unto them.

2. Because we have (as I said before) nothing that is their own, but it is our Lord’s goods. “The gold and silver are mine (saith the Lord;) therefore I will return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax,” Hos. ii. 9.

See here how the Lord lays claim to all outward good things, and threatens his people to take what he had put into their hands of these things, because they kept back from his use, through covetousness, what they ought to have

The Lord’s claim to all good things.

given, may be they let his poor, or ministers want what was necessary for them.

3. Because (as you have heard) if we are not faithful in the least, it may stop the hand of Christ from giving the greater things to us.

4. It will be otherwise a wrong and great injustice to the poor, or to such for the sake of whom they that are rich are entrusted with earthly wealth, or outward good things, in withholding that which is their's by Christ's appointment, from them; and so a clear demonstration of unfaithfulness both to God and man; and it may provoke God to take away from them what they have, or to blast them in their trades and callings, or outward substance.

5. Because we must in a short time be called to give an account of our stewardship about this matter, we must expect to hear Christ say what have you done with my gold and silver, my corn, my wool, and my flax? How is it that my poor have wanted bread and clothes, and my ministers have been neglected and put to many great straits, and forced to run into debt to buy them necessaries to support their families? and my church has been in debt, and my interest hath been not regarded, but sinks in your hands, for want of such supplies of money that was necessary; whereas I put enough into your hands to make the lives of my ministers, and my poor, comfortable to them, and that also whereby young men I gifted to preach, might have been encouraged and improved to the advancement of my glory, and spreading of my gospel in dark parts of the nation where you lived? How is it that you have converted my goods to your own proper use, and only taken care of your own house and your children, and feed and clothe them richly, and left the rest of your substance to your babes, and regarded not those great ends for which I put so much riches or earthly things in your hands? May we not expect Christ will charge some of his stewards after this manner, and convict them of unfaithfulness, when he calls them away by death to give an account of their stewardship?

An account must be given to Christ what care we have taken of his church, of his gospel, his poor, and his ministers.

Because if these good things be not rightly and faithfully improved as Christ commandeth, his poor, and his ministers also, may be exposed to great temptations, and their souls borne down and sorely discouraged, and Satan may get advantages against them, for many snares and dangers attend poverty or outward want; moreover, the name of God and religion may also thereby be exposed to the contempt of the world; who can believe we are the people of God, when they cannot see that love to one another among them, which always is the character of such that are true Christians? or how should they think that we believe the way we are in, is the true way and worship of God; whereas the very Heathen and papists show more zeal in supporting their idolatry, superstitions, and false churches, than we show to support the gospel, the truths of God, and the true church? Besides if the poor be not fed by us, they may be starved and perish, who should provide for them but we? shall we send the children of Sion to others to be fed, or matter not what becomes of them? if so, what a sad account shall we have to give at the last day.

Secondly, we must also improve all spiritual things which we have received, or Christ hath put into our hands.

1. The gospel and the ministration thereof, because it is given to the end that we may profit thereby. (2.) And it is Christ's chiefest treasure, and that which he entrusted very few with. (3.) And if not improved, he may take it away from us, as he hath formerly from others. (4.) When that goes, God goes, Christ goes, and all good goes, and all evil will come in.

All spiritual things must be improved also and wherefore.

2. Spiritual gifts, knowledge, and ministerial gifts, because given for the use and profit of the church, and they that have them, are but stewards of them, which they are commanded to improve. "As every man hath received the gift, even so let them minister one to another, as good stewards of the manifold graces of God," 1 Pet. iv. 10. (3.) All the graces of the Spirit," Rom. xii. 6, 7, 8, are also to be improved and daily increased by exercise. And (1.) Because Christ expects his own with increase. And also (2.) because thereby we do bring glory to him. (3.) And shall receive eternal advantage to our own souls thereby also.

U S E.

O get your accounts ready, you know but this night Christ may say, "Give an account of thy stewardship, thou mayest not be any longer steward."

SERMON XIV.

And the Lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.—Luke xvi. 8.

You have heard that our blessed Saviour did not commend him for his doing unjustly, but for his thoughtfulness about his future state, or in providing for himself for the time to come; though not the manner he took in doing of it. He was told of his being put out of his stewardship; and foreseeing a time of great straits and want might soon overtake him, he therefore thought timely how to prevent perishing at such a time, and it was for this our Lord commended him, saying, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." From hence note.

1. Doct. Some wicked men are more wise how to provide for themselves, or in contriving how to live in this world, than the saints and people of God are to contrive and seek ways how to advance the glory of God, and their own spiritual interest and comfort here, and happiness in the world to come.

Wherein the children of this world are said to be wise. O how subtil and crafty are the children of this world, what ways will they contrive to enrich themselves? or to prevent want, poverty, and extremity, they will not leave one stone unturned; if one way fails them, they study another; and think no time, no pains, nor any danger or difficulties too great to enrich themselves, or to prevent perishing for want of bread, and other earthly things, they see an absolute necessity of while they are here, (for the things of eternity, or of another world, they mind not) but earthly things they will have, though it be by cheating or base and horrid injustice. But (saith our annotators) that which was knavery in this unjust steward, is honest enough in those who are stewards of our heavenly Lord's goods, for no man can improve his parts, his riches, his honour, his health, his time, or his abilities, or his whole life to his own true spiritual advantage; but in so doing, he advanceth the real interest and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, their interest being not divided, or two, but only one and the same (as I shew'd you.)

Were we, my brethren, as wise for our souls and internal profit, as the men of this world are for their bodies and external profit, what rare Christians should we be? Had we but as many lawful projects, and spent as many serious thoughts, or took as much time, and spent as great pains to increase our true substance, and to grow and increase in grace, and in providing for a time of need, as they have projects and thoughts how to get the world, and spend their time and strength in providing for themselves here; religion would flourish at another manner than now it doth in our hands, but they are wiser in their way and generation than we are in ours. How few devise ways, study and spend their time and strength to grow spiritually rich; and for our failing herein, we arrive to no greater strength in faith, love, joy, peace, and comfort, and likeness unto Christ; "Whose meat and drink and whole business was to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work," John iv. 34.

But to proceed to another proposition.

2. Doct. That it is part of true wisdom, and highly commendable, for a man with the greatest care and thoughtfulness to provide for hereafter, or for the future time, when he fails or must die, and for an endless eternity. This is the main thing I humbly conceive that our blessed Lord would instruct us in by this parable. And in speaking to this point of doctrine, I shall,

1. Show how this appears to be such great wisdom, and is so commendable a thing.

2. Show what future times it is such wisdom to provide for.

3. Show wherein this wise and prudent care and endeavour in providing for the future time doth consist.

Now to demonstrate it is part of great wisdom to provide for the future time, appears (1.) by the care and practice of all wise, rational men. (2.) By the care and labour of irrational or mere animal creatures.

I. All rational men look upon it a great point or part of wisdom to provide for themselves against a time of need, or for the future time, and condemn such for fools who do not thus do; nay, and this is also the counsel that all wise parents give to their children, viz., "O, think of the time to come (say they), how to live in the world hereafter, or another day; be content with mean things now, or to endure a hard apprenticeship, or venture to go into another land; though you are exposed to many dangers, if you have a fair prospect that it will raise your estate in the world, and be for your future well being so long as you live on the earth; nay, how oft do parents send this or that son to India, with hopes of getting riches, and to provide and lay up wealth against the future time; so that it appears from the general and universal practice of all men to be a great part of wisdom to provide for a time to come, and that it is very commendable; and such who take no care in this respect but only for the present time, are laughed to scorn, as being meer fools, or such as want common reason.

All men provided for the time to come.

Now if it be such wisdom to provide for the body for the time to come, how much more wisdom is it to provide for the future well-being of the immortal soul? Or, if it be great wisdom to provide for our future days on earth, that are so few and uncertain, how much greater wisdom is it to provide for an endless eternity?

2. Every man thinks that it is his main business in health to provide for sickness; and in summer to provide and lay up for winter, and in youth to provide and lay up against old age; and to do these things is really wisdom, and very commendable; and if it be so, what wisdom is it to provide while health and strength lasteth for a sick bed, nay, a death bed; and, whilst the summer or day of grace lasts, to provide for such a winter that may come, when all hopes of gathering will fail; and in youth to remember no time is so proper, nor more acceptable to God, as to fall in love with Christ, espouse him, for so they will be provided for ever.

II. Nay, poor irrationals, or meer animal creatures, by an instinct of nature provide for the winter, or future time.

1. The bees, though a small creature, yet how wise are they; how do they labour to store the hive with honey in the spring and summer season, how will they venture out amongst their enemies, nay, and go a great way from home, and in gathering wax and honey, how will they lead themselves, and how industrious and wise are they in working to make their curious combs to lay up their food against the time they can gather no more? and it is also observed that such that will not work, but are drones, the painful bees will turn out of the hive; nay, fall upon them that are idle (and live on their labour) and kill them: and now, my brethren, shall these little creatures be more wise than mankind, whom God hath endowed with such an excellent rational soul, and who believes also such a future state, and yet take no pains nor care to provide for it.

The bees may teach man wisdom.

Also the ant or pismire, a very small and contemptible creature to look upon, yet how wise are they in this respect, even to such a degree, that Solomon (by the Spirit) sends slothful persons to learn wisdom of them; "Go to the ant thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise, which, having no guide, overseer, nor ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest," Prov. vi. 6, 8.

The ant teacheth man wisdom.

Having no guide, no overseer, intimating that as man is a rational creature, and so endowed with much wisdom, which the ant hath not, so also he hath a guide, viz., the word of God, and also God affords him his ministers to be his overseers, to excite, stir up, and warn to holy diligence for to provide for the future time: and yet, for all this, the poor ant acts more wisely than multitudes of men and women, for they neither regard the reproofs from this silly animal, nor the warnings and checks of their own consciences, nor the daily warnings given by God in the ministration of his word, and the loud alarms of his rod and impending judgments, but go on, and think not, or, at least, provide not, for the time to come.

III. This appears to be a piece or point of great wisdom, because God himself even bewails the folly of his people of old upon this respect, and wisheth they had more wisdom. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end," Deut. xxxii. 29. How doth the holy God by these expressions commend the wisdom I am speaking of; it appears that men do not understand what wisdom consisteth in this matter; if they did they would consider it; lay it to heart or ponder it more seriously in their hearts, and take more care than they do: I know some think the Lord wisheth that they would consider the state that his people Israel would be in through their sin, in the latter end of the world: suppose

God bewails such who consider not their future state.

he doth partly refer to that, yet much more, because they provided not for the eternal happiness of their precious and never-dying souls, or what was like to befall them to eternity.

IV. It must needs be great wisdom to provide for the future well-being of our souls, because all that were ever esteemed to be wise persons, before, or above all other thing preferred this matter; all holy patriarchs and godly men of old confessed themselves pilgrims on earth, they were dead to this world, they sought another country, that is an heavenly, they knew this was not their rest; and hence Moses contemned all the glory of Egypt, and of Pharaoh's court, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense of reward; Heb. xi. 25. It was not his present state in this world, but his future state and happiness that was in the eye; and to this purpose our apostle speaks also, "While we look not on things that are seen, but on things that are not seen, for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen, eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18. We regard not (as if he should say) present things, earthly things, our eyes, or our hearts are set upon future things, things to come, those things that are above, or on eternal things: why, now if these were the wisest men that ever lived, and their chiefest wisdom lay in this, in that they set their hearts upon God, and on eternal enjoyment of him in heaven, and parted with all things here, to have that future portion; then this is one great, nay, the chiefest point of true spiritual wisdom; therefore nothing is more evident than this, or to provide for an endless eternity is our greatest wisdom.

V. Because there is no avoiding our entering into an endless state of joy or sorrow; the unavoidableness of all men's failing; I mean dying and passing into a future state, shows that this is a point of the chiefest wisdom.

When you fail they may receive you, &c., after a short time you must fail, shall die, it is impossible to prevent it; and therefore it was their wisdom to provide against that time. Should a rich man be told of a certain truth that in a very short time he should fail in the world (or as it is called, break,) and be turned out of all he hath, sure he would be full of thoughts how he should live in after times; it would put him upon thoughtfulness for the time to come. Why, sirs, I am come this day to tell you every one, young and old, rich and poor, that after a very short time you will all fail, there is no avoiding it; you that are rich, your riches will fail; and you that are strong and in health, your strength and health will fail; and you that think you are wise, your wisdom will fail; and you that are beautiful, your beauty will fail; and you that have the means of grace, the means of grace will fail; and you that have nothing but false hopes of heaven, your hopes will fail, and be like the spider's web; and you that live now, and are brisk and lively, your life will fail. And is it not then your chiefest wisdom to labour for such friends that will not fail, or get an interest in Christ, and have your accounts to give up with joy, that you may be happy at death, and for ever.

VI. Because if the worth of the soul far exceeds in worth the body and all things in this world, then it must be our greatest wisdom to provide for our souls before all things: what hath God the Father done, and Christ done for our souls? and shall we take no care of them, but live as if we had no immortal souls, but were only animal creatures.

VII. Because God from all eternity studied the future good, sought the future good, and provided for the future good of our souls and bodies for ever, the early care God hath taken, and the wonderful love he hath showed, that we might be happy for ever; together with what Christ had done and suffered to save us from future wrath, and to prepare a place of future glory for us, should be a mighty argument or motive to stir us up wisely to provide for ourselves to all eternity, in improving the means God directs us to to so great an end: God from all eternity thought of the future state of poor mankind, whom he foresaw would fall, and how did his wisdom work or contrive to make us again and for ever happy in the other world.

VIII. Consider how soon either you or I, or any in this congregation may fail, how soon may the youngest here like a flower fade away; it may be this year, this month, this week, nay, this night; as God spake to the rich man in the gospel, "Thou fool this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall those things be that thou hast provided," Luke xii. 20.

IX. If you are not provided for your future state, consider how dismal at death your state will be: is it not the highest wisdom to prevent or seek to escape the greatest evil? what is worse than God's future wrath, or that wrath to come? or what is better than the glory that shall when Christ comes be revealed?

All wise men
ever provide
for the future
time.

God from
eternity
sought the
future good
of his elect.

Their state
at death
dismal, who
are not pro-
vided for
eternity.

X. Consider that God hath found out a way to make us happy for ever, and observe what promises he hath made to such who before all things seek the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness; if there was no hope, no way to escape eternal vengeance, this would make a man desparate, or else fall under utter despair, and say with them of old, "But there is hope in Israel concerning this thing."

XII. Lastly, how have many thousands bewailed their great folly in not providing for the time to come, until it was too late; how have some cried out, when death approached for one year longer, nay, for one month; but when that would not be granted, for one week, nay, day, O think of this, now, whilst it is called to-day.

Secondly, What future time is it such wisdom to provide for?

What future times we should provide for.

1. Against that time, when the means of grace may fail, or all provision for the future time may utterly cease, or be cut off, or our understanding fail; God hath deprived many of their reason; indeed some sin it away, and act more like brutes than rational creatures; also it is to provide before the time comes that the Spirit of God will strive with you no more, or God gives you up to the hardness of heart, to blindness of mind, and to a seared conscience, or before the evil days come, and sorrow and anguish come upon you.

2. The hour of death, this is the future time, no doubt, our Lord refers to in those words, when you fail, &c., no escaping death, there is no discharge in that war. And death (may as you have heard) be near, and woe to him it comes upon before he is provided for it, not having God a sure and certain interest in Jesus Christ.

3. The dreadful day of judgment, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in this body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10.

They that are prepared to die are fitted for the dreadful day of judgment; but they that die in their sins, or are miserable at death, will be more miserable at that day, for then body and soul both shall be cast into hell.

Thirdly, the last thing that was proposed was to show you wherein a wise and prudent care to provide for the future time doth consist.

1. We ought to think of our future state, into which we shall and must pass when the soul shall be separated from the body; it seems it is great wisdom to consider, to think upon, or to ponder this matter; let us think of death and eternity every day. (1.) Think of the certainty of a future state of joy or sorrow. (2.) The nearness of it, or how soon we may be in eternity; we know not what a day may bring forth; many of you that hear me this day may soon see what it is to be or not to be provided for death.

2ndly. If you would be provided, or would know wherein this wisdom doth consist; consider the necessity of your knowing Christ, or of being united to him by faith, for without you truly believe in Jesus Christ, you cannot be prepared for the time to come. "He that believeth not, shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16.

Nay, "He that believeth not in Christ, is condemned already," John iii. 18. You must get the Son. "He that hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life," 1 John v. 12.

3rdly. This wisdom consisteth in a careful and due making use of the proper means that God affords, and hath ordained, in order to faith, or a sinner's believing in Jesus Christ.

1. Prayer, O be much in that duty, cry to God for faith and for a changed heart, cry for understanding to see and know Jesus Christ.

2. Hear the word preached, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. x. 17. That is by the word of God preached. "Hear, and thy soul shall live," Isa. lv. 3.

1. But know it is not a bare hearing that is sufficient; no, you must hear it for the future time. "Who among you will hear this, who will hearken for the time to come," Isa. xlii. 23,

Answer. 1. To hear for the time to come is to lay up the word in our hearts. (2.) To believe or receive Christ in the promises. (3.) It is to find the transforming power of the word. (5.) To obey the word, or to be doers of it, and not hearers only.

4thly. This wisdom in providing for hereafter is therefore to close with Christ, to be united to Christ, and feel the work of regeneration wrought in us, and to contemn this world; or to be dead to it, and to be always ready and prepared to die. And to live every day as if it was our last, or as if we were this night to be called to give an account of our stewardship.

USE.

1. This reproves such who pursue the world as if they came into it for no other end, but to eat and drink, and heap a little white and yellow earth, for what is silver and gold else; it is but to load ourselves with thick clay.

2. It reproves such who prefer the world above the word, and the body above the soul.

3. Such that put the evil day afar off, as if we spoke of things that will be long before they come.

Exhort. O improve your present time, and have continual thoughts of death, judgment and eternity.

Lastly, it commends them who are heavenly, it shows the saints only are truly wise, O let us try to equal, nay, to out-do the men of this world, viz., be more zealous for the honour of God, and to promote his interest, and the interest of our souls, or wiser for another world, than they are to gain the things of this present evil world; why should they in their generation be wiser than the children of light? And thus I end with this parable.

THE

PARABLE

OF THE

RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

SERMON XV.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, &c.—Luke xvi. 19.

OUR annotations (and some other writers) seem to question whether this be a parable, or a narrative of matter of fact. Some lay down arguments, to prove that it is not a parable, but that there was such a rich man of the Jewish nation, and a poor man whose name was Lazarus.

And since the learned cannot agree in this case, I shall leave it to every man's own conceptions; yet I am most inclined to believe it is a parable, though my reasons I shall not here give.

But let it be matter of fact or a parable, be sure it is full of instruction, or may be of manifold use to the godly and ungodly, to the rich and to the poor.

First, I shall observe the main scope and design of it.

The scope and design of this parable opened 1. Considering what goes before where our Saviour exhorts his hearers to make themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness we may gather abundance of those worldly things which they possess; they may live in great and plenty, that his design in this parable, is to show the danger that attends rich men, who have their hearts set so upon their riches, that they have no pity on the poor, though help persons; or to convince all men of the great evil covetousness, or of an inordinate love of earthly vanities.

2. To show that men may be very rich, great and honourable in the eye of the world, and yet be in a miserable condition; and that the happiness of man consisteth not in the plenty and splendour a little while and in a moment go down into hell; moreover, there is no judging of the love, or hatred of God, by any outward occurrences, or what befalls one man or another in this life; a man may be very rich and prosperous in the world and yet be hated of God, or in a wretched state; and, on the other hand, a man may be very poor, and seemingly miserable here, and yet be beloved of God or in a blessed condition as to his soul.

3. To show that the soul of man is immortal, and that when a wicked man dies, his soul goes to hell, or into torments; and that the soul of a godly man at death goes to heaven, or into joy, and that as the pain and anguish of the one will be easeless, intollerable, and

endless ; and so the joys and comfort of the other, will be sweet and inconceivable, as well as eternal.

4. To show, that God's word or the writings of the sacred scripture (in the ministration thereof) are the more effectual means to bring men to believe, repent, or receive Jesus Christ, "than if one should rise from the dead," and discover how it goes with good and bad men in the other world.

1. As to the parts hereof, it contains the character of two men.

The parts
opened.

1. A rich man, who is described three ways.

1. By his clothing, or what he wore.

2. By his diet, or what he did eat ; viz. (1.) He was clothed in purple and fine linen, (2.) That he fared sumptuously every day.

3. By his spirit he regarded not a poor man at his gate, nor showed him any pity though a godly person. It is proveable our Lord refers to a nobleman, saying, he was clothed in purple, &c., not that rich clothing, or rich array in noble persons is hereby condemned ; but men's living in splendour, outward grandeur, in pride and baughtiness, forgetting God and their own souls, and without compassion and bowels to the poor. This he condemns, and herein lies their sin and danger, the simple wearing of gold and silver, and rich ornament, in people of high rank and quality, is not sinful in itself, provided it be not immodest array, exposing themselves to shame, or others to temptations, yet no people should exceed their state and ability, in respect of their garbes, dresses, or attires.

Rich-clothing
or dresses,
not evil in it-
self in noble
persons.

Doct. Pride and luxury prevails upon rich men, by what they enjoy, and that they are in danger thereby of eternal misery.

Riches in themselves are blessings, but being abused to gratify men's lusts they become a snare, and curse to such ; men may be clothed in rich robes, and eat the fat, and drink the sweet of the creature ; provided they do it with due moderation, and not "To make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," Rom. xiii. 14 ; nor forget according to their abundance to do good, nor to be "rich in good works," 1 Tim. vi. 18, and charitable to the poor.

1. I shall show you how it cometh to pass that rich men are so subject to abuse what they enjoy.

2. Show how it appears that pride and luxury prevails upon them, and they are in danger hereby.

1. It cometh to pass through the corruption of a man's own heart ; the heart is naturally, earthly, and carnal, and minds only such things that suit or agree with it, and as the heart exceeds all due bounds naturally, in desiring riches and outward grandeur, so when those things are obtained the same evil heart leads them forth to abuse them to the gratifying their inordinate lusts, there are "Seven abominations in his heart," Prov. xxvi. 25. Enough to make men fully miserable, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii. 9.

From whence
it is that rich
men are apt
to abuse the
earthly good
things they
enjoy.

2. It proceeded from the deceitfulness of riches, by means of reason of the corruption of men's hearts, they being both present and pleasant things to the flesh ; the deceitfulness of riches do not only choke the word (as I have elsewhere showed) but they do also strangely ensnare, and bewitch all unconverted persons ; riches tend to exciting to pride and luxury ; they put a knife (as it were) into such a man's hand, to murder his own soul, or cause him to forget God ; and from hence God gave such a charge to the people of Israel, when they came to abound in riches, peace, and plenty in Canaan, that they did not forget him ; and from hence it is also so hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Deut. x. 11.
12.

3. How are the poor ready to bow before the rich and honour them that are high and great in the world, and this feeds, and strangely takes with a carnal heart.

4. It is no doubt, also, partly from Satan, the God of this world ; he that was so bold to attempt (this way) to ensnare the Son of God, be sure will not fail after the same manner to assault silly mortals (who being not aware of his bloody design) are caught presently with his golden bait, "All things will I give unto thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me," Matt. iv. 9. Satan knows there is nothing like the glory and grandeur of this world to catch and overcome mankind.

5. Moreover, men are naturally so blind, that they see not, know not, that there is any higher good, than what is in the riches, honours, and pleasure of this world ; besides they have no power (until they obtain the Spirit and grace of God) to put bounds to their unruly lusts and carnal appetites.

How it appears pride and luxury prevails against wicked that are rich.

2. How it appears that pride and luxury prevails upon them that are rich. 1. In that they eat drink to a base, evil and shameful end, even to gratify the flesh, and make themselves like "pampered horses, every one neighing after his neighbour's wife," Jer. v. 8.

2. In that they care not what they spend or consume on their lusts, whilst their bowels are so shut up to the poor that they will hardly give them the crumbs that fall from their table; this shows how they give way to a luxury of life.

3. In that they vaunt and boast of their high station; and in their obtaining the desires of their hearts, they admire their happiness, "The wicked boasteth of his hearts desire," &c., Psal. x. 3. They glory in their greatness like Nebuchadnezzar, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and the honour of my majesty," Dan. iv. 30.

4. It appears in that they forget God, "God is not in all his thoughts," Psal. x. 4, or in none of his thoughts; there is in these men's hearts no room for one serious thought of God, nor of Jesus Christ; they being overcharged with gluttony and drunkenness, and love to their vile abominations. "The heart of the fool is in the house of mirth," Eccl. vii. 6; though God calls to mourning they are feasting.

5. In that by this means they say to God, "Depart from us;" nay, they contemn God, as if he could do them no good at all. "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ, they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave; therefore they say to God, depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job. xxi. 13, 14. May be some are so bold and impudent to say thus with their mouths, but all profane worldlings say it in their hearts; they that love not God would be rid of God; riches and worldly pleasures and prosperity are an occasion to wicked men to cast off God, and to have slight and contemptuous thoughts of Him; through their pride they cannot endure the presence of God, when he draws near to them by the lashes and accusations of their own consciences; and this shows the danger of riches to an unsanctified heart, "What can the Almighty do for us;" yet he fills their houses with good things. Some read it, "What can the Almighty do against us?" Job xxii. 17. They neither value the good God can do for them, neither fear what hurt he can do to them, and this is the effect of their riches, and earthly delights, and pleasures.

6. It appears also in that they neglect, nay, oppress the poor, yea, persecute the saints, and are without any compassion or sympathy, they being so glutted with their earthly fulness; revenge is sweet to them, and they vent it on those who fear God, and reprove their lewd and luxurious lives.

7. It appears, in that through this means they also forget their souls, death, and judgment; they live as if they were mere brutes, and had no immortal souls, nor should ever be called to God's bar; they do not believe God sees them, and observes all their doings, and thoughts of their hearts, or will ever bring them to an account for them.

8. In that they thrust out the word and cast it behind them, pronounceth curses, wrath, and hell against them. Nay, their pleasure and outward grandeur makes them to contemn the word, and east reproach upon Christ's faithful ministers, and to seek their ruin if they come once to touch their Herodians, or as Herod serve "John the Baptist," Matt. xiv. 3, 4, 5.

Lastly, In that it causes them not to regard the works of God, nor to tremble at the near approaches of dismal calamities; "The harp, the viol, and flute, and wive are in their feasts, but they regard not the works of the Lord, nor consider the operations of his hands." Isa. v. 12.

APPLICATION.

1. We may from hence infer the wicked have but little cause to glory in their portion, "They have their consolation," Luke vi. 24, 26. Their heaven here, and must have hell hereafter.

2. And we may also infer that riches to a carnal man are very pernicious and hurtful to his soul, and makes his salvation hard and difficult; he is in more danger than the poor of perishing eternally.

Exhort. 1. And therefore let such that are rich carefully watch their own hearts, and see that they are neither carried away by covetousness on the one hand, nor by pride on the other hand.

2. You that delight to go in brave and rich array, see that you exceed not, nor waste that on your lusts, that you shall allow to Christ and his poor saints; be moderate in your clothing, in your eating and drinking, and in your lawful pleasures: remember Lazarus,

who lies at your gate, rather take care to feed your souls than your bodies, that must in a short time be feasts for worms.

3. You that are poor, be content with your present state and desire not riches, since they expose men to such great temptations.

"And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores," ver. 20.

"And desiring to be fed with the crumbs, which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores," ver. 21.

We have an account here of another man, who seemed as miserable, as the former appeared happy.

2. His impotency; he was laid, not able to come of himself thither, being either sick and lame.

3. We have an account of the place, where he was laid, i. e., at the rich man's gate; perhaps he had some friends that brought him thither, though they could not relieve him, yet they brought him to an house where one dwelt that could do it.

4. His condition: he was a beggar, one very poor, also full of sores may be such that were not only painful, but incurable.

5. His desire: which shown wherefore he was brought thither, he wanted food, and desired not the best and rich man had, "but only the crumbs that fell from his table," he would put him to no charge. Yet we find not that he had so small a favour showed him; wicked rich men will sooner feed their dogs than the poor saints; some men are without any bowels of pity.

6. It is said "The dogs came and licked his sores:" these churlish animals showed more kindness to poor Lazarus than the rich man; men without compassion are worse than dogs, and a poor child of God meets with more favour from one of the worst of brutes than from a gracious rich man; moreover, let us note that God can cause these creatures, that are fierce and cruel in their nature, to show kindness to such that he loves, A child of God may be very poor, and in a distressed condition.

Doct. A man may be very poor, and in a distressed condition as to the outward man, and yet be in the love and favour of God.

But pray note, it doth not follow that every one that is poor, and outwardly distressed is by the Lord beloved; no, no, there are very few beggars that are believers, most of this sort are, it is thought, the worst of men and woman: for where they truly godly in such a land and city as this; certainly God's people would revive them, before they should beg from door to door. I have often thought, that these beggars are more earnest with people, for the relief of their bodies, than many good people are with God, for snoucr and comfort for their precious souls. (2.) Moreover, it is rare that any true believer is exposed to such want and necessity, as poor Lazarus was (or such, who are signified by him) but such an hour possibly hath been, and may be of common calamity, that a child of God may in such a state and needy condition.

Obj. David saith, he never saw the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Ans. 1. It might be so under that dispensation, for the promises of the old covenant were earthly, but those of the new are better promised, besides there was not to be a beggar in Israel. However this parable shows that a believer may be poor, and in great necessity as to beg. And now to proceed,

I. I shall show how, or by what means, a child of God may be in such a low and poor condition.

2. Show why God doth suffer some of his children to be poor, and afflicted in this world.

3. Show how the poor may be supported under the poverty and distresses.

1. In the negative, it is not through idleness after the man is converted, nor by extravagant or riotous living; or a slothful, an idle, or a riotous course of life certainly is inconsistent with true grace: the ungodly became poor, many times by gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness, wasting what they have on harlots, and in wicked company, mis-spending their time, and by injustice, which provokes God to blast them in all they have or do.

How some of God's children come to be poor in this world.

As to the first, this must be granted, that divine providence disposeth of all things and persons in this neather world, it is God that maketh rich, and that maketh poor; all is done either by his permission or commission.

(1.) In the affirmative, perhaps some believers had parents who were very and not poor, being able to put them to trades, nor give them learning, and not be fit or capable for hard labour, they might and so by this providence be very poor. (2.) Moreover

some may become poor for want of worldly wisdom or skill to manage their callings, for the children of this world, in this respect, are oftentimes wiser than the children of light. (3.) Some godly Christians become poor by losses and badness of trade or by fire. (4.) By thieves. (5.) Some by wicked men through fraud and injustice. God in his wise providence permits such things as these to befall his own children as well as the wicked, but always it is designed for their good. We know not by what means the person here represented became so poor as to beg. (6.) God's people are sometimes brought to poverty by persecution, all they have had being taken from them, as it fairs with many Protestants now in France, &c., and with many but a few years ago among us in England.

Secondly, Why doth God suffer some of his children to be poor, and distressed in this world?

Why God suffers some of his children to be poor in this life.

Ans. 1. It may be the Lord sees that riches would be hurtful to them, riches might choke them, or carry away their hearts from God. Agar desired not riches from thence.

2. It may be to show to all that the happiness consisteth not in the abundance of what he possesses of earthly things.

3. The Lord may suffer it to convince the ungodly world what little good is in earthly riches, and how little the value of gold, silver, or worldly grandeur; even no more than we do a bone we cast to dogs he gives these things to his enemies; the great Turk has these things; crowns and kingdoms may be given to the vilest of men.

4. God may do it to show, that as he himself is the portion of his own children, and their reward is above, so that his people can live upon him, and be content, though they are outwardly poor, and distressed whilst in this life.

5. Moreover, it may be to discover the sincerity of true Christians, and to convince the devil and wicked men they follow not Christ for loaves or earthly riches. "Both Job fear God for nought?" Job i. 9. No, as if Satan should say, it is because thou hast given to him much substance, and made "A hedge about him, and about all he hath; put forth thy hand and take all away from him, and he will curse thee to thy face." God did thus, and Job became as poor and distressed as Lazarus, and yet he held fast his integrity; he is the same Job when poor and full of sores as when he was rich and honourable.

God brings wants and afflictions on his saints to try their graces.

6. Likewise, it may be to discover to themselves and others the excellency of grace; i. e., faith, love, patience, &c.; how do these graces shine forth in a poor, distressed, and afflicted child of God; this was one reason why Job was brought to poverty and misery in this world. How is faith in these believers magnified? They rest upon God, live upon Christ, and upon the

promises with greatest satisfaction, being content with their condition; "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine," &c., Hab. iii. 17. "Yet they can joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of their salvation," ver. 18. Moreover, a poor Lazarus can love God as well as a rich Abraham. Also, how doth patience shine forth hereby, when a saint under the greatest poverty, pains, and afflictions, bear up with a composed and quiet mind, rejoicing in and magnifying God in the want of all things, that is, of all earthly things and comforts whatsoever.

Some saints are poor to try the charity of the rich.

7. It may be to try the rich, "The poor you have always with you;" why, because Christ will try and prove the rich, and see whether they will supply the wants of the poor out of love to him, and to their brethren; riches are not given to God's people only for themselves and for the sake of their children, but for the sake of God's poor, and to support his interest in the world, they are but Christ's stewards, and if they hand not out, as it is commanded, they will have a bad reckoning to make up at the last day.

Thirdly, How may Christ's poor be supported under their poverty and distresses?

How poor saints may be supported.

1. By considering, that they are made poor by the Lord's hand; it is their Father's good pleasure it should be thus with them; they may and ought to say with our Blessed Lord, "The cup my Father gives me to drink, shall I not drink it? I am not brought into want and poverty by idleness, nor by extravagant living, but by the providence of God my heavenly Father.

2. By considering, it hath been the condition of many choice and dear children of God, Job, Peter, John, and many others, though the first had been very rich, yet how poor was he made; and the other said, "Silver and gold have I none," Acts iii. 6; nay, our Saviour himself was very poor, had nothing to eat, but what was given to him; hence the "Good women ministered to him; the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests (saith he) but the Son of Man hath no where to lay his head," Matt. viii. 20. Also

when they sent to demand tribute of him it appears he had no money, but sent Peter to take a piece of money out of the mouth of a certain fish to pay the tribute, Matt. xvii.; "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," 2 Cor. viii. 9. My brethren, Is it not an honour to be brought in this respect, into the like condition with our blessed Lord and Master? Therefore, let not ministers that are poor be troubled, since the Lord Jesus himself was maintained by the people; and also seeing God hath chosen the poor of this world to be his ambassadors, and "Hath ordained that they that preach the gospel shall live of the gospel," 1 Cor. ix. 14.

3. Because hereby God delivers his poor saints from the snares which attend them that are rich; though it cannot be denied but many cares and temptations attend poverty; but doubtless not so many as attend riches; for our Lord never said "Woe to you that are poor," Luke vi. 24, but he hath pronounced a woe to them that are rich. Neither hath he said, It is as hard for a poor man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, as it is "For a camel to go through the eye of a needle," Matt. xix. 24; as he hath said of one that hath great riches; nor doth he say the rich receive the gospel: no, but they were the poor. Again it is said, "That they that will be rich fall into temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition and destruction," 1 Tim. vi. 9.

Greater
snares at-
tend riches
than po-
verty.

4. By considering that the poor saints, though they "Have nothing, yet possess all things," 2 Cor. vi. 10.

Quest. How can they be said to possess all things?

Ans. 1. Because they have all things which God gives them without a curse, "The curse of God is in the house of the rich;" if they are ungodly they possess a curse with their riches.

How be-
lievers pos-
sess all
things.

2. Because poor believers have all things they have sanctified to them it is not only without a curse, but it is with a blessing, it is sanctified; "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the revenues of many wicked," Prov. xv. 16. And again (saith Solomon) "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble with it. Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right," Prov. xvi. 8. Poor saints have all in quality, though not in quantity.

3. They have all things in promise, they possess all things by faith, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8.

4. They have all things that have any substance in it, all the vast riches of this world are but a shadow, and pray what hath he that hath a shadow? See what Christ saith, "That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures," Prov. viii. 21. They possess all things that are truly good, and hath substance in them, and therefore possess all things.

5. Because they have Christ, and he that hath Christ hath all things, "All are yours, ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. They have all things that are best, or what God esteems good things, riches that God so calls, and honours which are honours in his esteem; if a man have much gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones, must he have also abundance of dung, or else hath he not all things? no, he values not that worth anything; so a believer having Christ, and gold tried in the fire, precious stones, and pearls, he values not those cart-loads of dirt which wicked men boast of.

He that
possesseth
Christ pos-
sesseth all
things.

6. Because they want no good thing, neither shall they, but they must leave God to judge in the case, for they may want many good things in their own judgment, which God sees would be hurtful to them. "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

7. They are heirs of all things; "Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things," Rev. xxi. 7. Nay, he now possesseth all things in his head. We possess all things, even the glory of heaven in Jesus Christ, he hath possession of all things for us, and we possess them in him; and at death we shall actually be possessed of all things ourselves. Moreover, poor believers shall be rich when the wicked shall be poor; we shall have all things at death if we die in Christ; when the wicked will not have one penny, for they all die beggars, they carry nothing out of the world with them, but wrath and a guilty conscience.

SERMON XVI.

And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died,—Luke xvi. 22.

1. NOTE, Lazarus died. And,

2. He was carried into Abraham's bosom, *i. e.*, into heaven; even into the bosom of Jesus Christ; "He was," &c., that his soul.

3. We have an account of them who carried him, and they were angels; not one angel, but angels; as multitude of angels encamp about the saints, and minister to them while they live (Heb. i. 14.) so an host of angels carry the soul of a believer when he dies in triumph through the air (the region of devils) into heaven, which no doubt is no small cause of rage in those evil spirits, but they cannot prevent it. "Into Abraham's bosom," Abraham was a type of Christ, but it may be not only called Abraham's bosom simply from thence but because the covenant of grace was renewed with him, and he believed in God; and Christ, therefore, would have all know that his soul was in heaven, whither likewise all the souls of his true spiritual seed (who depart this life) go at death, and perhaps to show also that there was another covenant made with Abraham's natural seed as such; and that some of that sort (or who were in that covenant) may go to hell. For this rich man represents one of Abraham's seed according to the flesh (or one of the Jewish church and nation).

"The beggar died and was carried," &c.

Note, The soul here bears the name of the man, so Paul saith, "I desire to depart, and be with Christ;" and again (saith he) "While we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord," Phil. i. 23. That is, while our souls are in our bodies and when we die [we] viz., Our souls, "Are present with the Lord," 2 Cor. 5. So our Saviour said to the penitent thief, "This day thou (that is, thy soul) shall be with me," (that is, with my human soul) in paradise. The soul is the inhabitant, the body the house in which it dwells.

"For we know, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we (that is, our souls) have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. v. 1. The body is the cabinet, the soul is the jewel; and it being the chiefest and most noble part of man it bears the name of the whole person, or of the man.

There are four prepositions, I purpose briefly to touch upon.

Doct. 1. That both rich and poor must die.

Doct. 2. That death is a great blessing to every godly man, or that a believer is happy at death.

Doct. 3. That there is a vast difference between the state of the godly and ungodly at death.

Doct. 4. That the souls of all men are immortal, and at death go either to heaven or to hell.

To the first.

1. All men must die: death is a debt all must pay, the rich as well as the poor; though men live long, yet they die; the noble as well as the ignoble. Matheuseelah "Lived nine hundred sixty and nine years, and he died," Gen. v. 27; the oldest must die, and the strongest also; Sampson was a mighty man for strength, but he died: the wise also die. "Wise men die, likewise the fool." "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death, can he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave," Psal. lxxxix. 48. Kings die as well as peasants; Cæsar rides in triumph one day, and the next day stabbed to death. Alexander that conquered the world was conquered by death. Nay, grace itself exempts no man from death; the righteous die as well as the wicked, "The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart," Isa. lvii. 1. "The fathers, where are they? and the prophets do they live for ever?"

Quest. Why must all die?

Why all men must die, or be changed. Answ. Because all have sinned, death entered into the world by sin, though it is no curse to believers, but by sin all became subject to death, that which is mortal must die or be changed.

2. Because "It is appointed for men once to die;" the decree is past upon all, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," Heb. ix. 27.

3. A godly man dies as a demonstration of God's great love to him, because this life

exposeth the saints to many sorrows. Poor Lazarus here had his evil things, and this way, i. e., by death they are freed of all misery; also a godly man dies, that God may raise his body to glory; "It is sown in dishonour, but shall be raised to glory, and shall be made like to Christ's glorious body," Phil. iii. 31. The wicked likewise die, but it is as an act of God's wrath; he cuts them off sometimes that they may be no more a plague to his chosen, and dishonour to his majesty, nor a curse to the creation.

Doct. 2. Death is a blessing to believers, or a godly man is happy at death

This appears,

1. Because death puts an end to all their miseries, sorrows, and trouble; Lazarus was poor and distressed, but death puts an end to all his misery. All the godly Death is a blessing to the godly are afflicted many ways.

(1.) The world afflicts them, they are reproached, hated, and persecuted in this world. (2.) Sinners grieve and vex their souls, the sins of the wicked are the sorrow of the righteous, such that truly love God cannot but be grieved to see how God is dishonoured. (3.) The evil and scandalous lives of professors is no small affliction to them. "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ," Phil. iii. 18. (4.) Their own sins, and the corruptions of their own hearts, make them mourn, groan, and to cry out. "O wretched man that I am," &c. (5.) Satan also greatly distresses them by his continual temptations. (6.) Moreover their own children (many times) add great sorrow to them. (7.) Besides, worldly care and losses, and bodily distempers greatly afflict them. (8.) Likewise God oftentimes hides his face from them, but of all those evils and sorrows they are freed at death.

2. They are not only happy at death, in respect of negative good, or in respect of the evils freed from, but they partake then of positive good also; their souls (as you heard) go to Christ. O what a place is Paradise? and what joys are at God's right hand? What is it to see and behold, and be with Christ?

Moreover, their bodies have sweet and quiet rest, they fall asleep in Jesus, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labour," Rev. xiv. 13.

The rich man also died and was buried.

We read not of Lazarus's burial, he was buried too, but with no pomp; he was thrown into some hole or another. But observe what is said in the next place of the rich man.

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment." And this brings me to the next proposition.

Doct. There is a great difference between the death state of the godly, and of the wicked at death. A little to open this,

1. Consider a godly man dies in Christ, the ungodly in the wicked one; the one dies in a state of grace, the other dies in his sins.

2. The wicked are forced from hence, against their will; "The wicked are driven away (saith Solomon) in his wickedness," Prov. xiv. 32; but the godly willingly yield themselves up to death; "I would not live always," saith holy Job.

3. The wicked are driven away from their friends, from their houses, from their riches, from their vain comforts, and that day they die their hope perishes. Their souls are forced or torn out of their bodies, and cast into hell, but the soul of a godly man goes to Christ, "Having (saith Paul) a desire to depart, and be with Christ;" the soul of a believer is not driven away; no, he desires to be gone.

3. My brethren, as death puts an end to all a godly man's sorrows (he being freed from all evil) so death puts an end to all a wicked man's seeming joys and delights, and then begins also his sorrows; so that as the one possesseth nothing but good, so the other partakes of nothing but evil; and as the happiness of the one is inexpressible, so the misery of the other is inexpressible; and as the joys of the one at death shall never end, they being eternal, so the sorrows of the other at death will never end, they being also eternal.

5. The one is blessed in death, and the other cursed; the one falls into a sweet and quiet sleep, the other into a troublesome one; for though his spirit hath none, but is in eternal flames. This brings me to the last proposition.

Doct. 4. That the soul of man is immortal, and at death goes either to heaven or hell.

1. This I shall prove. 2. And then apply.

1. I shall prove the soul is immortal, by plain texts of scripture.

2. By several arguments.

1. The first proof is in my text, Lazarus's soul went to heaven when he died, and the

soul of the rich man went to hell, therefore the souls of all men at death go either to heaven or hell.

Object. But this is a parable, and what can you prove from hence?

Ans. To deny that the soul of Lazarus went to heaven when he died, or that the soul of the rich man went to hell, is in effect to say this parable is a fable, and so cast contempt upon our Lord Jesus Christ. For though parables are not so argumentative as other scriptures, and matters of controversy cannot so clearly be decided from them, yet may we not infer, from the parable of the pearl of great price, that Christ and the grace of Christ is exceeding precious, or of great worth: and from the grain of mustard seed, that the gospel-church was small at

Some parts of a parable are argumentative.

first, &c.

My brethren, that which is one main design of our Saviour in speaking of a parable, we may strongly argue from, and draw as concluding and as strong inferences, or arguments from, as from other scripture. Now (as I have showed) one main design of our Lord in speaking this parable was, to show the happy state of believers (though poor and distressed in this world) at death in regard their souls go immediately to heaven; and also to discover the fearful state of all wicked rich men at death, because then their souls go to hell, or to a place of torment; and this being so, it proves this truth as fully as if it had been a history, or matter of fact in respect of two particular persons.

Object. We will grant, it shows the state of good and bad men at the day of the resurrection.

Ans. Our Saviour speaks only of the state of both these persons spoken of at death, and not one word of the resurrection.

2. Besides, according to the purpose and design of our Lord herein, it evident that he shows when the rich man's soul was in hell he had five brethren living upon the earth, who had also the means of grace afforded unto them, "They have Moses and the prophets let them hear them." Certainly all believe that after the general resurrection, there will be no more any means of grace afforded to any wicked men, but that all will be swallowed up either in an eternity of joy, or of sorrow.

A citation of several texts of scripture, that prove the soul is immortal.

Another text which proves this great truth is that of Solomon.

"Then shall dust return to dust, and the Spirit unto God that gave it,"

Ecc. xii. 7.

It appears from hence, at death the soul is actually separated from the body, and goes to God to be disposed of, as he sees good; either to be sent to joy or sorrow. Again, he says, "The Spirit of a beast goes downward to the earth, but the spirit of a man goes upward." Also, take that concerning the soul of the child. "And he cried to the Lord, and said, O Lord God, I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again. And the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." I Kings xvii. 21, 22. Another text is that of our Saviour, "Fear not them which kill the body, but cannot kill the soul," Matt. x. 28. If the soul was mortal, man might kill it; but man cannot kill the soul, therefore it is not mortal, but immortal. Moreover, that which Paul saith in 2 Cor. v. 1, 6, 8, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have (that is, our souls have) an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Object. The apostle here refers to the resurrection of the body at the last day.

Ans. He speaks here of the state of the soul when the body is dissolved, and lies in its dusty crumbs, not when it shall be raised again. And from hence he adds, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we (that is, our souls) are absent from the Lord." 2 Cor. v. 6. For further proof read, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. i. 21. He doth not say to me to rise again is gain, but to die, or when I die death will be gain to me. And from hence he adds, "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," ver. 23. Compare this with that of the promise of our Saviour to the penitent thief, "I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise." Luke xxiii. 43. And to these scriptures I might add, 2 Cor. xii. 1; 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20; Heb. xii. 23.

Secondly, I shall proceed to lay down several arguments, further to confirm this comfortable truth. But let this be considered before I proceed; viz. That by immortal, I do not mean simply and absolutely the soul in its own nature is immortal; or had a being from everlasting. No, for in this sense, God alone is immortal, or "hath immortality," 1 Tim. vi. 16. But, by being immortal, I mean, it was created so; God hath bestowed immortality upon the souls of all men, that they die not, they cease not to live, nor shall be reduced to nothing (or annihilated); the soul being a

How the soul is immortal.

pure, simple, immaterial thing, or an unmixed being, where there is no composition or mixture found (saith one), no death or dissolution can follow. The very being of the soul is life, and it is also the vital principle of the body.

Argu. 1. If the soul of man be a simple, spiritual, immaterial and an unmixed being, not compounded of matter, as all mortal creatures are, the soul is immortal; but such is the being of the soul. Ergo, all mixed bodies, or creatures that come under the power of dissolution are mortal; matter and mixtures (say learned men) are the doors at which death enters naturally upon all such creatures; all matter hath its limits, bounds, and just measure beyond which it cannot be extended (saith reverend Flavel) but the soul is boundless, and its appetitions infinite; it rests not, but in the spiritual and infinite being, God alone being its adequate object, and able to satisfy its desires, which plainly proves it to be spiritual, immaterial, and a simple being. (1.) It is void of any principle of corruption in itself. (2.) It is not liable to any stroke of death, by any adverse power without itself. I. It cannot be liable to death from any seeds or principles of corruption within itself. The spirituality and simplicity of the soul admits of no corruption. Nor is it liable to death by any adverse power without itself; no sword can touch it, no instrument of death can reach it, therefore it is immortal.

Arguments proving the soul of man is immortal.

On the soul p. 96.

The soul at death goes upward to God that gave it.

Argu. 2. If the soul at death be actually separated from the body, and in that separated state goes upwards to God that gave it, it is immortal; (but this the text before cited plainly proves, Eccl. xii. 7) Therefore, the soul is immortal; the body goes one way, the soul another; the body returns to the dust, the soul goes to God; the body being made of the earth returns to earth, but the soul proceeding from God, who is called the Father of spirits, it being created of God, and infused into the body, that goes to God that gave it, or upward; whereas the spirits of beasts go downward, and though the souls of the wicked go to God, or go upwards, yet not into the third heavens; (for no unclean thing can enter into that place) but go into some inferior part of heaven, where God may pass sentence against them, and send them to prison. God (saith one) is not so in the third heavens, that he hath not a glorious presence in the lower heavens; if this be not so, how could Satan appear before God, as is mentioned when he accused Job. If, therefore, the soul died or slept with the body it could neither be said to be separated from the body, nor to go another way, and not whither the body returns.

Wadsworth p. 59.

Argu. 3. If godly men at death commended their souls or spirits unto God, praying the Lord to receive them, then they are immortal; but godly men have done, and always do this. Ergo, the soul or spirit is immortal. "And Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my Spirit," Acts vii. 59. Moreover, the very same thing our Lord Jesus Christ did himself, "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice he said; Father into thy hands I commend my spirit," Luke xxiii. 46; that was his human soul, "For he was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted."

Godly men commend their spirits to God at death.

Argu. 4. If the souls of men, in their separated state from their bodies, are either in joy or misery they are immortal; but the souls of men in their separated state from their body are either in joy or misery. Ergo, the souls of men are immortal. That the soul is separated from the body at death I have proved; and that the souls of the just are in a state of joy at death is evident. "I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Our Lord in these words answers this poor sinner's desire, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," Luke xxiii. 42, 43. Here he discovered his faith, he believed Christ was the Son of God, and that he would in an hour or two be in his kingdom, i. e., in heaven; and also showed he believed he was the true Saviour, and one able to save him; and now our Lord assured him that, that very day [He] (that is the soul of this believing criminal) should be with him in paradise, a place of delight and pleasure, viz., the third heaven; not that only he should be with him in his kingdom, when he comes again the second time, but that very day his soul should be with the soul of our Lord in heaven; I know some (who abuse this text) say, Christ said to him that day, or made a promise to him that day, that he should some time or another be with him in paradise. What will not men do to prop up an erroneous opinion, mind the comma, "I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me," &c. And from hence I infer, if the soul of one believing and godly person goes to Christ at death, then the souls of all godly persons go to Christ at death. For as the soul of the penitent thief went to heaven at death so also did the soul of Lazarus, and so the souls of all believers. And as the soul of the wicked rich man at death went to hell,

All men's souls at death happy or miserable.

or to a place of torments, so do the souls of all wicked men at death go to hell also.

Argu. 5. If men cannot kill the soul of man it is immortal; but men cannot kill the soul. Ergo, the soul of man is immortal. See what our Lord saith, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," Matt. x. 28. Were the soul mortal, he that killeth the body kills the soul also, even the whole man; but men are not able to kill the soul. Besides this, our Lord spake to encourage us not to fear bloody persecutors; because though they may put an end to our natural lives, yet our souls being immortal (they being not able to kill them) they live; and the very moment we lose our lives our souls are with Christ in heaven.

Obj. If any should say our Lord means that men cannot kill the soul for ever.

Ans. 1. Answer, in that sense they cannot kill the body, for the body shall live again; our Lord speaks not of the future, but of the present state of the body and soul or what the state of the one and the other is at death.

Argu. 6. "If every one that believes in Jesus hath everlasting life in him, and shall not see death (I mean eternal life in the seed and principle of it), then the soul is immortal; but every one that truly believes in Jesus Christ hath everlasting life in him, and shall not see death. Ergo, The soul is immortal. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life," John iii. 36. "And this is the record that God hath given us, even eternal life," &c. 1 John v. 11, 12. "That ye may know ye have eternal life. No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," 1 John iii. 15. A true believer hath eternal life abiding in him, because he hath the eternal Spirit in his soul, and it abides in his soul for ever. Now, if this vital principle abides in the soul for ever, the soul lives, and abides for ever in life, only not as being immortal (for so it was before) but in a state of eternal life also, which proves the soul's immortality and final perseverance. "This is the bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die," John vi. 50; "He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever," ver. 58. Our Lord must speak either of the soul or of the body; of the body he speaks not. "The body dies because of sin, but the Spirit is alive because of righteousness," Rom. viii. 10. As the soul lives a life of grace here, and hath a title to eternal life by Christ's righteousness, so, the Spirit being in the soul of a believer, his soul lives for ever in a state of eternal life, or life of joy. The Spirit being that "living water in the soul, springing up unto everlasting life," John iv. 14. The Spirit of God abiding in the soul of a believer, as a principle of eternal life, proves the soul is immortal. For if there is no separation of the Spirit from the soul, but that he makes his cohabitation there for ever, then the soul lives for ever; or it hath a being for ever, and a blessed being also; therefore it is immortal.

All true believers have the seed of eternal life in their souls now.

SERMON XVII.

And in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom," Luke xvi. 23.

I AM upon arguments to prove the soul is immortal, and have passed through six.

Argu. 7. If the soul of man in its separated state from the body be capable of the highest joy, or spiritual ravishments, it is immortal; but the soul of man in its separated state from the body is capable of the highest joy or spiritual ravishments. Therefore, it is immortal. "I knew a man in Christ fourteen years ago, whether in the body I cannot tell; or out of the body I cannot tell, God knows; such an one caught up into the third heaven: he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words," &c., 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. If Paul knew the soul was not capable to be separated from the body (or if it was), yet, if not capable in that separated state of such sensible and soul-ravishing joys and visions, then he would have said, I know he was taken up in the body; but, since he says he knew not whether without the body or in the body, it proves that Paul knew the soul was capable of such a separation, and, in that separated state, capable also of the highest enjoyments of God.

The souls of believers absent from the Lord while in the body but are present with Christ at death.

Argu. 8. If, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; and, when absent from the body, present with the Lord, then the soul is immortal; but both these Paul positively asserts; "Therefore we are always confident, that whilst we are at home in our body we are absent from the Lord;" 2 Cor. v. 6. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," ver. 8.

Ans. I answer, at the day of the resurrection we shall neither be absent from the body nor from the Lord; therefore from hence it most evidently appears that the souls of all believers at death are absent from their bodies, and present with Christ in heaven.

Argum. 9. If it be gain to a believer to die, the soul is immortal; but it is gain to a believer to die: ergo, the soul is immortal. See what holy Paul affirms, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil. i. 22. Now, if Paul's soul was not in a far better condition at death than when he lived in the body, having more sweet joy, comfort, and consolation, death instead of being gain to him, would have been great loss, for he might live many years, and have had sweet communion with Christ; and yet it would not be any longer before his body would be raised at the last day.

It is gain for a believer to die.

Besides, the apostle speaks not of gain when his body shall live again; but of that gain he should have at death, or when he died; not when he shall be raised at the last day, though then he knew his body and soul both shall be crowned with glory for ever.

My brethern, is not the presence of Christ, and communion with him here, while we are in the body, a great blessing; and if we may live twenty or thirty years longer here to enjoy this, would it not be gain to us? but if God should take us away presently, (and we lie in the grave asleep both body and soul) without any sensible joy or comfort at all, certainly (were it thus) death would be a great loss, and no gain at all; for we shall rise again from the dead, as soon though we should live forty years longer in the body.

Argum. 10. If the spirits of all just men separated are made perfect in heaven, then the soul of man is immortal; but the spirits of all just men departed this life are made perfect in heaven: ergo, the soul of man is immortal. "We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. xii. 23. That is, we are come to a clear revelation of this comfortable truth, as we are come to the blood of sprinkling, and to the general assembly, &c., viz., to a clearer knowledge and discovery of those glorious truths than the saints had who lived under the law or before the gospel times.

The spirits of just men are in heaven.

Argum. 11. If the soul of our blessed Saviour went to heaven at death, the soul is immortal; but the soul of our Saviour went to heaven at death; ergo, the force of this argument lies here, viz., Christ was made like to us in all things, sin only excepted; if therefore his human soul was immortal, the souls of all men are immortal. And if his soul was not immortal, how could it die a spiritual death, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and that his soul went to heaven at death, I before showed. "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."—"Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.

Argum. 12. If the soul be fed with and lives upon immortal or incorruptible food, it is itself immortal; but the soul is fed with, and lives upon immortal or incorruptible food; ergo, it is immortal. That which is corporal or mortal, may be fed with corporal or earthly food; the body being mortal, corporal food feeds it; but no earthly or corruptible food can feed the soul: no, that lives upon incorruptible food, spiritual food, or on the bread of life; let such therefore that affirm the soul is mortal feed their souls with the same food they feed their bodies; and if their souls are wounded, let them apply the same balm to heal them, which they apply to bodily wounds, and see whether such things can either feed or heal them; and try also whether some rare cordials physicians can prepare will revive their souls when faint and drooping since they affirm their soul is mortal, and so corporal.

The soul living upon immortal food proves it immortal.

Argu. 13. If the souls of those wicked men who lived in the old world in the days of Noah are now in prison or in hell, then the soul of man is immortal; but the former is true, ergo, for the proof of this argument see what the apostle Peter saith, "By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient in the days of Noah," &c. The apostle shows that "Christ was put to death in the flesh, and quickened by the Spirit," or by virtue of his Deity, even by the same Spirit or Godhead; he preached to those spirits that are now in prison, who once lived in the days of Noah wicked and ungodly lives. This text doth not only prove the souls of men are immortal, but also the pre-existence of Christ, or his glorious Godhead; inasmuch as by his servant Noah, he preached to the old world, to those whose spirits are now in prison, or in chains of darkness.

But to proceed. We read of souls under the altar in heaven. And from thence I argue,

Argu. 14. If the souls of those blessed saints (that were slain for Christ's sake) are now in heaven, and have white robes given to them, then the soul of man is immortal, but the former is so. Ergo,

The souls of the saints in heaven have white robes given to them.

"I saw under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long holy and true, dost not thou avenge our blood, &c., and white robes was given unto every one of them," Rev.

vi. 9—11. The altar I conceive is Jesus Christ; they lie under the wings of Christ, or are in heaven by virtue of the blood of our altar Jesus Christ. "And white robes were given to every one of them." By white robes is meant not only the righteousness of Christ (which brought them to heaven) but the purity of that state and happiness they are possessed with, triumphing in glory. White robes (saith one) is the sign of their honour and triumph in heaven.

Some now in heaven, whom Christ reconciled unto God.

Argu. 15. If there are some now in heaven who were reconciled to God by Jesus Christ then the soul of man is immortal; but there are some now in heaven who were reconciled to God by Jesus Christ. Ergo, See what the apostle saith. "By him to reconcile all things to himself: by him I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven," Col. i. 19, 20.

Object. By things in heaven, some say the apostle refers to the holy angels.

Answ. I answer that cannot be, because the holy angels need no reconciler. Hath Christ reconciled them to God? Were they and the holy God ever at variance, or was there a breach between God and them? Certainly, if there be any in heaven that were reconciled unto God, they must be the souls of just men made perfect, because no creature but the off-spring of Adam, or mankind only, were reconciled to God by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. So much as to the arguments, to prove the souls of all men to be immortal.

To proceed, let me add here some of those gross absurdities that attend the opinion of such that affirm the soul is mortal, and dies or sleeps with the body.

Absurdity 1. If the soul of man be mortal, then the punishment which God threatened against, and also executed upon our first parents, was only temporal punishment; as sickness, &c., and death, or going to the dust.

Absurdity 2. Then also the demerit of sin is not such, as the word of God positively declares, nor is there such inconceivable evil in sin, if it be only temporal misery and death the justice of God requires and inflicts upon the sinner. Moreover then also it follows that mere animal creatures suffer as much, or as great punishment for man's sin; as man himself would ever have suffered, had not God sent his Son to raise mankind again from the dead; and how absurd that is I will leave to all men's considerations.

Absurdity 3. Likewise then it will follow that Jesus Christ is but a temporal Redeemer (for though he may purchase other blessings for us) yet he could redeem us from no other death and miseries than those that sin brought us under, or exposed us unto.

Absurdity 4. Then also the curse of the law, and the wrath of God for the breach of the first covenant, is no great matter, nor to be so much feared; nor is the redeeming love in God the Father, and in God the Son so great, as his holy word everywhere expresseth it to be; for it must be then only to restore or redeem us from temporal or external wrath and punishment, and not from internal wrath which came upon all, nor to prevent that eternal wrath which certainly would have fell upon all had not the Son of God come to redeem and save us.

Absurdity 5. Moreover, then our blessed Lord was unjustly punished in his soul, for why did he suffer such dismal sorrow, and bear such wrath in his soul for us, as to sweat great drops of blood, if mere bodily suffering could have satisfied the justice of God, or have appeased divine anger? Besides, it would render our blessed Saviour more afraid of death than many thousands of his saints have been, who rather rejoiced in death, courted death and desired it, rather than showed any fear to die the most cruel deaths, that bloody tyrants could invent. And what disparagement and contempt would this cast upon the Son of God, who cried out, "Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and also it is said, that "He began to be sorely amazed, (and said) my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:" certainly this was from the weakness of his flesh or human nature, under the sense he had of that dismal wrath his soul felt (when our sins were laid upon him, and that wrath due to us let out against him, he standing in our law place) that made him cry out in that nature, even with bitter cries and tears. Ah! none know, nor conceive, what he endured in his human soul; that he might satisfy the justice of God for us, "The pangs of hell took hold on me," Psal. cxvi. 3.

Absurdity 6. Then it is weakness in the heathen, who never heard of Christ, and of the resurrection, to fear any punishment that is due to them for sin, but only that which is external; and how comes it about (or from whence doth it arise) that they fear and dread eternal wrath; and many of them so positively have asserted the immortality of their souls: the people of all nations, even Heathens as well as others, believe the soul is immortal;

All men in nations generally believe the soul of man is immortal. The Heathen affirmed and

and is it not absurd to think that God would suffer the whole world to be deceived. Cicero saith "In every thing the comfort of all nations is to be accounted the law of nature." And (Seneca saith) "We give much to the presumption of all men." And as one notes, the ancient Chaldeans, Grecians, Pythagoræans, Stoics, Platonists, &c., asserted the immortality of the soul; and Plato hath wrote excellent arguments to prove its immortality, amongst which this is one, viz., That if the soul were not immortal wicked men would certainly have the advantage of the righteous and good men, who after they have committed all manner of evils should suffer none; also, some of the Heathen argued for the immortality of the soul, from the consideration that nothing in the world can satisfy it, or fill its desires, and so make it happy: the Turks, also, in their Alehoran, assert a state of joy or sorrow after death, into which the souls of all men enter; though they fancy a paradise of sensual pleasure; nay, the very Indians believe it, and their wives will cast themselves into flames to attend the souls of their husbands in another world.

Absurd. 7. If the soul be not immortal, then Adam had not, and so by sin lost not the spiritual life of his soul; nor was the soul a capable subject to have the image of God stampt upon it: nor can our souls be said to be quickened by Christ, and so that life and divine image restored to us again. For how can an internal life, be said to be restored to man by the second Adam; if the first in innocency never had any such life.

maintained
its immor-
tality
Mr. Flavel
Seneca 17.

Man had no
internal
spiritual life
in the first
Adam if the
soul be mor-
tal, and so
not the im-
age of God
in his soul.

Absurd. 8. Moreover, if this be not so, what dignity had mankind above mere brutes, exempt his dominion; for they have all one breath, therefore to deny the immortality of the soul, is to debase man; yea, rob him of his chiefest honour, who was made but a little lower than the angels. Were it not for the excellent quality of the soul, how comes man to be so noble a creature, more in worth and far excelling all inferior creatures; for in strength, perfections of sense, agility of members, many creatures excel man. Moreover, were it not thus, from whence proceed these excellent faculties of knowledge, reason, understanding, &c., in man.

Absurd. 8. Then also it was not true, which our Lord told the penitent thief, viz., "That he should be with him that day in paradise;" and Paul also was very weak in desiring to depart and be with Christ; and was mistaken in saying death would be gain to him, and far better for him to be dissolved.

Absurd. 9. Take what a worthy writer notes, if man was only to be reduced (by the first sin) to an eternal state of dust, then really and truly God intended not to punish him at all, except it were in previous dying pains; for that was but to put him in the same condition in which he was before he was made, and that was only dust; which speaks him no more miserable, than if he had never been made; and surely none would think it had been a punishment to Adam not to be made at, &c. Besides the beasts, &c., would have suffered as much misery as sinful man.

Again (saith he), then also it will follow, that, that being in us, our soul, which understands, or knows God, Christ, the Spirit, in the unity, independency, immensity, and eternity of their nature, and that love, joys, and delights therein, above all the delicacies of food, melody of music, and all the pompous shows of this visible world, and all the hidden treasures of the earth, should be nothing but a congruity of the elements of air and fire, &c. And also that in man, which is the principal subject in regeneration. And is partaker of the divine nature, and is inhabited by the Holy Ghost, is nought else but the finest part of the decocted blood of our body, and this (according to these men) is that which the apostle says, "Is born again of the immortal seed, the word of God, and is regenerated by the Spirit, &c."

Absurd. 10. Then also it will follow, that the death of Christ would be the greatest curse and plague to the wicked that ever was, in that he, by his death and resurrection, brings them into a capacity to suffer eternal pains, who should after death, otherwise have known no sorrow nor misery: but alas! had not Christ come, the souls of all must have suffered everlasting wrath and vengeance; though it is true, their torments will be aggravated for their contempt of such great and inconceivable grace and favour, offered them through Christ in the gospel.

Absurd. 11. If the soul be not immortal, then the saints and people of God in every age of the world have been deceived in one of the great motives which encouraged them to suffer violent deaths and cruel martyrdoms for Christ's sake; viz., the hopes they had of being that very moment they died with Jesus Christ. Were they born up with self-hope and a vain and idle dream: they said (one to another) O brother be of good cheer,

If the soul is mortal the martyrs have been fed with fancies and idle dreams as to their going to Christ that moment they died.

Men are not fathers of spirits, but of flesh only.

for though we have a bitter dinner, yet we shall have a sweet supper this night with Jesus Christ. (Or to that purpose).

Absurd. 12. And then, also, as Christ's ministers have generally told the people a company of lies; and, also, one of the greatest encouragements believers have to be willing to die is gone for ever; which is the hopes of being that moment with Christ in heaven; for who would not rather desire to live longer in the possession of joy, comfort, and communion here with Christ, than to die and lose it, and come to heaven no sooner than if they lived forty years longer in this world.

Absurd. 13. Then also the man begets the soul, and is the father of the spirit, and God robbed of that peculiar prerogative and honour, who is called "The Father of Spirits," Heb. xiii. 9; and man only the father of the flesh.

Absurd. 14. If the soul be mortal, and dies with the body, who can prove it shall rise again? Or, where is there any scripture that asserts any such resurrection? It is only the body which the Scripture says shall rise again; and this is one article of our faith, viz., "The resurrection of the body;" but not that we believe the resurrection of the soul. Now that which the Scripture affirms not we ought not to believe. Some, indeed, talk of the soul's sleeping, but they say man is wholly mortal both his body and soul, and so both die. As to such that speak as if the soul slept, or doth not die but sleep, is a foolish notion and needs no answer to confute it; for sleeping in the grave and lying dead there is all one.

APPLICATION.

I. We infer from hence that the soul is very precious; it is capable of divine union with God, and of Divine inspiration; "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." And of divine assimilation to God, and of divine contemplation of God, and of divine communion with God. 2. Because the souls of the saints are in paradise with Christ at death, and the soul is worth more than ten thousand worlds, being bought with a great price, and feeds upon a most precious and incorruptible food.

II. We infer the loss of the soul is the greatest loss, "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul," Matt. xvi. 26.

III. That the ungodly are the greatest fools in the world, who prefer their bodies above their souls, nay, mind everything more than them; their children, their servants, nay, their beasts shall be fed and provided for, but their souls are neglected, though immortal, and neither be fed nor clothed; and, though sick and wounded, yet no seeking and looking out for a physician, to heal their precious and immortal souls. I have heard of a woman, whose house being on fire, got out all her chiefest goods, and then rejoiced, saying, she had saved her goods," but one replied to her, "Woman, where is your child? (She forgot that, which, being in the cradle, was burned to death)." O (then she cried out), my child, my child is burned." Just thus most people mind their goods, labour for the world, but forget their souls until in hell, and then cry out, "My soul, my soul is lost and tormented in these flames."

IV. It may be for reprehension.

(1.) Such who expose their souls to eternal flames, for love to their base lusts, and the vanities of this world, and may be for the unjust gain of one penny.

(2.) It may reprehend all such that draw others into sin, who are not satisfied to destroy their own souls, but seek ways to destroy the souls of others also. See to it, you that entice others to drunkenness, to uncleanness, &c. Is it not enough to have an account to give for the loss of your own souls, but for the loss of many souls of poor creatures also that you have enticed and drawn into abominable wickedness, even to the damning of their precious souls for ever?

(3.) Such also are to be reprov'd who promote damnable errors and heresies, to the destruction of multitudes of souls and glory in it. To see how they have corrupted them, they, being deceived themselves and given up to believe lies, deceive others also.

V. Exhortation.

(1.) O, bless God, sinners, for sending his Son, his Gospel, his Word, and the means of grace, to save your precious and immortal souls; and admire his infinite grace and pity in extending such boundless mercy unto us, to prevent the eternal ruin and damnation of your souls.

Impostors in a damnable condition for deceiving the souls of men.

(2.) Strive to believe in Christ, to receive Christ, and to be converted, "For if you believe not that I am he you shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. Again, our Lord says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 5. "Marvel not, I say unto you, Ye must be born again," John iii. 7. Before he spoke these words, he said, ver. 3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What, then, can you expect that are swearers, drunkards, whorewongers, or proud and covetous persons, but that you must perish and lose your souls if you die before you are regenerated, or become new creatures.

(3.) It speaks much comfort to believers. O, how happy are you that are true Christians! Your souls are safe, and when the wicked are miserable you will be happy; death will open the mouth of hell to them, but it opens the gates of heaven to you; be content with your portion though you are like poor Lazarus here, yet your condition is far better than the rich (who are ungodly) and this will be manifested at death, labour to prepare for it; life is uncertain, and death makes a mighty change, it will be a happy change to you, but a dismal change to the wicked.

SERMON XVIII.

And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.—Luke xvi. 23.

THE point of doctrine I shall take notice of from hence is this, viz.:

Doct. That the pangs of hell are dreadful and tormenting.

In opening of this proposition,

I. I shall prove that the pangs of hell are dreadful, &c.

II. Show who they are that when they die go to hell.

III. Apply it.

I. That punishment, that fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, must needs be very dreadful and tormenting. What pain and misery shall devils one day feel and endure, who are such implacable enemies to the Holy God, and have showed such hatred and malice against him, his Son and his interest, and precious children; why, the same all hypocrites and unbelievers must endure, "Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41.

The torments of the wicked, the same the devils shall endure.

II. The extremity of their torments will further appear if we consider that it is inconceivable, or beyond all men's understanding, "Who knows the power of thy anger," Psal. xc. 11; who can comprehend, or can be rightly and duly affected therewith: we can conceive of bodily pains or of external torments, but we cannot comprehend nor conceive the nature of infinite wrath, no more than we can comprehend or conceive of infinite love, grace, divine favour, and goodness; there is an height, length, depth, and breadth in it; it is amazing and unsearchable.

Hell torments are inconceivable.

III. It is intolerable wrath and vengeance.

1. Because it is according to the fear of, and, O, my brethren, what fear have some awakened sinners under despair had of the wrath of an offended God and of the torments of hell. "According to thy fear, so is thy wrath." The fear of some evils is worse than the evils feared, and many have experienced it to be so; truly, said they, I found it not as I feared, or according to that apprehension I had of it before it came; but it is not so here. Hell and the wrath of God will be according to that fear any can have of it.

2. The torments of hell are intolerable, because worse than any plague, anguish, or misery, undergone by any in this world; some feel the anguish and tormenting pains of cruel wounds, broken bones, sawing off legs and arms; and others the pain of the stone, gout, cholick; some burning in gentle fires, being consumed by degrees, and long before they could die, and some have been impaled, &c.

Now, consider these torments, nay, the worst of these many of God's dear children have suffered in this world; and therefore were no more than God's fatherly chastisements, or from the sin-correcting hand of God. But the torments and pains of hell are from the sin-revenging hand of God; the one proceeds from God's love, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," Rev. iii. 19; the other proceeds from his incensed wrath: but if God's correcting hand (or Fatherly chastisements) may be so sharp, and put his children to such pain and misery, how intolerable is that anguish, that pain, which is the effect of his offended justice.

3. Consider what hell is compared to. (1.) "To a furnace of fire," and to streams of brimstone and fire; and also called fiery indignation. (2.) "To a lake of fire;" indeed a hot fiery furnace is but a shadow of this lake of fire; and so far as the substance exceeds the shadow, so far doth hell exceed all torments or places of torment in this world, therefore intolerable.

4. The pains and miseries inflicted on the bodies of men here, in this world, may be abated, or mitigated, with some mixture of ease, if not in the body yet in the mind, or by the pity or sympathy of friends that seem to give little ease; but in hell both soul and body after the resurrection shall be equally tormented; and without any mixture of mercy, or mitigation of pain; neither will the damned have any to pity them. "The worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Not one drop of water hath any soul in hell to abate their pain; therefore the torments of hell are, and will be, intolerable. "They shall drink of the wrath of God, that is poured out without mixture into the cup of indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," Rev. xiv. 10. They shall have judgment without mercy, sorrow without joy, pain without ease, darkness without light; all relief is totally withdrawn from them for ever.

IV. Because it is to satisfy divine justice, as it proceeds from infinite wrath; yet no satisfaction can they by suffering make, for the wrong done to the holiness and justice of God, &c., but wrath feeds on them, like as a hungry man eats that which satisfieth him not.

V. We may gather what the nature, sore pangs, and torments of hell are, by considering what pains, sorrow, and anguish our blessed Saviour endured for us; when our hell-pangs were upon him, how did he cry out, and what drops of blood did he sweat, and yet had the power of the Godhead to support him; nor was he ever under the apprehension of being for ever forsaken of his father, though for a while he hid his face from him, by reason our sins were charged upon him, and he was to give satisfaction to divine justice in our behalf.

VI. To add to all I have said, the eternity of these torments show the fearful nature of them; for as they are easeless, so they will also be endless; to be tormented one hour is sad, but more to be in pain and torture twenty-four hours, but much more dreadful to be in unspeakable anguish forty or fifty years without ease or cessation of pain; but what are ten thousand years to an endless eternity? Alas! when million of millions of years (comparatively) are expired the damned in hell will be no nearer the end of their torment, than they were the first moment they were cast into hell. And is not this amazing thing to think upon.

VII. All the passions and faculties of the soul will be let out to torment the damned.

1. Conscience terrifies them, which is that worm that dies not. O, saith the sinner, what a wretch have I been! what a God have I lost, who often knocked at my door?" Rev. iii. 20; and O! what a heaven have I lost! and what a precious soul have I for ever lost; I was told by faithful ministers that what is now come upon me would be my sad portion, but I believed them not, but slighted all their reproofs, and cast God's Word behind my back. For the love I had to the base lusts of my evil heart, is all this come upon me; my pride, my uncleanness, my cursed oaths, my covetousness and love to the world, my malice, and my vilifying and reproaching the godly, hath damned my precious and immortal soul. Also I neglected prayer and hearing of God's word, I regarded not the mercies of God, nor the judgments of God, I came into the world a dead condemned creature, and refused life. The sense and punishment of loss will torment the damned, as well as their penal sorrows.

2. Shame will also greatly afflict and torment them, "The wicked shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt," Dan. xii. 2. Should a king lose his crown and kingdom for the sake of a few cockle shells? what shame would ever cover his face? the drunkard will be ashamed; O, saith he, for the sake of my cursed cups, and love to my wicked companions, am I cast into these flames. Also, shame will cover the proud; my heart was lifted up, I thought none so wise as myself, I contemned others, and made a derision of them that feared God: saith another, I would not leave off my idle and foolish fashions, though I grieved my poor parents, grieved men and women, and grieved godly ministers, "I loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." My heart (saith another) was lifted up because I was rich and had a good estate, and regarded not the poor. My gifts and parts saith another puffed me up, O, wretched creature as I am, I am undone and covered with shame and confusion of face.

3. Sorrow will likewise torment, penetrate, and seize deep upon their souls, "There

shall be weeping and wailing, as well as gnashing of teeth." But it will be fruitless sorrow; no tears, no crying, will avail them anything for ever.

4. Despair, also, seizeth upon their souls: O, saith the damned, what a great gulph is there fixed, God's eternal decree is passed, there is no mercy for ever now, no hope, no relief, no remedy. My brethren, here, in this world, when a man is in misery he hopes it may be better with him, and this abates his sorrow, and gives a little ease, but in hell all hope is perished and gone for ever.

Despair will torment the damned.

5. Fury and fearful rage afflicts, and torments the damned in hell; how will they tear, as it were roar, and howl in an hideous manner, and hate themselves, hate God, and blaspheme his holy name, and all that dwell in heaven.

Fury will torment them.

6. The company they shall have will also greatly no doubt torment them, though they thought perhaps the multitudes they should suffer with might be some ease to them; but they will find the contrary. May be such that they drew them into sin, will there curse them and torment them with taunting reflections, it was you, thou cursed wretch, that brought me to this place, you drew me to commit this and that sin. Others may say, it was you that deceived me with your cursed errors and heresies, and caused me to deny the true Christ, or to cast contempt upon his holy person, &c., devils, also, must be their companions for ever, who strove to bring them into that place, the sight of whom must needs be grievous, and hateful to them for ever.

The company that in hell will torment them.

The sorrow and rage of the damned (saith reverend Dr. Bates) will be increased by despair, for when the wretched sinner sees the evil is peremptory and no outlet of hope, he abandons himself to the violence of sorrow, and by cruel thoughts wounds the heart more than the fiercest furies in hell can, &c., p. 535.

6. Both soul and body too shall be tormented for evermore, when the bodies of men have been tormented, their souls have been at ease, and sustained them under their outward sorrows, but in hell the soul will be tormented as well as their bodies; the soul will be tormented in one fire, while the body is tormented in another.

Body and soul both tormented in hell.

II. I shall show you, who they are that shall go to hell, or are in danger to be cast into those dismal torments at death.

1. The devils. You heard that hell is prepared for the devil and his angels.

Indeed it is difficult (as one notes) to conceive how material fire can act on a spiritual substance; but it is (saith he) unreasonable to determine that it is impossible; for, if we consider what pain is, it is as conceivable how pure spirits are capable of it as how pure spirits in conjunction with bodies. The human soul in its nature is spiritual, as an angel; yet has a painful sense of fire, and other afflicting evils incumbent on sense. The body merely feels not pain, but it passes through the body to the soul. If the soul by a strong diversion of thoughts apply itself to an object the body is insensible of pain, as is evident in some diseases; and that in the heat of battle deep wounds are not felt. And as God, by a natural constitution, has ordered that the body so touched and moved, excites a painful sense in the soul, he may have ordained that the devils shall feel the impression of material fire in the place, to which they shall be confined. (Thus Dr. Bates, p. 531.)

Who they are that are in danger of being cast into hell.

But I rather adhere to what reverend Dr. Thomas Goodwin saith, viz., that though the body shall be tormented in hell with material fire (which he saith, he will not deny), yet the soul of man and the devils shall be tormented with immortal fire. Though there may be something in what the other reverend Doctor saith, yet, my brethren, what fire can be more tormenting than the internal sense of God's incensed wrath let out upon the Spirit and conscience of a man (as it seemed to be in Spira and poor Mr. Child). Certainly, the anguish and misery which our blessed Lord felt in his soul, when he bore the wrath of God due to us, was inconceivable (as I hinted before.)

2. As the devils shall be cast into hell, so shall all profane and ungodly sinners that live and die in their sins. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. &c., that is, such who so live and die; for in the next verse he saith, "And such were some of you, but you are washed," &c., ver. 11. And as here the apostle saith they shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, so another text saith "The wicked shall be turned into hell," Psal. ix. 17. And again it is said, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers,

All profane persons living and dying in their sins shall be cast into hell.

and idolators, and all liars, shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," Rev. xxi. 8.

All Atheists shall be damned.

3. All Atheists who deny the being of God, none can be greater sinners than these, let their lives be what they will, for if they that know not God (with a right spiritual knowledge) shall be damned, much more all that deny the very being of the true and only God. (2 Thess. i. 8.)

All that believe not in Christ shall be cast into hell.

4. All unbelievers: I mean such that do not truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not enough to believe there is a God, or to believe in God the Creator; but we must believe in Christ, the Son of God, as our only Saviour and Redeemer; "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," John xiv. 1. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. Again, it is said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36. As all men abide under wrath until they have the Son, or believe on the Son, so if they die before they so believe, and have union with the Son, they must perish in hell for ever.

All hypocrites shall perish in hell.

5. All hypocrites who die in that state, "They shall be cast into a furnace of fire, and shall have their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers," Luke xii. 46; and therefore it is said, "Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrite, who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burning," Isa. xxxiii. 14; so as to be tormented for ever and ever.

Persecutors shall perish.

6. All persecutors who hate, murder, and vilify the people of God, for who are worse murderers than these.

All final apostates shall go to hell.

7. All backsliders or apostates, who draw back unto perdition, or who revolt from God, from his ways and people and never return, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them," 2 Pet. ii. 21. Certainly, such sin against light and knowledge; they were once enlightened, and therefore to them. "Remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 26, 27.

8. All witches and sorcerers, who give themselves up to the devil, and are never helped to disclaim, and get out of that hellish contract, they expect no other thing, than being cast into hell. In a word, all whosoever they are that are not born again. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 5. And if they cannot enter into heaven, they must go to hell; and, indeed, what would an unrenewed man, an unholy man, do in heaven; for, as no unholy person can enter therein, so heaven would be of no heaven to him that has not an heavenly nature, or is not able to taste of the spiritual joys of heaven.

Quest. When shall sinners go to hell?

The souls of the wicked go to hell at death.

Ans. Their souls go to hell at death, even that very moment the body dies; "The rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments," &c.

And at the resurrection, when the judgment is ended, they shall both body and soul be cast into hell; "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire," Rev. xx. 15.

APPLICATION.

I. Infer. 1. That many persons are very near being cast into hell, even every ungodly and unbelieving sinner. O, how soon may some of you, if in your sins, feel how intolerable the torments of hell are? It is not afar off, no, there is only a small thread of life between sinners and eternal torments.

Infer. 2. What horrid and soul-unloving evil is in sin; how hateful must that be to God that provokes him to throw such multitudes of his creatures into hell.

Quest. But will the torments of the damned never cease?

Ans. No. They will never cease. "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thes. i. 9.

The reasons why the torments of the wicked will be eternal.

1. Because the judgment of the great day is called the eternal judgment; and also because the rewards of grace are eternal; the godly shall have eternal joys; therefore the punishment of the wicked eternal sorrow. The sentence; "These shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into

life eternal," Matt. xxv. 46. Not only eternally to excess (for the wicked shall eternally exist) but into eternal blessedness.

2. Because God is infinite in wrath and justice as well as in love and goodness. Moreover, our Lord shows they must lie there "Until thou have paid the utmost farthing;" and it can never be, because a finite being cannot satisfy infinite justice.

3. Because the soul is immortal, and the bodies of the wicked shall when they are raised be made immortal also; that is, not be subject unto death any more, nor to be annihilated; they cannot destroy their own miserable beings, and God will not.

4. Because their sinful natures and evil habits remain in them for ever; and were they capable subjects to sin (as when here on earth) they would eternally sin; nay, it is thought they will actually ever sin by blaspheming of God, &c., and therefore shall suffer those torments eternally.

Obj. But doth not the text say that the wicked shall be burned up, both root and branch, or be consumed, &c. Neither of these texts refer to the torments of hell: that in Mal. iv. 1 (as Mr. Cotton well observes) refers only to that internal and external wrath of God against the Jews, and Church of Israel, which began to burn against them in the ministry of John the Baptist; and God let it out at last to the utter burning up and consuming their Church-State, and left them not the root of Abraham's covenant, nor branches or the fruit of their own works and righteousness.

Infer. 3. From hence we may see how blind and deceived sinners are; what ignorance, folly, madness, and unbelief is in their hearts; they put the evil day far off, and neither regard nor fear the wrath of God, nor will they give credit to what he positively affirms in his holy word.

Infer. 4. We infer also from hence that ministers ought to preach on the torments of hell; they must be giving warning; "Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord we persuade men," 2 Cor. v. 11, that is, we persuade them to believe in Jesus Christ, and to fly to him from the wrath to come. Why did our Lord speak this parable, and also end so many of his parables after this manner, viz., "And shall be cast into a furnace of fire, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Ought not we to learn of him who was the great Gospel minister? Moreover, let all take heed how they reflect upon such ministers who do insist frequently upon such subjects, by calling them prodigal preachers; lest thereby they cast contempt upon our Lord himself.

Exhort. 5. Sinner, bless God you are yet out of hell. What improvement may we think the damned would make of one sermon (if it might be allowed them) in order to their taking hold of Christ, and so come out of that place; but alas! there is no grace, no mercy, nor means of grace allowed them for ever, there is no redemption out of hell.

Admirat. 6. O, let us also admire the infinite love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was pleased to bear God's severe and dismal wrath for us and in our stead, that we might never undergo it in our souls nor bodies.

Consol. 7. Moreover, what comfort and consolation may this administer to believers; the blessed Jesus hath suffered, not only to free us from the torments of hell, but also to purchase for us eternal joys in heaven, he hath delivered us from wrath to come.

Lastly, Poor sinners will you be wise, and remember your latter end. Will you think of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and labour to believe the truth of God's blessed Word about the future state of all men. You need not to have one to come from the dead to tell you what the joys of heaven are, nor how dismal the torments of hell are; for you have one represented in this parable, speaking in hell: O, hear his sighs and his groans, but if you will not believe God's word, if you will not believe Moses, nor the prophets, Christ, nor his apostles and ministers, neither would you believe, though one should rise from the dead to preach unto you. Know assuredly that nothing you can do can save you from hell. No, it is Christ alone, by what he hath done; and you must believe in Him or perish; and when you do believe truly you will soon find what a mighty change will be wrought in you. True faith is not without its powerful operations, there are sin-aborring, self-abasing, heart-purifying, and God and Christ-exalting operations, which always accompany the faith of God's elect. So much at this time.

SERMON XIX.

And he cried, father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." Luke xvi. 24.

THESE words show that this is a parable, for there is no converse between the saints in heaven and the damned in hell.

One design of our Saviour in these words, as I conceive, is,

1. To show, that the torments of hell are very dismal and intolerable.

2. To show that the damned have not the least ease, mitigation, or abatement of their pain and misery.

3. It may also show, that as wicked men were ignorant of the way of salvation, whilst they lived on earth; so that ignorance remains with them in hell. He cries to Abraham to have mercy on him, not to God nor to Jesus Christ. Alas! the best of the saints of God cannot help the distressed in this life. Can they show mercy to relieve sinners? They may pity them, instruct them, pray for them, but they cannot ease or relieve; none have mercy to bestow to help the miserable but God alone; indeed, if the saints could, yet they would not show mercy to such they know God will show none unto.

"To cool my tongue."

The soul hath no proper tongue, but as eyes, hands, a face, mouth, &c., are ascribed to God (who is an uncreated Spirit.) for several reasons I have formerly mentioned, so members of the body, and particularly a tongue, is ascribed here unto the soul of this condemned sinner. And it may be (as some think) because such a one as is here represented had blasphemed God, or grievously offended with his tongue; may be, by lying as well as swearing, or by reproaching, backbiting, and villifying the godly, and perhaps this poor beggar. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, and is set on fire of hell," Jam. iii. 5.

Doct. 1. The damned in hell would gladly receive the very smallest degree of ease, but it is denied them; not so much as one drop of water is allowed to allay that flame.

God will measure to them as they measured to others. "They shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy." As this wretch would show no pity to poor Lazarus in his sorrow, so he now has no pity, no mercy showed to him; no, not anything to mitigate, or abate his pain and anguish. All cries and tears in hell, avail nothing; their desires are all fruitless, as their pains are easeless and endless. The passions of the soul will abide for ever, both desire, horror, rage, grief, shame, and despair.

"But Abraham said "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

1. Note! the person here represented (it appears) was one of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh; and so, in that external covenant with him whilst he lived on earth, Abraham calls him Son, therefore a person being one of Abraham's seed, and in that covenant, Sirs, being the child of believing parents will avail no man; no, unless he be a Son of Abraham according to the covenant of grace made with him; which runs only to his true spiritual seed, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise," Gal. iii. 29. Therefore most evident it is, there was a twofold covenant made with Abraham, viz., The covenant of circumcision, and the free promise of God, "In thy seed (that is, Christ) shall all the families of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 3.

A twofold covenant made with Abraham.

The damned in hell remember what things they had when on earth, whether temporal and spiritual things.

2. Note! the good things which the damned once had will be brought to their remembrance; they shall call to mind their worldly riches, honours, and pleasures, and how their hearts were inordinately set upon those things; and also they will remember what means of grace was afforded them, which they slighted and utterly rejected. Moreover, how they slighted and neglected the poor.

Thou receivedst thy good things, that is, thou hast thy portion in the world. Many men have "Their portion in this life," Psal. xvii. 14. Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation; not because they are rich doth our Lord denounce a woe to them, but because they set their hearts upon their riches, trusting in them and despising the riches of grace and the glory of heaven; nor improving their riches to the honour of God, in supporting the common wealth, nor to the profit of their neighbours, the interest of Christ and his poor saints. Thou (as if Abraham

should say) didst desire no better things, and God answered thee according to the idols set up in thine own evil hearts.

And from hence note,

2. Doct. That some rich men have all their good things, or their portion only in this world.

From these men David desired to be delivered, "From men who are thy sword, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure, they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." P'sal. xvii. 14. They leave none of it to charitable uses, or not to Christ's servants to promote the gospel, nor to the poor saints: this very thing is a character of one that has his portion here; they leave all to their children or relations, and little or nothing for the other great purposes.

Doct. 3. That according to their unsatisfied desires, God answers some men's carnal hearts, in judgment and wrath, and not in love nor mercy to them.

1. God may give some men earthly riches to discover the abominable evil that is in their hearts; he this way tries them, and, for the neglect of due improvement of what they possess, will be the aggravation of their sin and misery.

2. Hereby God seems to deal with them (as some men serve rebellious children) viz., put them off of the inheritance, by leaving them a shilling in their last will and testament. Wicked men who have abundance of the world may justly fear that God designs to cut them off the inheritance above; they are stubborn and rebellious persons, and as such God deals with them. Alas! all the riches of this world comparatively is not one shilling to that crown of glory above, or inheritance in heaven.

God deals with some rich men as a man with a rebellious child.

Again observe,

Doct. 4. The remembrance of those good things the damned had when on earth will greatly afflict them in hell and augment their sorrow.

I shall a little open, and enlarge upon this truth, by giving a few reasons why it will afflict them, &c.

1. Because they see what fools they were. Wicked men think themselves to be wise above others whilst they live, and are never convinced of their folly till they come to hell; and may they not cry out against themselves, for placing their chiefest happiness in such thing, which could not answer the wants of their souls whilst they lived. What folly is it to esteem the creature above the creator.

2. They thought the people of God, who were exposed to reproaches, persecutions, and many sorrows in the world, to be the worst of fools; but to see them afar off in glory will tend to convince them and discover their folly, and cause the remembrance of the saints (whom they abused) to be very grievous to them.

3. The remembrance of the shortness of their outward happiness will afflict them, that they for one day's delight and pleasure should lose eternal or endless glory, and incur everlasting misery.

4. They will remember their horrid infidelity, and how the devil deceived them; they believing the father of lies, and disbelieved all which the holy God said and testified, and deriding his ministers, then they will say, "How did we hate instruction, and obeyed not the voice of our teachers, nor inclined our ears to them that instructed us," Prov. v. 12, 13.

USE.

1. Let none call the rich happy unless they are gracious it may be feared: that but few rich men are good men; and though they seem happy here, yet are like to be miserable hereafter; these men bless themselves, and many foolish creatures bless them. But alas! the holy God blesseth them not, they are under his curse. "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth," P'sal. x. 3.

2. Consider that the remembrance of sensual delights will not allay but augment the misery of the damned; if pain here extinguish all the pleasures of the senses, and if actual enjoyments cannot afford delight to the body afflicted with tormenting diseases, what will the reflections upon past pleasures in the fancy and memory terrify the damned in extreme torment. Saith Dr. Bates, "The remembrance will infinitely increase their anguish, that for such seeming and short pleasures they brought upon themselves misery intolerable."

3. Let such who are rich, if not gracious, always remember this rich man, and behold him first in his purple robes, (and perhaps) with a chain of gold about his neck, riding in his chariot, with many servants attending on him; also his table spread with all delicious food,

whilst concerts of ravishing music and sweet melody soundeth in his ears, and multitudes bowing down before him; and then presently behold him as he is in another world, deprived of all his honour, and none to attend him but devils; and, instead of music, nothing but the horror of a guilty conscience continually following him, while his soul lies burning and is tormented in dismal flames. Also, behold him in his first state possessed with all that grandeur but for one hour, and in his other (or last) state for millions of years; nay, to all eternity: and you will conclude the rich who are ungodly are miserable creatures, and such to be abominable fools that desire their portion here.

“And Lazarus his evil things, but now he is comforted,” &c.,

A godly man hath all his evil things in this world, which friendly and kind death delivers him for ever from; sweet death puts an end to all his sorrows and begins his everlasting joys, when the sorrows of the righteous end then the sorrows and miseries of the wicked being; or as death opens heaven to all believers, so it opens hell to an ungodly sinner: when death comes the souls of the righteous are comforted, and the souls of the wicked are tormented: when it is spring-time with one, it is winter with the other; “One sings for joy of heart, the other shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit;” Isa. lxxv. 14. Whilst the one drinks and is abundantly satisfied with the rivers of God’s pleasure, the other is thirsty, and has not one drop of water, either to allay his thirst nor ease his pain; and as no comforts are like soul-comforts, so no torments are like to hell torments; and as their is no place of joy and delight like the celestial Paradise, so there is no place of sorrow, like the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Moreover, as the pangs of hell cause the damned to forget all his former good things, joys, and delights, so as no ways to please him, so the joys of heaven cause the saved to forget his former sorrow and miseries, so as no ways to grieve him.

Doct. 5. The day of death is the day of a believer’s joy and comfort, and of the wicked’s sorrow.

The godly sowed in tears, but then reap in joy; “Light is sown for the righteous,” Psa. cxvii. 11; and death is the harvest of that light, and joy for ‘all the upright in heart; and death is the harvest of that joy. Do the wicked think they shall always rejoice, and the godly always mourn? no, no, as the joys of the one are but for a moment, so the sorrows of the other but for a moment in this world; and as the joys of the one in the other will be eternal so will the sorrow and miseries of the other in the other world never have an end, but be eternal also. How should he want comfort that enters into his master’s joy? can God comfort his people? can Christ comfort them? can the Holy Ghost comfort them? can the fruition of God comfort them? can all the joys, the unmixt joys, soul-ravishing, soul-satisfying joys comfort them? can all the joys of heaven comfort them, even joys that are unspeakable and full of glory? Then they shall be comforted, and that also when the wicked shall be tormented.

1. God is their God, who is the God of all comfort; and, when death comes, that is God’s time to let out the greatness of his comforts to his saints.

2. Comfort is promised to them that mourn, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,” Matt. v. 4; such that mourn under the sense of the evil of sin, and the evil of their own hearts.

3. They must needs have comfort in respect to their state, being delivered from all discomforts and sorrows whatsoever; and are in a sweet, comfortable place, and with sweet and comfortable company. Who can want comfort that are with Christ in paradise?

4. God hath ordained or appointed everlasting comfort for all true mourners, and his decree and counsels shall be accomplished. “As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you and ye shall be comforted,” &c., Isa. lxxvi. 13. It will be soul-comfort, and comfort without sorrow, yea, and eternal comfort.

U S E.

1. I infer, That you that are godly, though poor in this world, may lift up your heads and sing, for though you have sorrow here, sorrow now, yet you shall be comforted, being delivered from whatsoever is evil, and possess whatsoever is truly good, and when you die you shall partake thereof.

2. Who would that is godly be afraid to die, or fear death: who that is sorrowful, but would be comforted; and what you want of it now, you shall have hereafter; though your life be a life of sorrow, your death will be comfortable: O, what a vast difference is there between the state of believers at death and the state of sinners.

3. Bear up under your present troubles: God gives you, now and then, comfort in the midst of your sorrows here, and will pour joy and comfort into your souls like a river

hereafter, when wrath will be poured into the souls of the wicked, how full of earthly comforts soever they seem to be now; when your comforters, remember, come, they will never abate nor end. You shall never see one dark or uncomfortable day more, but ever be with the Lord; therefore when your godly friends die, "Do not mourn as others, who have no hope, but comfort one another with these words."

4. Let the wicked howl and mourn bitterly, for they shall at death be tormented; their comforts are short-lived and the days of their sorrows will be many.

Besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, &c. ver. 26.

This gulf that is fixed, some think, is God's eternal decree. My brethren this shows that the happiness of the saints in heaven is unalterable, and the miserable state of the damned in hell is also unalterable; the glorified in heaven are fixed there for ever, the one cannot pass to the other they can neither change their place nor their company.

The wicked can neither return again or live on earth, nor can they go to heaven; all their hopes of being saved die when they die: their expectation perishes, and Prov. xi. 7. all means of grace cease: the door of mercy is shut for ever: they are in a bottomless pit out of which they can never get; but are bound in chains of everlasting darkness. The power of God and his wrath as it is fierce, so it is irresistible, and his will is unalterable: the decrees of God are compared to mountains of brass, Zech. vi. 1.

Sinners tremble; O, what a dreadful God do you provoke! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. xii. 29. If you know not what it is to sin against God now, you shall hereafter; and when you come to hell there you must abide, justice will hold you fast, "Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out hence, until thou hast paid the utmost farthing," Matt. v. 26.

2. Will you remember what sin will bring you to; why do you put the evil day far from you; death may be nearer than you are aware of, and that is the evil day to all Christless sinners, then they go to hell; dare you defer seeking Jesus Christ, "boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what one day may bring forth," Prov. xxvii. 1.

3. O, dread death, how can you think of death, and are in your sins, and without God, without Christ, and without hope; that is, without any true and well-grounded hope; Eph. ii. 12; be persuaded to lay these things to heart, and labour to improve the means of grace, and prepare for death, and bless God you are yet out of hell.

SERMON XX.

Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my Father's house;

For I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place.—Luke. xvi. 27, 28.

No doubt, but our Saviour represents a man in the parable whose Father's house and brethren were like himself, viz., wicked or ungodly. Here are several things to be considered.

1. The rich man's request, which was, that Abraham would send Lazarus from heaven to the earth: he would employ him in a great work, whom, when on earth, he would not allow the crumbs that fell from his table.

2. To whom he would have him be sent, viz., to his Father's house and to the five brethren.

3. The message itself, viz., to testify to them; that is, declare the great danger they were in, of going to hell when they die, and so feel that torment which he himself actually felt: let him declare what a woeful condition I am in, and what a blessed state he himself is in; let him assure my five brethren, that there is a dreadful God, and a hot hell prepared for all that provoke this God, and live wicked lives, and regard not their precious souls.

It cannot be thought that there is pity among the damned, or love to the souls of sinful men; they care not (as one observes) how many are as miserable as themselves; having a diabolical nature.

Saith another, it is most undoubted that there is no real charity among the damned to the souls of their survivors, nor any true zeal for their salvation, &c.

1. Therefore (as our annotators observe) he prayeth not for them, but for

himself, that his torments might not be increased, or aggravated by his brethren's continuing in their sins, and so come to hell also; whom, perhaps, he, by his wretched life (or atheistical notions), had hardened in ungodly ways, whilst he lived among them. A grave author (as our annotators note) saith, that he prayeth not for them but for himself, that he might not be more miserable by their company, who upon earth were his relations, and dear unto him. But another, I think, speaks more to the purpose: take his words, viz., "It is most probable that the main reason which swayed the rich man to the making this request was the fear of the aggravation of his own torment by the continued sin and future damnation of his brethren then living on the earth, so that whatsoever he pretendeth, or appeareth at first sight, self was at the bottom. But we must (as he saith) remember that our Saviour here speaketh in a figure, and that which he intendeth by these expressions to instruct us in is no more than this, i. e., that all atheistical, rich, proud, and haughty persons, who in this life make a mock at hell and the wrath of God, and despise the poor servants of God, who by their doctrine, holy life, and good example taught them better things, yet shall find the fire of hell so hot, and the wrath of God so terrible and intollerable, that if it were possible they would gladly receive any relief from such ministers or persons, whom in their live's time they hated and despised (and were it possible for them, to have natural affections or bowels in them when in hell); they would beg the favour of them, to forewarn any whom they loved (who are out of hell) to leave their ways, and believe in Christ, and accept salvation on any terms, though themselves they see are past all hope of recovery.

But to proceed a little further on this, God, no doubt, will punish the wicked not only for their own sins, in which others partook not, but also for drawing of others into sin, either by actual enticements or by their example strengthened, and encouraged them to pursue the like horrid lusts and evil courses; some "Walk in the counsel of the ungodly." Psal. i. 1, 2. We read of some that caused others to sin; how often is Jeroboam branded with this brand, i. e. he "Who made Israel to sin." O, then, how dismal will the state of impostors be! who by false doctrine and heresies have deceived and eternally ruined thousands of souls, as well as such who entice persons to steal, or to drunkenness, or to uncleanness, &c. And, O, what torments shall the devils have, who have tempted so many millions to sin against God, to the eternal destruction of their souls. Also, such sinners, who have been instruments to draw many souls to commit cursed acts of sin, or that have been ringleaders to wickedness, be sure shall have a hot hell. Nay, my brethren, if just and righteous endeavours are not used to dissuade others from their sinful ways, it may provoke God; he hath punished some men in this life in indulging their children in sin, or not endeavouring to restrain them from acts of great wickedness, as in Ely's case; and he may punish others in hell for ever, for their great wickedness in this respect; how do some by their own evil example rather encourage their children in abominable acts of sin rather than forwarn them or strive to restrain them from it; and by sending them to dancing schools, &c. to such places where they can learn nothing but evil and cursed practises.

U S E.

1. Learn from hence not to be partakers of other men's sins: this may be done many ways; which here I shall not speak to. But,

2. Much more learn to avoid drawing others into sin. Look to it, you that entice others to drunkenness, or to uncleanness; or to hear false teachers, such that deny the Christ of God, or that preach not justification and salvation by Christ alone. You may bring the blood of such persons upon your own souls, and not perish yourselves only, but be instruments of their destruction, also, though all ignorantly done, "Take heed who you hear." Our days in this case are very perilous.

Be sure take heed you be not ringleaders to wickedness, nor into any false way, notions, and opinions.

The person here represented, it is concluded, had been an evil instrument to blind, and harden his brethren in some wicked ways or another; and so feared his torments might be augmented if they, through that means, came to the place of torment.

But to proceed,

"Abraham said, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." ver. 29.

And he said, "Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent." ver. 30.

"And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," ver. 31.

1. Note, it is no small blessing to have the written word, or God's sacred oracles: "Moses and the prophets were until John," Luke xvi. 16; that is, they were the chief external means God afforded his people to direct them into the way of life until John; but we have not only the Old Testament, or Moses and the prophets, but the holy doctrine of Christ and his apostles; we have the New Testament also, and so much clearer light than such had who lived under the ministration of the law, or in the times of the old prophets.

2. See the blindness of men's hearts, and the vainness of their imaginations. Alas! hell removes not that infidelity, folly, and ignorance that is in them; they remain in the same mind and filled with the same idle fancies and dreams that possessed them when on earth. Hell is no place of conversion. Sinners think that way to be the most effectual to bring them to repentance which God hath not ordained; they stop their ears, or are deaf to the voice of God's word, and think some sensible evidence (either of future joys in heaven, or of the wrath of God in hell) will work more powerfully on the hearts of sinners than the revelation of the word, or the preaching thereof; they oppose their fancies to divine oracles, or God's sacred institutions; "They have, saith the Lord, chosen their own ways," Isa. lxi. 3; they will give the preference to what proceeds out of their imaginations; like as the "Jews and Pharisees, who made void the commandments of God through their traditions," Matt. xv. 6; or are like the people of old, "Who refused the waters of Shiloh, that went softly and rejoiced in Rezen, and Remaliah's Son," Isa. viii. 6; or esteemed the word of God as a small and contemptible book, and rather adhered to the lofty and proud notions of silly mortals. "Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the rivers of Israel," said Naaman, the Syrian, 2 Kings v. 12. The cause of this (as one notes) ^{Reverend} is their pride and arrogance, together with self-love; as likewise, that rebellion ^{Cruso.} and perverseness there is in their hearts against God, and no doubt Satan is not wanting in stirring them up through his malice, to contradict the wisdom, appointment, and authority of God; he knowing hereby the Holy God will be provoked, and that he will pour forth his wrath upon them for opposing his sovereign will and pleasure. For sinners hereby seem to intimate that their wisdom exceeds the wisdom of God, as if they knew what ways would sooner bring men to repentance than God himself; which is to confront divine wisdom, and so inexcusable presumption. Let this be a caution and warning to all such who go about to set up their post by God's post, or bring in their superstitious worship and vain traditions, as if God was negligent, or had omitted such things that would tend much to his own honour, and the profit of men's souls. "Vain man would be wise, though man is born like a wild ass's colt," Job xi. 12; i. e., he would be ^{Caryl.} wise beyond his line (saith one) or in things above him; though he is but like a brutish creature, yet would magnify his wisdom above the wisdom of God. O, ye children of men when will you leave your folly, and strive to bring down high thoughts that exalt themselves in you, against the will, pleasure, and authority of God, and submit to him before he draws forth his sword, and cuts you off in his anger.

"They have Moses and the prophets," &c.

That is, They have their writings, or those divine oracles, that God appointed as the chief outward means to deter men from sin, and to direct them into the way of salvation. They, my brethren, that lived before John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles (as I hinted before), had only the Old Testament, but it may be said, we who live in these gospel times have Christ the Son of God sent from heaven, whom "God hath spoken unto us in these last days," Heb. i. 1, 2; whose holy doctrine is laid down in the writings of the evangelist and the holy apostles. True, the Old Testament testified of Christ, Moses pointed unto Christ, the Shadows of the law and sacrifices held forth Jesus Christ, and the prophets prophesied of Christ, but yet that was but a dark dispensation of the gospel; and hence it is said, "Many prophets and kings desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them," Luke x. 34. That is, to see Christ come in the flesh, and to behold the vail taken off, and so to see with open face as in a glass, the glory of God shining forth in the ministration of the gospel. But let no man mistake me, the law is still of great use, and the old testament is of the same authority with the new, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable," &c.; the law convinceth of sin, and discovers the woeful state and condition all sinners naturally are in, and God, by Moses and the prophets, denounceth wrath against all ungodly sinners; but yet pray know that we are only to receive the law now from the hands of Christ, or from the mouth of our high priest. Moses, as a teacher, was not to abide in the house for ever; his ministration of the law abides not, though the

law as it is in the hand of Christ, abides as a rule of righteousness for ever. And from hence note ;

Doct. That it is no small blessing and privilege for a people to have the written Word of God, especially the Gospel or New Testament, i. e., the writings of the evangelists, and holy apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This I shall endeavour to demonstrate, and show wherein the written Word of God is of such great use.

Wherein the word of God is of useful, nay, of absolute necessity.

1. The Word of God is of such great use that without the knowledge of it what can men know in any nation of the world concerning God, &c., but only mere natural religion, or what is made known by the light of natural conscience, through the help of the visible things of the creation : for the Heathen or Pagan world know no more, nor any people on earth who never had God's written Word, nor conversed with any persons who had the knowledge of them ; they may know the being of a God, together with his glory, wisdom, and mighty power, considered as a creator, " The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament show his handy work," *Psa. xix. 1.* " For the invisible things of Him from the beginning of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse," *Rom. i. 20.* But they show nothing of Christ, or report nothing of a redeemer ; nor can any know this, but by the revelation of the holy Scripture.

The Jews had the advantage of the Gentiles, in having the written word of God, or the law.

The pagan world know nothing of Christ.

The pagan world know nothing of Christ.

2. Moreover, such is the usefulness of the written Word that upon this respect the apostle shows that the Jews had the advantage of the Gentiles, viz., " Because unto them were committed the oracles of God," *Rom. iii. 2.* For God only gave his laws and statutes unto Israel, some of which God wrote with his own finger, and he commanded Moses to write them in a book ; " He showed his Word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation, as for his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord," *Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20.*

3. Matter of fact proves that all men remain ignorant of Christ and salvation who have not nor ever heard of the sacred Scriptures, by which means it evidently appears that this great and importunate matter only depends upon revelation ; for such who have conversed with the Pagan or Heathen people found them altogether ignorant of the very name of Christ ; they never heard of any such person, much less of that blessed sacrifice he offered up to God for sin, and of faith in him, " For how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard," *Rom. x. 14.*

4. This further appears, for though (as the apostle shows) " God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the Fathers by the prophets, hath in these last times spoken unto us by his Son," &c., *Heb. i. 1, 2.* By the Lord Jesus Christ only, as the last great prophet he promised to raise up, to reveal his mind and will unto the sons of men, whose holy doctrine, together with what he hath done and suffered, he commanded to be written, and to this very end, that men might know and believe in him ; though all things our Lord did are not written, yet so many things are left upon sacred record, that God saw was necessary for us to know, in order to instruction, reproof, correction, comfort, and eternal salvation, " But these things are written that ye might know Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name," *John xx. 31.* This shows the absolute necessity of the writings of the New Testament ; God being pleased this way only to reveal or make known the blessed Saviour ; and to make his Word as it is wrote and opened in the ministration of the Gospel his ordinary way to work faith through the spirit in the souls of men : saith Paul, " I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." Why so, or how comes this to pass ? " For therein is the righteousness of God revealed," &c., *Rom. i. 16, 17.* It is thereby revealed and no other way except God doth it in some extraordinary or miraculous manner, who being a free agent may step out of his own ordinary and instituted way if he please ; but it is not revealed to any, by the light that is within all men, nor by the visible things that are made, &c.

5. The holy Scripture is (as the apostle shows) every way useful by God's ordination, being given by inspiration of God, or by holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, " All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works," *2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.* There is nothing needful for us to know or be instructed in, but is contained in the written Word

of God, though they are not understood by any without the Holy Spirit opens them to us, and works faith in our souls.

6. And lastly, the written word (it appears from hence) is the only rule both of faith and practice; and, indeed, should this be denied, God hath left us no certain rule at all, as hereafter I shall (God assisting) endeavour to prove, which cannot stand consistent with the wisdom and goodness of his holy majesty. Therefore, the sacred oracles should be held in highest esteem, being beyond all pretended visions, dreams, or apparitions whatsoever.

And from hence, we may see the great blindness of this wicked creature in hell, who conceived that if one rose from the dead to tell his five brethren, the state of the dead in the other world, they would believe or be persuaded; who would not be prevailed with so to do by the written word of God; indeed he was for a sign, like as the Jews were: "What sign showest thou, that we may believe on thee? As if those miracles our Lord did, were not sufficient to confirm his holy doctrine. And thus it appears, that those who have not the written word of God, have not the greatest blessing under heaven; they are with the means God has appointed, to bring men out of darkness into light, and have no ways or means afforded them, to reveal Christ to them; they are without that stated and established rule and way of faith and conversion, and so left in a dismal condition.

U S E.

1. O, prize God's holy Word, esteem the law of his mouth above thousands of gold and silver, as David did: value it above your lives, account it your greatest riches, prefer it more than mines of gold.

2. Labour to believe the truths contained therein, never doubt of the verity of God's word; conclude all such thoughts that may be darted into your minds to question the veracity of the sacred Bible are from the devil.

3. Expect no new revelation from God, for God hath established his Word for ever, he will not alter the thing that is gone out of His mouth; heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot or tittle of God's Word shall pass away. Expect no new revelation, nor any other prophet to be raised up, to discover the mind of God to you, or to make void any thing that is not written, or to teach you otherwise to believe, act, or do, that you may be saved.

4. Entreat God to bless his own blessed means, or his avowed and established institution, to your conviction, and conversion, and eternal salvation. O, take up and read, search the Scripture, neglect not reading your holy Bible, and pray that God would give you wisdom to understand what you read; pray over the Word which is 1 Pet. i. 18;
& ii. 1, 2. the immortal seed, by which the babe of grace is begotten and nourished.

5. Know that the Word of Christ remains just as you find it written, even every precept every ordinance, every promise, without any alteration, additions to it, or diminution from it: therefore have no regard to any who press things upon you as truths of Christ that are not written; for the precepts of Christ are laid down in the New Testament very plainly, the faithfulness of the Son exceeding the care and faithfulness of Moses, who was but a servant in God's house. The Jews had made void many of the commandments of God through their traditions, which from the beginning were not so. No Church, no people, or person under heaven, have any power to alter anything left in Christ's last will and testament; and such that add thereto or diminish therefrom are Deut. iv. 1.
Rev. xxii. 18.
Prov. xxx. 6. pronounced accursed.

7. Be aware of those men who contemn the holy Scripture, and such who strive to render it to be contradictory to itself, and full of falsities, and commend natural light above it, or those who pretend to inspiration and extraordinary revelation, and cry up their cursed books to be of equal authority with the holy Bible; nay, indeed, magnify their detestable nonsensical scribbling above those sacred oracles: the holy Scripture, they call a dead letter (as the Papists call it a noise of wax) but their own books are called light and life, a word from God is the voice of God, &c.

Lastly, take heed you do not receive the Word of God's grace in vain, but strive to mix faith with it, for otherwise it would not profit you anything, or at least not be made an instrument of God's power to the salvation of your souls.

SERMON XXI.

And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.—Luke xvi. 31.

I SHALL from hence note,

Doct. That the written word of God is of divine authority, and therefore is above all pretended inspirations or apparitions of the dead, &c., and so of great efficacy to bring men to believe.

In speaking to this proposition I shall,

1. Lay down several arguments to confirm the truth of this doctrine.
2. Prove that the sacred scriptures as read (especially as preached and opened in the ministry of such men Christ hath sent, or authorized to preach) hath far more efficacy to bring men to believe, than any pretended immediate revelation, or than if one should rise from the dead.
3. Show you how the sacred scriptures should be heard, when faithfully preached.

Note this by the way, that it is no wonder that such who doubt whether the holy Scripture be of divine authority, find not the power and efficacy of them upon their own hearts; for who will regard that which they are ready to believe is a more devised fable or contrivance of man's own brain. Some men in these days, do, indeed count it but an idle tale, too many atheistical wretches are in these times, and God having left them withdraws all the operations of his Spirit from them.

Note these arguments and more fully laid down in my Key to Open Scripture Metaphors.

But to proceed,

The sublime matter of the Scriptures prove they are of divine authority.

Argu. I. My first argument to prove the divine authority of the holy Scriptures shall be taken from the matter contained in them, and their sublime style: certainly this proves they are not of an human product, what writings carry in them or discover such amazing mysteries?

1. What human brain could have imagined a Trinity in the Godhead, or have given such an account of the manner of God's existence, or of the Person of the Son of God in taking our nature on him, or into union with his own divine person; or would not God have showed his abhorrence of such an attempt long ago. Had the declaration of those things been the contrivance of any wicked man's brains, certainly divine vengeance had been quickly poured out upon such a person or persons, who should give a false account of the blessed Deity, as existing in the three sacred Persons; that so the generation of the righteous might not be deceived in, and about the object of divine worship; though in many cases the patience of God seems wonderful: but such things, sure, could not consist with his truth, wisdom, love and holiness to bear with.

2. The holy scripture only gives an account of the beginning of the world, which men by natural light have given full demonstrations could not be from eternity, but had a beginning; but deny the holy scriptures to be true, or from God. It is impossible for us to know how they were created, or how long since, or how long God was in creating of it, and all things that are therein; and can it be imagined that the holy God would keep mankind (for whom he made this world) ignorant of this important matter.

3. The Scripture only gives an account of sin, and discovers how, and by whom it came into the world; and unless men believe the truth of the scripture, men may deny that there is such evil in it, or that sinners must be punished in another for it.

4. What an amazing account is there given in the holy scripture of that covenant, that was between the Father and the Son before the world was made; and revealed as soon as man had sinned: could such things have ever entered into the hearts of men, what purity and wonderful equity, is there contained in every precept of the holy law; and how is the substance of the matter contained therein, confirmed by the light in every man's natural conscience.

4. What a self-denying doctrine doth the scripture bear witness unto, directly opposite to the whole corporation of debauched mankind, being utterly destructive to all men's carnal interest and to all impiety.

What foolish and imperfect rules of life, with the end and design of a holy life are those of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Tully, Seneca, &c., when compared to the holy scriptures,

or the best and wisest of mere natural men, who have wrote of moral and Divine things.

Argu. II. My second argument shall be taken from the antiquity of the Scriptures; the writings of Moses being the first that ever were in the world (next to those wrote by the finger of God himself on mount Sinai): this Justin Martyr hath fully proved, who lived one hundred and thirty years after Christ; the same also is most excellently proved by Tertullian. And, indeed, if the Scripture be not of God, then Moses is a grand impostor, and the first religion a mere counterfeit, and that the devil set up his chapel before God built his Church. Since Moses' writings contained a platform of worship, of any notice, and given of God himself, and the first that ever the world knew, so that it would follow from hence, that the world's origin, the fall of man, and the way of his recovery, is all a cheat and delusion, and the Jewish worship, and all the sacrifices were devices of some wicked man or men; which is enough to cause all who deny the divine authority of the holy Scriptures to tremble.

The antiquity of the Scriptures shows they are of God.

Justin Martyr in his Paraenetic to the Greeks Tertul. 1. Apology, cap. 19.

Argu. III. Consider the majesty and authoritativeness of the Spirit of God speaking in them, and that extraordinary and inimitable style wherein they are written: the style of the sacred Scripture is singular, they teach with awful authority, and have peculiar properties not found in other writings; its simplicity is joined with majesty commanding the veneration of all serious men. Not like the writings of men, filled with elaborate blandishments, or human elegancy, that tickle the ear and fancy, and relish with the flesh. Commands here are given forth, and subjection peremptorily required with great severity; and no stronger arguments than the will of the law-maker; promises made unlikely to be accomplished, yet assurance of performance, though no other reason alleged, but "I, the Lord, have spoken," Isa. li. 22, and lii. 4. And to encourage against the greatest difficulties imaginable, that a man might believe in hope against hope, or things utterly impossible in the eye of sense and reason, nothing is added but "I will come, and Sarah shall have a son," &c. Also the divinity of the style may be observed, that, without respect of persons, all degrees of men are commanded, high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, kings and peasants, and such things, too, most distateful to their natures, forbidding what they approve, and promising not earthly honour but everlasting life, threatening, not with rack and gibbet, but with eternal pains and torments in hell-fire.

The majesty and authoritativeness and style of the holy scripture, show they are of divine original.

Of all writings in the world, the sacred Scriptures assume most unto themselves, telling us, they are the Word of God, the words of eternal life, and given out by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the testimony of Jesus, the faithful witness, John xii. 48; and that they shall judge the world, 2 Tim. iii. 16; that they are able to make men wise unto salvation, Rev. ii. 19; that they are the immortal seed, Exod. xx. 1. 2; their tenor is, "Thus saith the Lord," 1 Pet. i. 23; and no conclusion but "The Lord hath spoken," "Hear the word of the Lord," "He that hath an ear to hear let him hear." The nature, quality, or composure of the style and phrase of the Scripture, we say, is emphatical and signally different from all human writings. Here is no apology begging pardon of the reader, or insinuating into his good opinion by the art of rhetoric, but a stately plainness and mysterious simplicity. The Scripture so speaketh (saith Augustine) "That with the height of it it laughs proud and lofty spirited men to scorn, yet feeds men of the greatest knowledge and understanding, and nourisheth babes and sucklings."

Argu. IV. That excellent Spirit of holiness, which every where breathes in, and from the scriptures, show of whose framing they are: to this holiness they most powerfully persuade by amazing expressions and commands, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" requiring men to be righteous and holy, and yet to behold themselves filthy, and not to trust to their own inherent holiness, nor to boast or glory, but to be ashamed and loath themselves after they have attained to the highest degree, while here in this world they are capable of arriving at, assuring that "No man without holiness shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. And yet that their holiness is none of their title to eternal happiness, but that they must be found in the righteousness of another, and that their own is as but filthy rags; yet censuring men to eternal burning, not only for the outward acts of sin, but inward lusts of their hearts. From whence can such pure streams flow, but from the fountan of all perfections. Doth such a design to advance holiness and utterly debase man look as if it was the intrigue of any polluted and proud mortals, and which discovers such a way of attaining to righteousness and ever-

The excellent holiness that breathes forth in the Scriptures, proves their divine original.

lasting happiness, that lies above the reach, thoughts, invention, and comprehension of the wisest of mere natural men.

The harmony of the Scripture proves they are God's holy oracles.

Argum. V. The sweet and admirable agreement, consent, dependence and harmony that we find in all and every part of the holy Scriptures prove their divinity, though there are so many books contained in them and written by so many different persons of various conditions, in different ages, in several places, and in different languages, yet all agreeing with each other, and every part with the whole; which could not be foreseen or contrived by any human wisdom or subtilties of men in writing any one part thereof; for all the histories, prophecies, promises, types, and doctrines in an orderly connection, tend to promote the same thing, and one admirably subservient to the other; and every age proves a fresh interpreter, and reveals to us more and more of this glorious concord and harmony, which could not be the effect of human artifice, nor of any other cause, but an infinite comprehension and foresight, and that the several writers of this book were in all times guided in what they wrote by the supreme wisdom of that one God, who is always constant to himself, and the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

The credit and sincerity of the penmen of the holy Scripture prove they are of God.

Argum. VI. Consider yet further, the credit and sincerity of the penmen of the sacred scriptures; for were they not what they pretend to be, viz., the Word of God, and dictated to the writers thereof by the Spirit of God, it would be the greatest affront to the Divine Majesty imaginable, and the greatest cheats towards mankind, that ever was put upon the world; but if we consider the penmen thereof we shall find them all of undoubted credit, and no ways to be suspected of imposture; some of them being kings, and of the deepest learning, not likely to be guilty of such a mean and base spirit, as to vent odious lies and forgery. Moreover, many of the prophets, and almost all the apostles were illiterate men, of parts and education so mean that of themselves it seems impossible they should write so profoundly, or lay so deep a contrivance for deluding the world; and, as it is incredible that so many men of such a distance, times, qualities, and abilities should all agree in the same imposture, and so harmonize in promoting it. So neither could any interest nor ambition prompt them thereunto; for, as in the main tendency of this book is to notify men's ambition and lusts, so most of them exposed themselves by publishing these writings to great hazards and persecutions. Many of the prophets, and almost all the apostles, being put to death in maintaining the things asserted and wrote by them; nor have several of them forebore to record their own great sins, failings, and imperfections, together with those of their brethren.

Thus Moses relates his own infidelity and averseness to submit to the extraordinary call of God. What an account have we of Noah and Lot, Jacob, David, and Solomon, and Peter's great sins and falls. Now, had the penman of the Scripture wrote only by a human spirit, or had they been impostors, be sure they would have hid or concealed their own and their brethren's gross iniquities; but no doubt those sins of theirs were by the Lord left on record for many grand and good causes; and one among the rest might be to support poor believers, who, through temptations, may fall fully, and that they might from thence have hope, that the root of the matter may be in them, though Satan and their own evil hearts might be too hard for them.

Argum. VII. My next argument shall be taken from the accomplishment, and punctual accomplishment of the prophecies of the Scripture to foretell events, which is the prerogative of God alone. Let them bring forth (saith God) what shall happen; or show us things that are to come hereafter, that we may know them" (Isa. xli. 22). Now, my brethren, the body of the Scriptures is enlivened with the spirit of prophecy almost throughout, and what a full and convincing prophecy is that of Jacob (recorded by Moses), i. e., "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a law giver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," Gen. xlix. 10. This was not fulfilled till near two thousand years after. The first part was made good all along, from the entrance of the tribe of Judah upon the government in king David, until the going of it off in the person of Hircanus, whom Herod slew, as Josephus testifies; but when Herod, a stranger, and of another nation, had cut off the house and line of Judah from the government of the Jews, then, at that very time, Shiloh, viz., the long expected Messiah, punctually came into the world. That by Shiloh the Messiah was meant, the Jewish Rabbins do not deny, which, being well considered, one would think might convince the Jews their Messiah is long since come. But, however, what a plain and wonderful confirmation in this prediction of the sacred verity of the Scripture; also I might mention that concerning Cyrus, foretold

by the prophet Isaiah one hundred years before he was born, and how he should conquer Babylon, and rebuild the temple at Jerusalem; which came to pass accordingly. As also the seventy years' captivity of the Jews by the Babylonians. Moreover, Daniel's prophecy of the four monarchs, and of the fourth or Roman monarch, which, as he foretold, should be so much different from all the others before it, and of the rise of Antichrist signified by the little horn, Dan 7, who should wear out the saints which the whole world long since hath seen exactly come to pass. And also, that of Daniel's seventy weeks, discovering the very time when the Messiah should be cut off, which was punctually fulfilled accordingly. Also, if we come unto the New Testament times, how fully were the predictions of our Saviour accomplished, touching the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and also Paul's predictions of the revelation of the Man of Sin, and John's prophecies in his revelations, of the general apostacy from the Christian faith; and the rise and tyranny of the Papacy, or the Church of Rome, under the name of Mystery Babylon; together with the time of the Beast's reign for forty and two months, and state of the witnesses of Christ in sack-² Thes. ii. 8. cloth for one thousand two hundred and sixty years all these prophecies do abundantly rove the truth and divine authority of the holy Scripture.

Argum. VIII. Those writings and doctrine, that was confirmed by real and wonderful miracles must needs be of God; but the books and doctrine of canonical Scriptures were so confirmed. What miracles did Moses work by the finger of God in Egypt, and at the Red Sea to confirm the Jewish religion, or the truth of the Old Testament. And, also, how amazing were they wrought by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, to confirm he was the true Messiah, and to confirm the doctrine of Christianity, or the truths of the New Testament, which, as to matter of fact, none dare or can deny, for those miracles were not done in a corner: the very Turks deny not the miracles of our Lord, and Josephus makes mention of them in his history of the wars of the Jews. When God puts forth his miraculous working power, in the confirmation of any word or doctrine (saith reverend Owen) he avows it to be of and from himself, or to be absolutely and infallibly true, setting the fullest and openest seal unto it, which men who cannot discern his essence or being are capable of receiving or discerning, &c.; the worst enemies of the Christian religion cannot deny the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord. Moreover, take notice of this, i. e., that the devil can work no real miracles, for could he, what mortal might he not deceive? all the miracles which he, or his instruments pretend to work, the Lord calls lying wonders; those miracles in the primitive times, sirs, did not soon cease in the Church. For I find, that Irenæus who lived near two hundred years after Christ, declares that miracles were not ceased in his time, but that in the name of Christ "The dead were raised, and devils cast out," in his days.

The scripture confirmed by miracles.

Argum. IX. I might add the wonderful preservation of the holy Scriptures for so many ages, which, indeed, seems to me to be none of the least of miracles, considering what enemies they have met withal; certainly, if they belonged not to God, as the author and parent of them, they had not continued to this day. For why should God suffer such a book to remain, and be under his peculiar care, declaring itself to be of his dictation, if falsely pretending to his name and authority? Many works of eminent men are lost, but the sacred Bible continues in spite of the wrath and malice of men and devils. What, the holy God suffer a book to remain, calling itself the Word of God? If it was not indeed so, be sure it had been obliterated and blotted out long ago; but since it hath surmounted all difficulties and oppositions for so many generations, and against such unwearied and diabolical attempts, we have no reason (in the least) to doubt of the certain verity thereof.

The preservation of the Scriptures proves they are of God.

Argum. X. The wonderful success wherewith the Gospel has been attended might be brought in as another argument to prove the Divine authority of the Scripture. How in the first ages did Christianity prevail and spread itself, notwithstanding the opposition made against it by the Heathen emperors and many cursed heretics; though published by a few weak and illiterate fishermen and contemptible instruments, yet it strangely prospered and prevailed (as I may say) against wind and tide, earth and hell; and what a multitude were brought to the obedience of the cross in many nations.

The wonderful success the Word of God hath had.

Argum. XI. The fearful judgments of God inflicted in several ages, upon many wicked men, for contemning these sacred oracles, might be brought in as a weighty argument to prove this great truth, God having in a dreadful manner cut off some, who have blasphemed his Word and holy name, by immediate death, as approved histories testify.

Judgments fallen on many who have blasphemed God's Word.

The mighty power God's Word hath on man's heart.

1'sal. xix. 10.

Argum. XII. The wonderful power the writings of the Holy Scripture have had, and still have upon the hearts of men, is a forceable argument to prove they are of Divine authority; they convince the conscience, enlighten the eyes, convert the soul, stop the mouths of gainsayers, kill, and terrify obstinate sinners, and comfort the minds of sorrowful and dejected saints, manifesting the thoughts and intents of the heart, causing the godly to bear and endure the greatest sorrows with the greatest cheerfulness, the unshaken hopes they give to good men of a future glory, and the horror that through them oft-times falls on wicked men for fear of hell, shows they are of God.

The testimony of the Church and holy martyrs.

Argum. XIII. The faith, confession, and universal testimony born to the truth of the Scriptures, by the martyrs and consent of the godly, and universal Church in all ages, is another strong and powerful argument, for the confirmation of the verity of the Holy Scriptures: what power could support, and bear up the spirits of the martyrs in the flames, testifying to the truths of the written Word, save the mighty power of God.

The holy Scriptures not compiled by men.

Argum. XIV. If the Scripture be not of God they are human: viz., compiled by men, and if by men, either they were godly men or wicked men; good or godly men they could not be, for what is more foul and abominable in men, than to invent or forge a book out of their own brains, and to father it upon the holy and ever blessed God. Moreover, there is no reason to think they were compiled by wicked men, for what impious wretches would, nay, could frame such a book, that promotes such a holy, self-denying life as the Scriptures do; so opposite and contrary to the natural interest and inclinations of all ungodly persons.

The inward testimony and witness of the Spirit.

Argum. XV. To all these I might add the Divine testimony of the Spirit upon the hearts of all the godly, which unremovably doth establish our faith, and give us a full assurance of the truth of them. Though this testimony is not the formal reason of our belief of them, yet it is of such a nature, that we are wonderfully confirmed hereby; so that neither men nor devils can weaken our confidence, nor alledge anything to shake our belief of the sacred oracles, because we have the witness of the Spirit, testifying to our conscience within, to what they speak and declare without.

SERMON XXII.

And he said, if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.—Luke xvi. 31.

I AM upon proving the Divine verity and authority of the holy Scriptures. I shall proceed to another argument and demonstration.

If the scripture be not God's Word hath left us no certain rule to walk by.

Argum. XVI. If the Scriptures be not the Word of God, then God hath left us no certain rule at all, either of faith or practice; nor is there any way for us to know truth from error. The Papists say, the Church is the rule. To which we reply, that the true Church is only known by the Word of God, for twenty communities of men, whose doctrine and discipline may directly differ from each other, may each pretend to be the true Church; and if we have no certain rule, whereby to know which is the true Church, no Church can be an infallible rule but the former is true; ergo., the like I might say (as you will hear by and by) touching immediate revelation.

He, therefore, that disowns the Bible to be of Divine authority must prove there is some other way to know the true way to heaven, and the true worship and will of God, or else it will follow that God hath utterly neglected mankind in the highest matter of importance in the world, which must of necessity cast the greatest contempt and reproach upon the wisdom, goodness, love, and mercy of God to his creatures imaginable; and if a man thinks there is no certain rule, then he doth not only give the lie to the Christian and Jewish religion, but generally to all religion that has been or is in the world: all may be false or a counterfeit: but that infinite wisdom and goodness should deal thus is absurd and unreasonable to conceive and most abominable.

Argum. XVII. The doctrines and matters of fact recorded in the Scripture, if true, then

its divine original cannot be doubted of. But many things spoken of in the Scripture as to matter, are not only avouched by its own votaries, but divers things contained therein are acknowledged by its enemies. As to instance, in a few particulars. The creation of the world is intimated by Ovid, the long lives of men in the first age of the world by Manetho, the Egyptian; Berossus, the Chaldean, and others. The Flood, also, is mentioned by the same Berossus, whose words are recited by Josephus; also Noah is mentioned under the notion of bifronted Janus, because he lived in both worlds, by Berossus and Heroditus. We read also of the ark in Polyhyssor, and of the destruction of Sodom. We read in Pliny that there was such a man as Moses, and a people called Israelites, whom he was captain of, and led out of Egypt, is testified by the most ancient records of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Grecians; and also Manetho speaks particularly of the Israelites coming in, and going out of Egypt. Of the coming of the Israelites into Canaan. See Procopius. Of Solomon we read in Dionysius, Cassius. And Tacitus, the great Roman historian, speaks of the persecution of the Christians by Nero. The star that appeared at the birth of our Saviour, is taken notice of by Pliny, and also by Caloidius an Heathen philosopher. The slaughter of the infants by Herod is recorded by Macrobinus. Moreover, Josephus gives an account of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he calls a man (if it be, saith he, lawful to call him a man, for he was a worker of great miracles, and a teacher of such that received the truth, &c.)

Ovid in lib. Metamorphosis. lib. 1.

Aniqui. lib. 1. cap. 4.

See my key part 2. Open Scripture Metaphors.

Pliny lib. 5. cap. 16.

procop. lib. 4.

Tacitus his annals, lib. 15.

Pliny, lib. cap. 5.

Now extant in Bibliotheca Patrum.

Now, how

The same thing is also spoken by Lentulus in his epistle to the emperor Tiberius, recited by Eutropius in these words: There hath appeared in our days, and yet is living, a man of great virtue or power, named Jesus Christ; who is called of the nations the Prophet of Truth, whom his disciples call the Son of God, a raiser of the dead, and an healer of all manner of diseases. Now, how unreasonable a thing is it for men to give credit to the truth of many human histories and matter of fact that never was so confirmed, as the sacred Scriptures, have been, and yet boldly dare deny or doubt of the divine authority or truth of this book.

But to proceed,

Secondly, I shall endeavour to prove that the holy Scripture, in the ministration thereof, hath far more efficacy attending it to bring men to believe and repent than immediate revelation, or apparition from the dead, &c.

1. For the proof and demonstration of this great truth I shall show you the uncertainty of the evidence of all other pretended ways, particularly that of immediate revelation.

1. Suppose a man pretends to immediate inspiration or revelation, by which he says he knows the truth, or the only way to be saved, and how to worship God, how can we be assured that what he says is a true and infallible revelation. For, perhaps, twenty men, who may all teach contrary doctrine one to the other, yet all pretend to immediate revelation or inspiration of God, how shall any enquiring and doubting person be assured, which of these are truly inspired; one may say, I witness it in myself, and know it is of God; well, and so may another of them say, and so all; and how, then, is the doubting person left at an utter uncertainty.

The uncertainty of immediate inspiration.

For unless one or another of this sort who pretends to immediate inspiration can do that or such things to confirm his mission which no impostor can pretend unto, or do the like, he is not in the least to be regarded, in what he says or teaches from such a spirit.

Quest. What must he do?

Ans. He must work real miracles, as to raise the dead, and open the eyes of such that were born blind, by that spirit he pretends to be led; and if he cannot do such things he can do no more than any grand deceiver or impostor can pretend unto.

Moreover, pray consider that Almighty God himself, who is a Free-Agent, and is under no obligation to his creatures, never gave forth but two religions, or two sorts of public worship, laws, and ordinances (the first was the Jewish religion, and the second the Christian religion) and neither of these he imposed on his people without confirming them by signs and wonders.

The first was given forth by Moses, and pray what amazing miracles and wonders did he work in Egypt before Pharaoh, and at the Red Sea, to prove his mission; or that he was sent of God, and such that none could do the like: though Jannes and Jambres withstood him, and strove to do the like things, but at last were forced to cry out, it was "the finger of God." Moreover, when the time of the Jewish worship, and their Church-

state was expiring, and our Lord was sent from heaven, to give forth the doctrine and worship of the New Testament; and what wonderful miracles did he work to prove he was sent from heaven; he also said, "If I work not the works that no other man can do, believe me not." And again he saith, "The works that I do, they bear witness of me." They proved that the Father sent him, and that his doctrine was of God, "Or else believe me for the very work's sake." John xiv. 11.

3. Suppose a man should say he is come from the dead, either from heaven or hell, who will believe him? he may be an impostor, a liar, he is not to be regarded, unless he works miracles; and to confirm what he says he must raise the dead and open the eyes of such that were born blind, or such like wonderful works which no deceiver can do; for the devil, and all lying spirits can work no real miracles, no, they are all lying signs and wonders, for were not this so, the world were left in a woeful condition. Besides, then the miracles our Lord wrought could be no infallible evidence that he was the Son of God and sent by Him, and his doctrine was from heaven.

4. Moreover, suppose one should really come from the dead, and preach to sinners, and tell them what they should do to be saved; yet his testimony would be only the testimony of a mere human creature; but the sacred Scriptures are the word of God, "All Scriptures are given by inspiration of God," 2 Tim. iii. 16, Heb. i. 1, 2. Nay, the doctrine of the Gospel, or word of the New Testament was spoken by Christ himself, the Son of God from heaven; he, in His own person and with His own mouth, gave it forth as He received it from the Father, and confirmed it by wonderful miracles. And now, which should we soonest believe, or is of the greatest authority? what the Son of God himself spake, or what an human spirit should declare?

5. But the grand argument is this, viz., that way, or that word, or that means, which God hath ordained or appointed (as the ordinary and most effectual way or means) for the conversion of sinners, or to bring them to believe and repent, hath a great and divine power and efficacy in it (yea, above all or any other way or means whatsoever), to effect that end. But God hath ordained or appointed the sacred Scriptures as read, especially as preached by his faithful ministers, as the ordinary and most effectual way or means for the conversion of sinners, or to bring them to believe and repent, therefore the Scriptures as so read and preached hath a real and Divine power and efficacy in it above all or any way or means whatsoever, to effect that great end. Will God leave his own ordinance, and own an ordinance of man's own devising, or cause that to succeed to answer the great end proposed by himself in his own institution? no, no, the rich man in hell magnifies the apparition of a spirit; concluding that what one that riseth from the dead might declare would have more effect upon his five brethren than the written Word. But,

Certainly, that way and means God hath ordained to such or such an end, he will bless and own, for the effecting his own gracious design and purpose, above any way or means else. Now, for the confirmation of this argument, see what the apostle John saith, "Many others signs truly did Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." John xx. 30, 31. The reason why the doctrine and miracles of our blessed Saviour are written in the Book of the New Testament is that we might believe this is the way and means God hath ordained to this great end, compared with Rom. x. 14, 15. "How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they are sent." (1.) Note, that faith comes by hearing the Gospel preached as the ordinary way God hath ordained. (2.) That they must be such that preach it whom God hath ordained and sent. Now, either he hath ordained mortal men to preach it, or angels, or else the spirits of men who are dead; but God hath not ordained his angels to preach it, nor the spirits of men that are dead; therefore he hath ordained and sent mortal men, whom he hath gifted to that end, to be the preachers thereof. Besides, matter of fact puts it out of all doubt, for nothing is more evident than this, that mortal men were chosen, gifted, ordained, and sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the only ministers or preachers of the gospel. Matt. x. 14. First, he chose his twelve disciples, and sent them forth to preach it, (Luke x. 1), and afterwards he sent out the "seventy." And when they went away he said to them, "Behold I send you the promise of my ather,

The devil
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miracles.

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fectual way
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bring sinners
to believe.

but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high," Luke xxiv. 49. Also it is said, "When he ascended up on high he gave gifts to men." Not to angels, nor to the spirits of the dead. "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," Eph. iv. 8, 11. The first had an extraordinary mission and call; such offices as apostles, and extraordinary prophets, and evangelists, none can pretend to have since the extraordinary gifts ceased; but pastors and teachers remain in the church to the end of the world, who preach by virtue of those gifts Christ received and gave when he ascended up on high, and hath left rules how pastors should be qualified, and how both pastors and teachers should receive their ordinary and regular call, and so be sent by the Church.

6. That Word which is more sure than in the voice that came from the "excellent glory in the holy mount" must needs be of the greatest authority, and most powerful efficacy attending it, to bring to believe, &c. But the holy Scriptures is a more sure word than the voice that came from the most "excellent glory in the holy mount;" ergo, the holy Scripture is of the greatest authority, and hath most power and efficacy in it to bring men to believe, &c. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his Majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the Holy Mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts," 2 Pet. 1, 16,—19. Well, and what is that more sure word? see the next verse, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation," &c.

Know this first, viz., The rule of your faith and practice, or first and principally above all things, as the great article of your faith, that the holy Scripture is of divine authority, and is to be preferred above that glorious voice heard in the mount; and so far above all pretended visions, new inspirations, spirits, or any other way or means whatsoever, that any can pretend unto. And that this doctrine contained therein, and as a sure rule, remains until Christ the Day (or Morning) Star comes in his glory, when our hearts shall be perfectly illuminated, or that which is perfect is come, and that no one place of the Scriptures is to be interpreted by men's own spirits, or is of any private interpretation, contrary to what is confirmed by other Scriptures; God being the Author of it, all agrees and sweetly harmonize, though, through the ignorance of men, and by the delusions of Satan, some understand them not, and others wrest them to their own destruction; but not that we are to conceive no man is to interpret the Scriptures unless he hath received extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, or the knowledge of the tongues, for the Scripture may be understood of the ignorant (as the ancients well observe), who have but the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, by comparing one scripture with another; for the Scripture itself is the best interpreter of the Scripture.

7. If we read of many thousands that have been converted by preaching the Gospel, or by the unerring Word of God or his sacred oracles and not one converted by the Spirit of any of the dead, or by any spirit whatsoever, teaching directly contrary to those sacred oracles, or not adhering or referring to them by pretended immediate inspiration, then the Scriptures, or the preaching of God's written Word, hath the only authority and efficacy in it through the Spirit of Christ (which always teaches according to it), but we read of thousands this way converted, and not of one converted by the Spirit of any come from the dead, nor by immediate inspiration or by a Spirit that teacheth directly contrary to those sacred oracles; or not adhering or referring to them. Ergo,

Many thousands have been converted by preaching the Word.

Acts ii. 42, 44.

My brethern, such who pretend that they were converted by any spirit, light, or inspiration of or by any spirits that speak not according to this Word, it is a lying spirit, and no light is in them, but that they are certainly deluded and deceived by the devil.

Isa. viii. 20.

8. If the holy Scripture be not the certain way and means of faith and practice, or of faith and repentance, then God hath (as I before hinted) left us no certain rule, way, or means at all, and be sure that cannot stand consistent with the wisdom, goodness, mercy, pity, honour, and faithfulness of the holy God. If any say God hath left a certain rule for our faith, practice, and conversion besides the Scriptures, let them prove it by such evidences that are infallibly certain, that no man led thereby can be deceived. I deny not, but God may convert men by

There is no certain rule left us of faith, &c., if the Scripture are not that rule.

afflictions, &c., but what though yet he makes use still of the written Word in the light and promises thereof, though it may not be by preaching.

9. If no man or spirit is to be regarded, unless they speak according to this Word, viz., the written Word of God, then the holy Scripture is the only rule and ordinary means, answering the great end pleaded for: but that this is so, see Isa. viii. 19, 20. "And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter; should not a people seek unto their God?" &c.; "to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

10. If the holy Scriptures, through faith, are every ways sufficient, in respect of faith, practice, and salvation, then the holy Scripture hath the only efficacy in them for this great end, but that this is so, see what the apostle says; "That from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. And now, my brethren, what is further necessary that the Scriptures fail in to any one that believes in Jesus I see not.

Lastly, I might add that the personal ministry of our Saviour, could it be enjoyed again, (as Reverend Crusoe notes) it would be ineffectual to them whom the written Word hath none effect, "Had you believed Moses you would have believed me; but if you believe not his writings how shall you believe my words," John v. 46, 47. O, how doth our Lord magnify the written Word? There is the same reason why Christ's Word should not be believed by such that believed not Moses' writings, who confirmed his mission with miracles as our Saviour did his. You, therefore, that despise the written Word of God, should Christ come again and preach to you (in such a state and condition as he appeared in when on earth), you would despise him or not believe in him.

Thirdly, How should the sacred oracles or the holy Gospel be heard?

How we ought to hear the word of God preached. Answ. 1. As it is indeed the Word of God or holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, you that hear it as only being the word of man, it is no wonder you profit not by it. See how Paul commended the believing Thessalonians, "For this cause, also, thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God which you heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God, which effectually also worketh in you that believe," 1 Thess. ii. 13. The apostles preach the Gospel, and that Word or doctrine they preached he saith truly, is the Word of God, and as being such we should hear it.

2. With prayer, or join prayer with hearing, for the Holy Spirit to accompany it; for unless the Holy Spirit works with the Word it will not be effectual to them that hear it; God must open the heart, and work faith in the heart, or bless the Word with the divine influences of His Spirit.

3. With all diligence, and holy awe and reverence, "I stand in awe of thy Word," Psal. cxix. 161: thus saith David, and the Lord saith "To this man I will look, that trembleth at my word," Isa. lxvi. 2. It is by the word we shall be judged at the great day. Nothing should divert our thoughts while we are under the Word, but attend upon it with our utmost diligence. Some think it is enough if they hear the Word, though they never regard how their hearts wander abroad, like the eyes of a fool to the ends of the earth; whilst they hear it, and others perhaps sit and sleep, whilst the Word of Life is preached to them.

4. With all endeared love and affections. If we love not the Word how should we profit by it? it will not be a burden to him who esteems it above God. "O, how love I thy law?" We should prize it above our necessary food, and hunger for it, love and esteem it, as a hungry man loves and hungers for bread, prizes and esteems bread; so should our souls hunger for the Word of God.

5. With a full purpose of heart to receive it, to hide it in our hearts. Psal. cxix. 11. Not only receive it into our ears and heads, but into our hearts, into our understandings and affections; and so, also, have our wills bowed to the authority and power thereof, and retain the savour of it in our memories, and with a firm resolution to yield all due ready, hearty, and present obedience to it. We must believe the promises, obey the precepts, and fear the threatenings of the Word.

6. Believing. If we do not mix faith with the Word it will not profit us; we must feed Heb. iv. 3. upon the Word, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." The Word of God is the food of the soul, "And thy word was to me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart," Jer. xv. 16. This was Jehoshaphat's advice to the people of Israel, "Believe in the

Lord your God, and believe his prophets, so shall you prosper," 2 Chron. xx. 20. Some will not, do not so much as give such human credence to the Word of God as they give to human histories; if they did, durst they persist in sinful ways as they do?

1 Cor. vi. 9. whereas the Word pronounceth wrath and Divine vengeance on all ungodly men,
 10. Mark xvi. 16. and shows that swearers, drunkards, unclean persons, liars, and all that live in
 John iii. 3. any known sin or course of wickedness, or believe not in Christ, shall be damned; or such who are not born again.

APPLICATION.

1. I infer that such who cast contempt upon the Word of God, and magnify any spirit, rule, or light, that some pretend is in all men, above the holy Scripture, are deceived by Satan, and are in a fearful condition, and are greatly to be pitied.

2. It reproves such that neglect reading and hearing the Word of God, and it may inform us that the reason why some men are not converted, it is, alas, because they attend not upon that means which God hath appointed to that great end.

3. Moreover, it may inform us why some who do hear God's word profit not; alas, they hear it not as it is truly the Word of God, nor attend upon it with diligence, with faith, and godly reverence: the voice of the minister of Christ is God's voice, or the voice of Jesus Christ; but this they believe not, "They that receive you receive me," saith our Lord 2 Cor. v. 18—20. Ministers are God's ambassadors, by whom he offers terms of peace, and a marriage with his son.

4. It may inform us what a mercy and blessing it is to have the holy Scriptures, or the sacred oracles, and what a loss and dismal judgment it would be should God take the ministration of the Gospel from us, or bring upon us a famine of the Word. The glory of England lies in this, it enjoys the light of God's word, it is a land of vision; but if God should take from it the Gospel, it would soon become a land of darkness: no judgment, as I have shown in opening another parable, is like to such a judgment, as many in our neighbouring nation find by woeful experience.

See the parable of the vineyard let to husbandmen opened. Matt. xxi. 33—46.

5. O, let us highly prize the Word of God, and beware of Satan's designs now on foot, in labouring to render it of little worth or value, by stirring up some to magnify natural religion above that holy religion revealed in the blessed Gospel of our dearest Lord, and in stirring up others to cry up the light in all men as the only rule of faith and practice, and their foolish and erroneous books above the sacred Bible, "God hath magnified his Word above all His name:" though, perhaps, incarnate the world may chiefly be meant thereby, yet what way of revelation of God to His creatures hath God magnified as He hath His written Word, as God's name by which He is made known; for all other ways by which He is made known to us fall short of that revelation we have of Him in His word.

6. Prize and esteem the messengers or ministers of God's Word, for though they are but instruments in God's hand, yet it is by them and through their word we come to believe, "Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man," 1 Cor. iii. 5; but, O, let us look beyond ministers, unto God; who is the great and only agent of all Divine operations, "I have planted and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase," ver. 6.

Now to conclude and close with this parable, let us all learn from hence to bless God that hath afforded us the best and most effectual way and means to believe in Him, and to turn our souls from our evil ways, that so we might be eternally saved; and let none once think in their hearts that if God would send one from the dead to preach unto them that they then should be persuaded to leave their sinful ways and receive Jesus Christ, or that that would be a more effectual means to awaken them, and work upon their hearts and consciences. For if they will not believe Moses and the prophets (or Christ's written word and His apotles) neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead

THE
PARABLE
OF THE
PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

SERMON XXIII.

Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican.

I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all I possess.

And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breasts, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

—Luke xviii. 10—14.

The occasion of Christ's speaking this parable.

THE occasion of our Saviour's speaking of this parable is expressed in the precedent verse, "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." So that the design or scope thereof is,

The scope of the parable.

1. To discover the sad and fearful state of all self-righteous persons, or such that trust in their own righteousness.

2. To make known the frame of a person's spirit that is justified in God's sight, viz., one brought to the foot of God, being humbled through the sight and sense of his sin, and so a self-condemned sinner. Moreover, it might be to inform us, what great encouragement there is for great sinners to fly to the mercy of God; and that it is not only the duty of sinners to pray, but to let us know God regardeth their prayers, who are under the sense and conviction of sin, when he rejects the prayers and worship of self-righteous persons.

But to proceed,

The parts opened.

First, in this parable we have mention made of two men, and also who they were or what sort of men; viz.,

1. One was a Pharisee. 2. The other a Publican.

Secondly, we have an account of what they did, viz., "They went up into the temple to pray."

As all the families of Jacob were to discharge the duty of prayer in their dwelling-places, so likewise they were enjoined to pray and worship God in the temple, God having promised to hear the prayers that were made in that place.

Who the Pharisees were.

The Pharisees were a strict sort of people amongst the Jews; but though they seemed to be very devout yet were guilty of great hypocrisy, and very vain-glorious, doing what they did to be seen of men, against whom our Lord denounced many bitter woes.

Who the Publicans were.

The Publicans were toll-gatherers, being such that collected Cæsar's tribute, and were greatly hated of the Jews.

1. Because they were servants to the Romish emperors, whose yoke the Jews could not abide.

2. Because they were generally very loose, or profane persons, extorting from the people more than their due, to enrich themselves; there were some who were masters of the society of the Publicans; and it is thought that Zaccheus was one of them because he is said to be "chief of the Publicans," Luke xix. 2; but though they were great sinners yet divers of them were converted, and became the disciples of Jesus Christ; the evangelist Matthew was a Publican before he was called to be an apostle. Moreover, we read that the Publicans were so hated by the Jews that though they were of their own nation yet they would not suffer them to marry with their daughters.

These two men (it appears) differed very much the one from the other; one was a zealous professor, and the other a profane and an ungodly sinner, yet both went to the temple to pray and worship God.

Thirdly, we have a relation of both their gestures and manner of their devotion.

1. "The Pharisee stood and prayed." Standing in prayer is not condemned by our Lord, it was used by good men, as well as kneeling; but, perhaps, the Pharisee stood to be seen of men, with his hands and eyes lifted up towards heaven, that all might see that he prayed, for may be his voice at this time was not heard.

"He prayed with himself." Intimating as if he did not speak out with a loud voice at this time, which at other times the Pharisees and Pharisaical persons were ready enough to do, that others might hear them; but it seemed to be a strange kind of prayer; we find not one petition he put up to God, or asked anything.

He prayed thus, "God I thank thee, I am not as other men are," &c. I grant that thanksgiving is part of prayer, but certainly all sincere persons, when they pray, have something to desire of God, some request to put up by way of humble supplication to God for what they want, as well as to give thanks for what they have received of him; but the Pharisee, it is like, saw no want of anything, glorying in himself, and in his own righteousness, and commending himself to God; whereas nothing is indeed more hateful and abominable in the sight of God than so to do, and such (as our Saviour saith) shall be abased.

Godly persons in prayer always make supplication to God, for what they want as well as give God thanks for what they have.

2. We have, also, an account of the gesture of the poor Publican. (1.) His standing afar off. (2.) Not daring to lift up his eyes unto heaven. (3.) He smote upon his breast. (4.) Saying "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Fourthly, we have an account how successful this man's prayer was, and how unsuccessful the other's; or of the acceptance of the Publican, and the rejection of the Pharisee, "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

Fifthly, an intimation from whence it was the Pharisee was rejected; and an account of the frame of the other's spirit that was accepted and justified; i. e., the one exalted himself, was proud and conceited, and therefore abhorred of God, and shall be abased. The other was of a humble, lowly, and broken frame of heart; he was accepted, and shall be exalted; signifying that God justifies and exalts all whom He doth justify only in a way of free grace, and that all such whom he doth accept, pardon, and justify, are sensible sinners, broken-hearted, and self-condemned sinners. But to proceed,

Proud persons abhorred of God.

Note. Doct. 1. That all Pharisaical and self-righteous persons God rejects, and will cast off for ever.

Doct. 2. That a justified person looks upon himself with abhorrence, or sees himself, as in himself, a woeful, lost, and an undone sinner.

In speaking to the first of these propositions, I shall,

1. Give you the character of this Pharisee, and in him of all self-righteous persons.

2. Show you from whence they justify themselves, and why God rejects them, and their condition is so dismal.

1. The Pharisees were hypocrites; they did all they did in religious matters to be seen of men. I do not say they were also without exception: some might act out of a principle of moral sincerity, as certainly Paul did when he was a Pharisee; but generally our Saviour condemns them for hypocrites. Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, they did all to be seen of men or for vain-glory sake, and therefore were hypocrites. And this appears in respect of three religious duties performed by him, viz., giving of alms, prayer, and fasting.

The Pharisees were hypocrites.

In their giving of alms they blew a trumpet, "Therefore, when thou doest thy alms do not sound a trumpet, as hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets that they may have glory of men," Matt. vi. 2. When they purposed to give alms to the poor they caused one to sound a trumpet, not to call the poor to them, but to let all men know what religious and charitable persons they were.

The hypocrisy of the Pharisees in giving of alms.

2. When they prayed they did it to be seen of men; this our blessed Lord also charged them with and condemned them for, "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men; verily, I say unto you they have their reward," Matt. vi. 5. They stood up in the synagogue, in such

The hypocrisy of the Pharisees in praying.

places that all might see them when they prayed, and would get into some corners of the streets merely out of ostentation, that they be thought to be more holy and devout persons than any others. My brethren, I never approved of such who in their families pray so loud as that such that go by their houses in the street may hear them, for, if it doth not savour of hypocrisy, I am sure it doth betray their folly and weakness, because it opens the mouths of all that hear them to censure them for hypocrites; therefore our Saviour directs us when we pray to enter into our closets and shut the door (Matt. vi. 9.) Though in family-prayer, where people live in rooms next to the streets, possibly (though they speak low) yet their voices may be heard, and they not reprobable; but let us all look well to our hearts, ends, and aims.

The hypocrisy of the Pharisees in fasting.

3. In fasting, also, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees appeared, "Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to fast; verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when ye fast, anoint thine head, and wash thy face," &c.,

Matt. vi. 16.

Quest. Some (perhaps) may say, why do we not do thus when we fast, since our Saviour directs us thus to do?

Ans. Should we do thus, it might in a little time savour of as great hypocrisy in us as it did in the Pharisees to disfigure their faces; because, it being not a custom amongst the people of this nation to anoint their heads, &c., anointing the head, and causing the face to shine amongst the Jews was a sign of joy, and to put on sackcloth, and disfigure the countenance, and look demurely, was a sign of great sorrow; but neither of these are used in these northern countries. Therefore, where that action or practice is used, it would have quite different effects; the use of it is not, ought not to be complied with, for whatsoever may favour of hypocrisy or vain ostentation is utterly condemned by our Saviour in these places.

The Pharisees only took care of their outward conversations.

II. The Pharisees only made clean the outside, i. e., strove only to keep their outward conversation unspotted, and took no care to have their hearts washed from sin and filthiness, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter," Matt. xxiii.

25, "that the outside of them may be clean," ver. 26. They were outwardly holy but inwardly wicked. And hence our Lord compares them to "painted or whitened sepulchres," which appeared beautiful outwardly, but were within full of extortion and excess (Matt. xxiii. 27.) or all manner of filthiness and pollution. Thus, this Pharisee cries, "God, I thank Thee I am not as other men are, nor as this Publican," that is, not outwardly profane and wicked, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, &c. But though they did not perhaps appear to men to be unjust, &c., yet, by what our Lord shows, they deceived themselves in that respect, for he charges them for devouring of widows' houses, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers," Matt. xxviii. 14. Their practice (it seems) was to persuade widows under specious pretences to give their estates when they died to them to the service of the tabernacle, they making long prayers for them.

III. They gloried much in negative holiness, being not profane persons; though it is true personal holiness partly consisteth in departing from sin, or outward acts of wickedness; yet not chiefly from the outward act, but from the love of it, and evil habits also; which inherent negative holiness they never arrived at.

The Pharisees gloried also in positive holiness.

IV. They were much also in some acts of positive holiness; "I fast twice a week;" they prayed, you heard, often, and were frequent in the public worship of God in the temple and synagogues, and paid tithes, or their tenths to the priests, as God under the law commanded; but pray note that all Pharisaical

persons chiefly show their zeal in a constant performance of the outward acts of worship; they were for the easiest part, but the more hard parts of religion they would not put forth their finger to do. What people are more zealous at their public devotion than the Papists and common Protestants? they will be at their public worship (may be) twice, or thrice a day, and say over with a great many prayers, but it is all done from false principles, and in show only.

V. The Pharisees, and all self-righteous persons have a self-fulness in them, they are not poor in spirit, nor do they see any need to confess their sins to God, no, they see not that they are sinners, but righteous persons, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their wickedness," Prov. xxx. 12. They are increased in goods, and have need of nothing, but are the people the prophet speaks of,

“Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am more holy than thou! (saith the Lord) these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day,” Isa. lxy. 5. A great conceit of a man’s own righteousness, of his knowledge, parts, learning, or self-fullness is the character of a Pharisaical person; the Pharisee confesseth no sin to God, he asketh not for pardon, nor cries for mercy.

VI. They expected to be justified by their own righteousness before God, and see no need they have of any other righteousness to be found in at God’s bar; not doubting but by their own obedience to the law, and the precepts thereof, they shall be saved; as many among us think, by keeping the ten commandments (though they break them many times in a day), and by conforming to the rules and precepts of the Gospel, they shall be justified in God’s sight and saved when they die; never being convinced of the want they have of the righteousness of Christ (to be clothed with that) and to cast off in point of truth all their own.

VII. They were always more strict and zealous (as I hinted) for the smaller matters of the law than the more weighty things thereof, and made a great stir about days, meats, drinks, garbs, dresses, &c., but neglected judgment, justice, mercy, faith, and the love of God, Matt. xxiii. 23.

VIII. They were such whose eyes were more abroad than at home, could sooner see a mote in their brother’s eye than see the beam that was in their own eye. This is the character of an hypocrite, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye. Thou hypocrite! first cast out the beam that is in own eye, and then thou wilt see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye,” Matt. vii. 3, 5. It is notorious wickedness to censure and condemn others for this or that fault when we are guilty of worse ourselves; indeed we should take heed that we do not judge others at all, nor censure them unless they are found guilty of a palable violation of God’s law, or of the rules of the Gospel and good order: who art thou thou judgest thy brother? So much as to the first thing proposed.

Secondly, I shall show you from whence it is that they justify themselves, and God rejects all self-righteous persons, and so their state is so dismal.

I. It is from their ignorance of God. (1.) They know not the rectitude of his nature nor pure holiness, who is of such pure eyes that he abhorreth all who have the least stain of sin in them, nor can any stand before him in judgment who have sinned. If a man be justified with God it must be by a perfect, spotless righteousness, but this the Pharisees saw not. (2.) They were (and such persons still are) ignorant of the eternal counsels and purpose of God in Jesus Christ. (3.) They were ignorant of the holy law of God, thinking if they keep the external precept, so as not to break the law in the letter of it, they might be justified by the righteousness thereof; not seeing that by the secret lusts of their hearts they violated the law every day, and that the justice and holiness of God required satisfaction for the former breach of it. “They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness,” Rom. x. 3. Paul himself, when a Pharisee, was without the law, that is without the true knowledge of it.

The cause or reasons why the Pharisees justified themselves, and so of their woful state and condition:

II. It was because they knew not Jesus Christ, nor the end and design of God’s sending his son into the world, to take our nature into union with his own divine person; they knew not why He was made under the law and therefore He lived in an exact conformity to the precepts of it, nor wherefore He died the cursed death of the cross; they thought their Messiah when he came would appear like a glorious king in outward glory and grandeur, to save them from all their enemies, and so only a law-giver; and not to work out a righteousness by His obediences and sufferings to justify such that believed in Him, and since they were ignorant of this, how could they believe in Him, and so be justified by him, “But he that believeth not shall be damned,” Mark xvi. 16; that is, that doth not fly to Christ to be justified; and, indeed (as I have often told you), we have them in and about this city and nation who look upon Christ to be little more than a law-giver. One that hath purchased a mild law of grace, of faith and obedience, by living up to which they expect to be justified before God, even and so far as they do obey in sincerity, so far they think they are justified; which error I have in opening other parables fully confuted.

III. They justified themselves by reason they knew not what a fearful state they and all the Jews (as well as the Gentiles) were in, or there being no difference, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” Rom. iii. 22, 23. All being under the guilt of original sin, and all under the breach of the first covenant, and all the children of

wrath by nature. Alas! the Pharisee saw not this; he looked upon his state very good, though he thought the state of the Publican was bad; but Paul shows all were gone out of the way, &c., "And that by the deeds of (that broken) law no flesh could be justified in God's sight."

IV. They saw not any necessity of regeneration, or of a changed heart, nor could they attain thereunto without the Spirit and true faith in Jesus Christ: how ignorant of this was Nicodemus (though a master in Israel), and yet our Saviour shows, that "Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," John iii. 1, 2, 3. And hence their state was so miserable, they thought a reformed life from gross acts of sin and wickedness was sufficient to save them, as too many do now-a-days.

V. Because, they looking upon themselves righteous, whole, or such who saw no need of a physician; they were such a people as Christ came not to call, "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," Matt. ix. 12; but such sort of sinners the Pharisees were not; they knew not that God would have mercy and not sacrifice; and hence publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of heaven before them; and our Lord shows that except our righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees we can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. v. 20; whether the righteousness of the hypocritical Pharisees or such that were morally sincere.

APPLICATION.

1. We from hence infer that men may be legally or morally righteous, and yet perish for ever; moral righteousness gives no man a title unto eternal life.

2. We infer but very few people know the true and only way of salvation. Most think it is by leading a sober life, or that holiness is the only way to happiness, or, because no man can be saved without holiness, they think their inherent holiness and good works will save them: but, alas! sirs, while some men (with the Jews) follow after righteousness they may not attain to the law of righteousness and the reason of it the apostle gives, viz., "Because they seek it (as it were) by the works of the law," Rom. ix. 32 (or by their own righteousness), and others who are great sinners, such as the Gentiles were, "Who follow not after righteousness may attain to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith," ver. 31.

3. Exhort. Be exhorted you that are conceited of your own righteousness to make your boast of that no more; but utterly despair of any relief or help that way for your poor souls; but look out to Jesus Christ for a better righteousness, "Even the righteousness of Christ, which is by faith of the Son of God," Phil. iii. 9. And this do with all speed, lest publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you; for you hear the publican (who humbled himself) was exalted or justified; and the Pharisee who trusted to his own righteousness was rejected and cast off by the Lord.

For the pressing this great duty upon you consider these things following:

1. Consider that you are condemned notwithstanding all your righteousness for original sin, and also for all your own actual sin, you lying under the guilt of both, until you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Consider that all sincere and most pious Christians in the world who believe in the Lord Jesus, and are justified, do see so much sin cleaving to their own inherent righteousness (though it far exceeds your's) that they look upon it but as dung or as filthy rags.

3. And from hence also know and well consider that none of the holy saints of God durst ever plead their own righteousness at God's bar; mind what Job says, "I abhor myself," Job xlii. 6; and David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified," Psal. cxlii. 2: though David thus cries out, yet what man had ever greater repentance and sorrow for sin, or arrived to an higher pitch of inward sanctification, or had a clearer testimony of his uprightness, it being positively said he was a man after God's own heart, to which I might add what holy Paul saith, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

4. Consider that all the godly ever made mention of God's righteousness, "I will go in the strength of the Lord, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only," Psal. lxxi. 16; that is, for his acceptance and justification before God, I will not so much as once think upon or speak of my own strength or abilities, or what I have done, but only plead thy strength, thy covenant, thy promises, thy righteousness, which I have by faith, and through thy faithfulness.

5. Consider that Jehovah saith that in his righteousness alone is the help of all his people, "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to

him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed: in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory," Isa. xlv. 24, 25. That is, all that truly believe, or such who are true Israelites, whether Jews or Gentiles, they shall not, like the Pharisee, glory in their own righteousness, but shall be acquitted and freed from the guilt of all sins, by Christ's righteousness, received by faith alone: it is not by every one's own obedience, but by the obedience of one that many are made righteous, Rom. v. 19.

6. Consider, O sinner, though thou art as vile as the worst, or a notorious and profane person, such as the Publicans were, yet if thou art helped, as an undone sinner, to fly to Jesus Christ, there is certainly mercy and pardon for thee: true, whilst thou remained unconvinced of thy sins and sinful state, there is no hope, no ground for thee to conclude God will forgive thee; but if thou smitest upon thy breast, and lookest upon thyself not worthy to lift up thine eyes to heaven, and canst plead for mercy through the satisfaction of Christ, thou needest not doubt of finding mercy with God. O, what a happy man is a convinced sinner, a sin-sick sinner, a wounded and self-condemned sinner. Sins, as no man's own righteousness can save him, so no man's unrighteousness (if penitent and believing) can damn him.

Consolation. What, comfort, then, is here for broken-hearted sinners, and for all true believers; your sins God will forgive, nay, he hath forgiven them, and will remember them no more: no enemy, no devil, nay, no sin can ever separate you from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1, 2. But this, I know, will not, cannot be an encouragement to you to sin; no, God forbid, you know by what a dear price you come by pardon (dear, I mean to Christ, though in a cheap and easy way to us); the love of God will constrain you to hate all sin, and to love holiness: O, be persuaded to lead a holy life, that your faith may be evidenced to your own conscience to be of the right kind; and let it be your care and mine to show forth the glory of God's rich grace who hath pardoned and justified us freely "Through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ;" "And being now made free from sin, and become the servants of God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," Rom. vi. 22. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

Two men went up into the temple to pray, &c. And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner, &c.—Luke xviii. 13.

If the Publican was a Gentile he was not admitted into the court of Israel, but must stand as far off in the temple as the court of the Gentiles was from the other; but it is thought this Publican was a Jew, and that the Pharisee would not suffer him to stand near to him, nor, indeed, would they any but those of their own sect: Brethren, from what is said of the Pharisee I have prosecuted one point of doctrine, and from what is spoken of the Publican I shall take notice of another, and speak briefly unto it, viz.,

Doct. 2. That an enlightened person whom God justifieth looks upon himself with abhorrence, or is humbled at the foot of God, and sees himself (as in himself) a woeful, lost, and an undone sinner.

First, this appears to be an undeniable truth from what is said of this publican.

The publican stood afar off, and would not lift up his eyes unto heaven, &c. A sinner enlightened, convinced, or thoroughly humbled at God's foot, sees so much guilt and filth in himself, that he dares not, or is ashamed to look up to God.

But smote upon his breast.

1. O, here is the plague (as if he should say), it is in this vile heart of mine; O, what a rebellious and obstinate sinner have I been against God; how have I contemned his authority, resisted his will, violated his holy law, slighted his goodness, abused his patience, &c.; he had thorough sense of the majesty and holiness of God upon his soul; like that of the prophet, "Woe is me, I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts," Isa. vi. 5; "I that am but dust and ashes," said blessed Abra-

The parts of the parable concerning the publican opened.

What may be meant by smiting on his breast.

ham; who was a man brought to the foot of God, who before was an idolator; "Who raised up righteously the man from the east, and calling him to his foot," Isa. xli. 2: so from the Hebrew some read it. Thus, the poor publican looks upon himself, even a loathsome and vile creature, a filthy leper, or as abominable carrion in the sight of God; he stood afar off, (as one notes) that a Mediator might come between God and him, or between him and sin avenging justice.

"Smote upon his breast." &c.

2. This smiting upon his breast may denote his great sorrow for his sins, or as a demonstration of his unfeigned repentance (as commonly a man doth that sees his state deplorable); yet, no doubt, he was convinced of the pardoning mercy of God in Christ; for in vain do any plead for mercy until they see God is reconciled in his Son, and that in Him there is forgiveness that He may be feared.

3. His smiting upon his breast may also signify his indignation against his sin (for true repentance, the apostle shows, worketh this in the soul of a sinner, "Yea, what indignation; yea, what fear," &c., 2 Cor. vii. 11). He had an utter abhorrence of himself for his iniquity, and a hatred of his sins.

4. His smiting upon his breast may also signify that apprehension he had of the infinite love, grace, and mercy of God to him, upon his flying to him in and through Jesus Christ; as when a man is apprehensive of some great, wonderful, and undeserved favour from one that he hath abominably abused, smites upon his breast, "Lord (as if he should say) who could have once thought that I who have been such a rebel against Thee, should see hopes of pardon, and that purpose of Thy love and grace of receiving me into Thy favour and gracious presence, and confer honour upon me; but can it indeed be thus, Lord, or am I in a dream, or only flatter myself:" for some doubts, my brethren, especially at first may attend true faith in poor, convinced sinners.

"Saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner,"

Certainly (as I hinted before) this publican represents one that was enlightened into the knowledge of a Mediator; this is implied though not expressed; he pleads not for mercy, but in that way God only lets his mercy and pardoning grace forth to sinners, which is only in Jesus Christ.

But pray observe his confession. "To me a sinner."

1. He confesseth himself a sinner, nay, one of the worst, the greatest, or chief of sinners, as Paul saith and confesseth, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," 1 Tim. i. 15. He does not say he had been the chief of sinners, but he had such a sense of his former sins upon his heart (when he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious) that he still loathed himself, counting himself still the greatest of sinners; "I am," &c., and "Less than the least of all saints," Eph. iii. 8.

The nature
of the publi-
can's confes-
sion.

2. No doubt but the poor publican confessed his sins, with all the aggravations of the abominable circumstances thereof, and also how he stood charged; nay, condemned by the law of God, the commandment coming now with power upon his conscience, as it came upon Paul, "Sin revived and died," Rom. vii. 9, 10, 11; by which means sin became to him exceeding sinful.

3. Nay, a true confession hath more in it, no question, for he acknowledged the justice of God, that he might righteously execute the sentence of the law upon him, and send him to hell: shouldest thou, O Lord, enter into judgment with me I am gone for ever.

4. It was a deep, a sincere, and hearty confession, with a resolution and full purpose of heart to sin no more; "God, be merciful to me a sinner," "My sin is ever before me;" what a good and gracious God have I offended? I will not hide my transgressions; "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned," saith David, Psal. li. 4; I am willing to take shame to myself, and give glory to thee, "That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest;" I am contented that Thou should lance my sore, and lay open my wounds; that so Thy pardoning grace may be more sweet, and consolatory to my bleeding and sin-sick soul, and that I may have the greater obligation on me to live to Thy glory, and to advance thine honour, Lord: as if the poor publican should say I am ready to sink down under the burden of my sin; O, some relief, one word of comfort, Lord; apply the plaster, the only remedy, I have nothing to bring, no motive, no argument to plead with Thee but Thy mercy, Lord, be merciful to me; and thus David cries out also, "I said, Lord, be merciful to me, heal my soul for I have sinned against thee," Psal. xli. 4.

5. In confession there is also contained restitution, if the sinner hath wronged any man. Thus Zaccheus who was a publican. "And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, be-

hold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man, by false accusation, I restore him fourfold," Luke xxxix. 8. If a man be able who hath wronged any person he must make restitution, or else his repentance is not true.

And thus having opened the parts concerning what the publican said, and showed the nature of his confession, which partly proves the truth of the proposition, I shall,

1. Further endeavour to confirm the doctrine, viz., that an enlightened or convinced person who God justifies looks upon himself with abhorrence, or is humbled at the foot of God, and sees himself (as in himself) a woeful, lost, and undone sinner. And then,

2. I shall show what persons may be said to be undone, or in a woeful condition, or what sinners see cause to abhor themselves for.

3. Show from whence it cometh to pass that a person enlightened cries out for mercy.

4. Show how God deals with such a person.

First, further to confirm this doctrine, consider, that it is no wonder that this publican cries out, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," (I abhor myself), because the most eminent saints cried out in the same manner as was showed before. The prophet Isaiah was a holy person (as I hinted), yet, having a glorious sight of God, cries out, "Woe is me, I am undone;" the sight of a holy God on his throne made him dread and tremble: and thus it was also with holy Job, though he was a "Perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil," Job. i. 1, yet he cries out, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job. xlii. 6.

The doctrine further confirmed.

Job, no doubt, had not only heard of God, but he had also seen much of God before this time, but now had a more glorious vision or manifestation of God than ever he had until now, and see the effects it had upon him, "Therefore I abhor myself," &c., as if he should say (as Mr. Caryl notes).

What Job might abhor himself for.

1. I abhor myself, that ever I had one good thought of my own self.

2. I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes, that I ever complained of God's severe dealings with me; it is enough that I am out of hell.

3. I abhor myself that I was ever so bold as to desire to plead with God my innocence.

4. I abhor myself that ever I set such a value upon, or commended my own righteousness, my faith, and sincere obedience to be justified at thy bar.

O, I am, alas, an undone creature as in myself; thus Habbakuk also, when he heard his belly trembled, his lips quivered; "O Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid," Hab. iii. 10. David cries out, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified," Psal. cxliii. 2. He would have the Lord to hear his supplication in righteousness, ver. 1. In whose righteousness? even in that righteousness whereby God is ready and stands engaged to favour such who by faith fly to Him; but, Lord, I cannot stand before Thee in my own righteousness, upon a severe trial, at the tribunal of Thy divine justice; for if Thou shouldst rigorously examine all the passages of my heart and life, I dread the thoughts and consequences of it; I know I should be cast upon the terms of strict justice, and be undone for ever, unless I am found in the righteousness of my redeemer.

My brethren, although the profane hear of God, yet they are not afraid, they tremble not, hypocrites and presumptuous persons are secure. From whence is this? alas! they know not God, they see not the purity of his nature, his justice, and holiness: but it is far otherwise with such who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they dare not vindicate themselves, justify themselves, nor plead their faith, their inherent righteousness, nor sincere obedience: but see cause, notwithstanding all those things that are wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, or done by them, though the fruits and products of true faith, to cry out they are undone, "For I know nothing of myself, yet am I not hereby justified," I Cor. iv. 4. Not that Paul was without sin, or knew no evil in himself; no, no, this is not his meaning, for then he would have contradicted what he speaks in Rom. vii., but in the discharge of his ministry, and in the whole course of his life he had nothing to charge himself with in respect to any willful failing; he had in all things been as blameless (perhaps) as any saint or child of God ever was: well, but what of all this? some sin cleaved to him in his own sight, and much more in the sight God who judgeth him; and therefore saith he, "I am not hereby justified; I dare not plead my own works, or my own righteousness at God's bar, for he knew he had sinned, and formerly broken the law more than in one point; and now also, when he did good, evil was present with him; nay, saith he, "The evil which I would not that I do;" "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Why profane persons fear not the holy God.

Paul means not that he had no sin in him.

Rom. vii. 17—24. I am undone in myself. Now, if such holy men were forced to plead the mercy of God, and the mercy of Christ, is it any strange thing to see the poor publican to cry out, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner?" So much as to the proof of the doctrine.

Secondly, I shall show you who it is that may be said to be undone, or is miserable.

But before I proceed, let me note one thing, viz., what being undone doth imply? viz., that such a person was once, either originally or actually, in a good condition, or rich and happy. For a man that was ever poor and miserable, having nothing, cannot in a proper sense be said to be undone: he that never had anything cannot have less; or a person that is not in misery need not plead for mercy. Now all mankind originally in the first Adam were rich, and every ways in a most blessed and happy state and condition. But every one of his offsprings, as well as himself, by virtue of his first sin were undone, being brought into a state of misery, and so need God's mercy.

I. A man, who is possessed of a vast estate or great riches, that hath lost it all, even every farthing by thieves or by fire, or otherwise, we say is undone, and thus were all mankind originally undone.

II. But, may be, such a man (mentioned) that hath lost all, may not be every ways so undone as to be so miserable neither as all men are in the first Adam; for, perhaps, he may be able to work, and so to help and relieve himself; but if he be a poor, impotent, or indigent person being utterly unable to work to get himself one bit of bread, we say, Poor creature he is undone. Indeed, now thus it is with every man and woman in the world, as they stand in the first Adam, or under the covenant of works; not a man living who hath any strength, power, or ability to help himself, but by sin adds every day to his own misery, and further undoing, and therefore needs God's mercy.

III. But although the man I speak of so undone as to have lost all he had, and hath no power or ability to help himself, so as to get one bit of bread or morsel of meat, yet, notwithstanding, he may not be so undone, as all Adam's off-spring in a spiritual consideration are; for he may have some friends or brother that may relieve him and raise him again to a high, a rich, and prosperous condition in the world. But no one son, or child of Adam hath any friend or brother in all the earth, to do anything for him; because the whole family or posterity of fallen mankind were undone, and brought into the same deplorable state and condition of want and poverty; let a distressed soul go to what door he will, not one house hath one bit of bread in it; not one person, neither friend, enemy, or brother, which hath so much as a bit of bread for himself, much more unable to relieve another. Now, thus I say it is with all mankind, as they are in the first Adam, and as they are in themselves; and, therefore, may well cry out for mercy, being distressed and utterly undone, or in misery.

IV. But such wretched creatures I speak of (among men) may not be so miserable neither as Adam's off-spring are in a spiritual sense: for though he may have lost all he had, and is unable to work (being blind, lame, &c.), and hath not any friend or brother to do anything for him, yet he may not be in debt, he may not owe anything; but poor, lost, and undone sinners, besides all I have said, are in debt, deeply in debt to God! not one of them but owes ten thousand talents; and one talent, as our annotators note, is one hundred, eighty-seven pounds, ten shillings, therefore ten thousand talents is a vast sum.

V. A man may be said to be in a miserable condition, who, being once in a king's favour (and raised to great honour), but for some heinous crime, as treason, rebellion, &c., is cast out of his favour; and not only so, but is condemned to die a most fearful and amazing death. O, say all that (hear of it, how happy was this nobleman once? how great, how rich, and honourable a person was he? but alas! alas! now he is undone, and is become a most miserable person; who can be in a more deplorable condition than he is in now? Why, thus it is in a spiritual sense with mankind in the first Adam, how dear and near to God were we while we stood in the state of innocency in which we were created? What creature was more in the love and favour of God? man was then in a state of honour, but for horrid treason and rebellion against the glorious Majesty of heaven we were cast off and rejected of God, and became the objects of his wrath and fearful curse, being sentenced to die a lamentable death, even to be burned alive, or to lie in eternal flames for ever and ever. And every man and woman naturally is in this fearful state, therefore he might cry out, I am undone, "O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

VI. But the man I before mentioned thus cast out of his prince's favour, and condemned to die a cruel death, yet he may repent and humble his soul, and his sovereign prince

The aggravations that attend a man that is miserable.

Who are in a miserable condition.

No person so miserable among men, as sinners in a spiritual sense.

may pardon him, and so reverse the sentence. But the law which we have broke admits of no repentance, "He that sinned against Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses," Deut. xix. 15; "The law is not of faith," Heb. x. 28; Gal. iii. 12. That speaks nothing of faith in a Mediator, though faith in God is commanded in the first precept; but faith in Christ is not commanded by the law (as that by which the soul shall live), no, no, but every man is required to keep the law perfectly, nay, to continue "In all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10, or else he must perish. The law saith "Do this and live," but it doth not say for your non-doing of these things, Repent, and ye shall live; no, repentance is not of the law but of the gospel. God's law is an impression of His holy nature, and He is just, nay, justice itself; and therefore He by the law will not forgive any man: nay, I may say (with holy reverence) God cannot forgive, His justice puts in a bar, and stops the plea of mercy until satisfaction is made to His justice, truth, and holiness, for the breach of the holy law; so that every man is utterly undone as he is in himself, and as considered under the law and stands in need of God's mercy.

The law admits of no mercy.

VII. Though it be thus, or this be the tenor of the law of perfect obedience, ye some, perhaps, may say, mankind may not be quite undone notwithstanding this fiery and severe law; may not God reverse that law, abrogate the law that requires perfect obedience, and give forth a more mild law that will admit of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, that so by such a sweet and more gentle and mild law sinners may be justified.

Ans. Unto this I answer (as I have elsewhere) that the law which requires perfect obedience, God will never reverse, repeal, or abrogate; no, the pure moral law stands as an eternal rule of obedience (though as a covenant of works it is abrogated); God doth not now require us to keep the law that we may be justified (as He did require the first Adam), no, we must believe in Jesus, yet not one jot of the law, not one precept of the moral law shall pass while heaven and earth abides.

The moral law abides for ever, as a rule of life and obedience.

1. For what is the sum of the moral law, is it not To love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves, Matt. xxii. 37—39. Now, is not this our indispensable due still, or is it not as much our duty thus to do as it was the duty of God's people under the law? nay, are not we commanded to be "perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect?" Matt. vi. 48.

2. The law is (as it were) an image of God's nature; God allows of no sin, no more doth his holy law; all precepts of the moral law are good, and therefore commanded and not commanded and therefore good (as all mere positive precepts are); therefore should God offer violence to his law, or abrogative that, his very essence would change, nay, he would cease to be God; for he may as soon cease to be God as cease to be less holy; or give a law to justify a sinner that admits of imperfect obedience, or such obedience which is attended with any sin and horrid filth and pollution; therefore the publican might well cry, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

3. Moreover, had there been a law given, or could such a law have been given that could have given life, God, no doubt, would have given such a law for justification. For what reason can be given by our adversaries who plead for such a law why the blessed God did not give such a mild law of grace at first, wherein man's imperfect obedience, if sincere, might so have been accepted and he justified (when fallen) in the sight of God.

And certainly, had the law simply proceeded from the sovereignty of God, such alterations had been made that man's sincere obedience thereunto would have been accepted to his justification; and so God might have spared his own beloved Son, for then there would have been no need for the Son of God to come into the world to take our nature upon Him, and to be made under the law, being obliged to work out a perfect righteousness by His complete obedience thereunto, and to die for our breach thereof; and if a sincere, though

The moral law resulted not as an act of God's simple sovereignty, but from the rectitude of his nature.

an imperfect, obedience would have done, we may say with the apostle, "If righteousness, came by the law then is Christ dead in vain," Gal. ii. 21. If righteousness could have been by any law, and furthermore the same apostle saith, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. iii. 21. But nothing is more clear than this, viz., That the righteousness to a sinner's justification cannot be by man's obedience to any law whatsoever in his own person; therefore he is utterly undone as to any help or relief in himself, and must plead for mercy through Christ's merits.

My brethren, the law must be kept perfectly, and satisfaction must be made to

Divine justice for our violation of it, by one substituted in our room, partaking of our nature, and accepted of God as our surety, and if God in his infinite wisdom had not found out such a representative, substitute, &c., and accepted of such a surety we had been eternally undone; and if any man hath his eyes open to see this Saviour provided he beholds the holiness of the Lord God of Hosts, and the nature of His holy law; he must cry, "Lord, be merciful to me, I am undone."

VIII. Moreover, if the least sin, whether it be a sin of omission, or of commission, lays man under God's wrath, the curse of the law and eternal condemnation, he is undone as in himself, and must cry for mercy; but thus it is, and all persons must therefore cry out as the prophet, and the publican did, when God's Spirit openeth their eyes to see what a state and condition, as in themselves, they are in.

IX. Moreover, if God hides his face from any believer, so that he cannot see his interest in Jesus Christ, nor be able to behold his discharge from sin and wrath by our blessed Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, he is ready to cry out he is undone, or as an object of pity and mercy. Thus I have done with the first thing proposed, viz., What it is to be undone, and when a person may be said to be undone and to see himself miserable as in himself.

Secondly, I shall further (God assisting) demonstrate, from whence it cometh to pass that persons who are enlightened by the Lord come to cry out they are undone.

From whence it cometh to pass that sinners are miserable and see themselves so to be.

1. From the manifestation of the holiness of God's pure nature: God is infinitely holy, amazingly holy, he is holiness itself in the abstract, essentially holy; holiness is his very being and nature, he infinitely hateth all sin and iniquity, or whatsoever is contrary and opposite to his holiness and the rectitude of his nature; God cannot love nor delight in, nor justify any creature, that is polluted and defiled with sin as he is in himself, nor have communion with them, who have the image (or likeness) of the devil stamped upon their polluted and degenerate hearts; but indeed as they are so considered He abhorreth them.

2. It riseth from, or is occasioned not only from a sight of God's glorious holiness, but also from the sight and of His justice. For God will not pardon or forgive guilty sinners, *i. e.*, to the eclipsing the glory of His holiness and infinite justice. Pray see what He Himself declared to Moses, when Moses desired to see His glory, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth," Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Ver. 6. He is merciful and gracious, but His mercy is only let out in a Mediator, "Forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin," but mind what follows, and he "Will by no means clear the guilty," &c. Now all are guilty, and stand charged before Him by His law and justice, as in themselves; and so remain until they are pronounced just and righteous in Christ. Sins, legal repentance and sorrow for sin renders no person a subject of Gospel pardon, or such that God will forgive; no, be they penitent or impenitent it is all one, unless they fly to Him by faith, in and by Jesus Christ, they stand charged, and "He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36. My brethren, there is no begging mercy for the sake of mercy, without eyeing a complete satisfaction made to Divine justice, or without seeing how or by whom this satisfaction is made, and therefore until a poor sinner seeth his discharge in Jesus Christ, and Divine wrath pacified in Him, if he be thoroughly convinced by the Spirit, he will behold himself miserable, as in himself.

3. An enlightened sinner comes to see that he is undone, by his being convinced of the purity and holiness of the law of God which he hath broken; he understands the spirituality of the law, and how every sinful thought and lust of the heart is a breach thereof, and lays him obnoxious to God's wrath and curse; and by this means he is brought to cry out he is undone. Thus it was with Paul, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died," Rom. vii. 9. The law entered or came with power upon his conscience and sin abounded; he thought he was alive, and in a good condition before, but soon saw he was deceived, and thus he was made to cry out, and thus no doubt it was here with the publican.

4. It riseth from a clear and full sight and sense of sin, which is so opposite and contrary unto the pure nature and holiness of God.

1. In respect of the guilt of it.

2. In respect of the abominable filth and pollution that is in sin, and how it hath defiled the soul.

3. From the sense of the great power and strength of sin.

I have repeated this great doctrinal truth, in speaking to several parables, because it is the main gospel truth, and that many are ignorant.

The sight and true knowledge of the law makes a man cry out for mercy.

4. From the sense and sight of God's entering into judgment, and calling of the soul to his bar and fearful tribunal; or by the beholding the severe punishment and just demerit of sin. Had not the prophet some apprehension of this, when he saw the Lord upon a "Throne high and lifted up?" Our annotators on this place say, "I dread the thoughts of appearing before Thy judgment-seat, which I see erected in this place. The sight of this glorious and Holy God gives me cause to fear that He is come in judgment against me."

Poole's
Annota. on
Isa. vi. 5.

The sense of
the guilt of
sin renders
men as in
themselves
miserable.

1. It is from the sense of the guilt of sin, and of that abominable evil which is in it, it being directly contrary to the holy nature of God, rebellion against him, and a resisting of His will. Can the spirit of a man bear him up, or support him, when the weight of sin lies upon his conscience and presseth his soul? or when God comes by His Spirit, and shows him what a holy and just God he hath sinned against, wronged, and abused, and what a holy law he hath violated, both originally and actually also? and that many thousand times. Alas! should God but charge the guilt of one sin upon the soul of any man in the world, and demand satisfaction to His justice, what could the sinner do? What distress of conscience would he be in? and how would he cry out for mercy? Who then can bear the weight of such a mountain of horrid guilt that lies upon every sinner out of Christ, or in his natural state, or that seeth not how he is discharged, justified, and acquitted in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Can the feeble sinner bear the weight of sin when the guilt thereof is charged upon him, considering how it made the great and mighty Saviour to shrink and faint, nay, to cry out, and to sweat great drops of blood, when the guilt of the sins of the elect was laid upon him.

1. Can the law, or his keeping the commandments, ease him of this burden; no, no, saith he, the law accuses me and condemns me, and all that seek to it for relief and succour, thinking to be justified thereby; for it is the strength of sin, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," 1 Cor. xv. 56. The law entered not to discharge us from sin, no, but that sin might abound, "and become exceeding sinful," Rom. vii. 13. The law lays every sinner that seeks for relief thereby, under its fearful curse, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. The law slays the sinner, it kills him, and lays him dead at the foot of God, that flies thither for help; and this the sinner sees when his eyes are opened by the Spirit, and convictions are set home upon his conscience; he thereby sees the purity and spirituality of the law; so that from thence, instead of obtaining relief and succour, he is forced to cry out, "Woe is me!" "Lord be merciful to me a sinner."

No relief
under the
guilt of
sin by the
law.

2. Can a man's own obedience and inherent righteousness, in conformity to the Gospel, under the sense of sin, relieve him? No, no, saith the enlightened sinner; Alas! alas! all my own righteousness is but filthy rags (Isa. lxiv. 6.) or it is loathsome in God's sight, being attended with abominable pollution; and this made David cry out, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified," Psal. cxliii. 2.

Bare obe-
dience to
Gospel pre-
cepts can
relieve no man.

3. Will a godly man's pleading his external privileges relieve him? Many boast of the great privileges they have attained, like the people of Israel, of old who cried out, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." Thus many now glory in that they have been baptized, are members of a Church of Christ, and have often received the Lord's Supper, are endowed with great learning and many spiritual gifts; but alas! those things can afford them no relief under the guilt of sin, nor be a sufficient plea at the bar of God, would he enter into judgment with them. See what Paul saith, "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee. Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church, touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless," Phil. iii. 4, 7. But notwithstanding all this, see what he further saith, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." If any man by his external duties and religious privileges, might hope for acceptance with God, Paul much more. Who of the Jewish Church excelled him, or had that cause to glory or receive relief and succour under the guilt of sin, from hence, like unto him?

Outward
privileges
cannot re-
lieve a sin-
ner.

Object. But, perhaps, some may object and say that Paul only in this place and upon

this occasion refers to his legal duties and legal privileges; those (say they) it is true could not commend him to God, nor are to be trusted in, or to be pleased with God, for by the works of the law, no flesh can be justified in God's sight; but he was now a converted man, and had attained too many great and glorious Gospel privileges, and to a high degree of Gospel obedience and holiness; and those things sure will avail him, and might relieve him under the sense of sin and the guilt thereof, he speaks of the time past, &c.

Answer. I answer, it is evident he comprehends all his Gospel duties and Gospel privileges also; and excludes them likewise, or accounts them and all his present inherent righteousness as nothing, in point of trust or dependence, "Yea, doubtless, and I do count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ," Phil. iii. 8. He speaketh now universally what he did but indefinitely before (as our annotators note), using the present tense with a discretive particle. He disesteemed and excluded not only his Jewish and legal privileges, duties, and righteousness, which he had before, but also his Christian or Gospel privileges, &c., after conversion. Though he was an apostle, and had been an instrument in Christ's hand to convert many thousands to the faith, and had planted many Churches, but he sought for no relief by these things as having any worth in them to commend him to God, or as any matter to be trusted to, or rested on for justification before God. He remarkably puts in all he had when a Pharisee, and now he is an apostle, yea, whatsoever could be thought of besides Jesus Christ, as being in comparison of Christ accounted but dung; therefore in himself (or as so considered), notwithstanding all his duties and privileges, he saw he was lost and undone, and must fly to God's mercy in Christ.

No sacrifices but the sacrifice of Christ can relieve a poor sinner.

4. But some, perhaps, may say, will not sacrifices (which a poor sinner may bring and offer up to God) appease and satisfy Divine justice, and so relieve and give ease to his distressed conscience? suppose he could bring, "A thousand rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil, or offer his first-born, the fruit of his body, for the sin of his soul," Mich. vi. 7. God in the law required a ram, or a few rams to be offered up in sacrifices; but if they were too few we will offer a thousand, or a very great number. The phrase (as one notes) is an hyperbole. Also, oil was required in sacrifices in meat-offerings, though in no great quantity, a log, or hin, about half a pint, or two or three quarts; that was too little, and infinitely short to satisfy Divine justice; but what if we should offer ten thousand rivers of oil, had we such store, (which no man ever had or could have) would such an offering satisfy for our sins, and procure God's favour? or if that will not do, suppose we should do as Abraham did, offer our first-born; which sacrifice must needs excel any other. But, alas! such a sacrifice God would reject. But then,

Repentance cannot justify a sinner, or procure God's favour.

5. Will not repentance give a man ease, or relieve him under the guilt of sin, when it lies heavy on his conscience? No, it cannot; for then David's heart needed not to have failed him, nor he to have roared out in distress and horror, for who had greater repentance than he, who watered his couch with his tears, "I make my bed to swim, I water my couch with tears, I am weary of my groanings," Psal. vi. 6. How! who would be weary of such groanings, or the shedding of such tears, which could wash away the guilt of sin, and appease an accusing conscience? But, alas! alas! he found no relief that way, but still cries, "Lord, be merciful to me, for I have sinned against thee; wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin," Psal. li. 2, 3. He (with the Publican and all convinced sinners) saw a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1; in which he must be washed, which is, the blood of Christ.

No more can a reformation of life.

6. But will not a new course of life, a changed or reformed life give ease and procure a sinner's acceptance with God under the sense of sin and guilt? No, this will not do neither, though it is to be feared many trust to this as their last refuge. Will promises a debtor may make (and keep them) that he will run no more, or any further in his creditor's debt, to whom he owes ten thousand talents, pay off that old score or so vast a sum? Besides, who can promise God that he will sin no more, there being no "Just man on earth, that doth good and sinneth not."

But to proceed,

The filth of sin distresses an awakened person.

II. The cause of a poor convinced sinner's crying to God for mercy is from the sense he hath of the filth of sin; I am (saith the soul) a man of unclean lips.

I. The convinced sinner sees the pollution of his heart. My heart (saith

he) is defiled; even in all the faculties of my soul is much sin. O, how depraved and dark is my understanding, how carnal is my mind, how rebellious my will, and how earthly my affections, how treacherous is my memory, and misled and misguided is oftentimes my conscience? "I am carnal, sold under sin," Rom. vii. 14, (saith the great apostle); "the good that I would I do not," ver. 19; "but what I hate that do I," ver. 15; "O, wretched man that I am." ver. 24.

2. Sin cleaves to our desires, and what weakness and inconstancy is there in our purposes and resolutions, and how oft have we broke our promises with God.

3. Sin more or less defiles our whole conversations, in our daily walk and converse with men. My brethren, though a believer is sanctified in every part, in every faculty, yet it is but in part in any; and though his conversation is holy, yet is not his conversation without sin.

III. Nay, my brethren, sin also defiles all our graces, or cleaves to every grace of the Spirit in believers.

1. Some make a great noise of their faith, and place it in the room of perfect obedience to the law of works; but, alas! faith itself needs a Saviour (I mean the sin that cleaves to our faith); we may all say, we believe, Lord, help our unbelief. Abraham, though at one time he was strong in faith, giving glory to God, yet, alas! how weak was his faith at another time, "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; I am afraid they will kill me for thy sake." Can any say, there is no sin, no doubts, no weakness, no fear attends their faith.

2. Sin cleaves to our love. Do we love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength, and our neighbours as ourselves? This is, 'tis true, our duty, but we can as soon perfectly keep the whole law as thus to love God; for though our love be sincere (and so it is said to be perfect) yet no man loves God in the highest degree of perfection. O, how is our love divided between God and the creature; yet I deny not, but every true Christian loves God with a superlative love. Again, do we love the Church and every believer as we ought? Do we love our brother as ourselves, and miss not at any time, fail not in heart, word, or deed?

3. Sin cleaves to the grace of humility. What think you, is there no pride, no high thought, nor conceitedness in our hearts, of our wisdom, gifts, parts or learning? do we always esteem others better than ourselves?

4. And then as to temperance and sobriety. Do we never exceed in the inordinate love of the creature, or in the use of lawful things? Do we never exceed the bounds of temperance in eating, drinking, nor sleeping, nor in buying, selling, and possessing? Do such who have wives live as if they had none? Do you never exceed in weeping or worldly sorrow, nor in earthly comforts? Do they that buy, buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it.

4. And then as to the grace of patience. Doth no sin defile or cleave to that grace? Are any so patient that they are never disordered, having no inordinate passion, no impatience under afflictions, trials, losses, and cruel reproaches, and great provocations? Are there any who are quite free from wrath and all degrees of murmuring, or undue complainings under God's hand, or never are disturbed in their spirits, nor moved to anger?

III. Sin also cleaves to all our duties.

1. Take repentance as it is a grace or as a duty, hath it not many defects cleaving to it? Who can mourn for sin as much as he ought? Hath not our sin murdered our Saviour? Is there not an infinite evil in sin, considered objectively? Can then a finite creature mourn sufficiently in the sight and sense of sin? Have we not fought against God and contemned his authority, resisted his will, grieved his Spirit, abused his patience? What kind of sorrow doth such sins call for?

2. What sin attends us in preaching and hearing the Word? Are we never secretly lifted up when men foolishly praise us? or do we preach with that zeal, power, and constancy as wrought? and do we always hear the Word as it is the Word of God? and also with that holy awe, diligence, and reverence that becomes us? and are our hearts never wandering abroad in the time of hearing, nor are ever drowsy nor weary under it? and do we always believe and obey the Word preached, and take the reproofs of the Word kindly, and never offended with the poor preacher while he discharges his duty with wisdom and faithfulness?

3. I might also proceed in the like manner, in speaking to the duty of reading God's Word.

4. As to the duty of prayer. Do we pray always in faith, lifting up holy hands without wrath or doubting? Do we never restrain prayer from God, nor are we at no time remiss in it?

Sin cleaves to the lips and lives of the best of saints.

Sin cleaves to every grace.

Sin cleaves to our faith.

Sin cleaves to that love we have to God and to one another.

1 Cor. vii. 29-31.

Sin cleaves to all the duties the saints perform.

5. I might also speak of the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and of Church-communion, and,

6. Of the duty of distributing to the poor.

7. Of all relative duties; as those of husbands to wives, and wives to husbands; parents to children, and children to parents; masters to servants, and servants to masters. And also of the duties of one neighbour to another. Are there any who never fail in any of these duties, or hath not every one need to cry out, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!"

Thirdly. Every one hath cause to cry out and to plead the mercy of God in Christ, in respect of the power of sin. What bones hath sin broken, what strong men, strong in grace, have been worsted and overcome by sin? David cries out, "All my bones are broken." Nay, my brethren, how did it crush the Son of God himself, and cause him to sweat great drops of blood when it lay heavy upon him, he standing in our law place.

Fourthly. They cry out and beg mercy in respect of the demerit of sin, or from that sense they have of the severe judgment of God, or the severe punishment that is due to it. Alas! it deserves infinite wrath, even the least sin that a child of God commits, for the satisfaction of Christ doth not lessen the demerit of sin though our Lord hath borne it for us, yet sin is not less evil, nor less deserving as in itself.

Fourthly and lastly, I shall show you what care God takes of such that are humbled at his feet, or cry out for mercy through Christ's merits, as being in themselves undone, or show the happy state such are in.

I. As God hath found out a ransom, a Saviour, or hath laid help upon one that is mighty, so this ransom is applied to these souls; they find help in this Almighty One.

II. And as the Father laid all the sins of the elect upon his own Son, and he hath paid all their debts, so those souls who are thoroughly humbled, and are brought to believe in Jesus, are justified and pardoned. He went away rather justified. The Pharisee was not justified, but this publican was. "He that humbles himself shall be exalted," saith our Lord, which words he uttered to show that the publican was humbled, and therefore was exalted. Justification, my brethren, tends to lift up, or exalt a poor sinner, for such are brought into a state of peace and of union and communion with God; their persons are in the special love and favour of God, nay, they are the sons and daughters of God; this our Lord discovered to Zaccheus. Such who are the true spiritual seed of Abraham, and in the covenant of grace with God as Abraham was, and so the children of God.

III. They are the very proper objects of mercy, or such to whom God sent his Son to call, to heal, to seek, and to apply the precious virtue of the blood of the covenant unto, "The whole need not a physician but them that are sick; but go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Matt. ix. 13.

IV. By virtue of their receiving the Spirit, by which they are united to Jesus Christ, they have his righteousness imputed to them, and have interest in all the riches of Christ, and therefore, though poor in themselves, yet are very rich, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich," Rev. ii. 9. None that are poor in spirit, poor in themselves, but are rich in Christ. Such that think they are increased in goods, and have need of nothing, are poor and miserable; and such who see they have nothing, possess all things, because they have Christ.

V. God looks upon these persons with a look of approbation, affection, and benediction, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word," Isa. lxvi. 2. Such that look upon themselves with abhorrence God looks upon with acceptance.

VI. God doth not only look unto them, but also he dwells with them, yea, dwells in them. "For thus saith the high and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit," Isa. lvii. 15. Well, but why will God dwell in such spirits, and what advantage will this be? See the next words, "To revive the spirits of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones:" their spirits would otherwise fail, and their souls would faint. What can administer greater comfort, and what can be higher honour, than to have God by his Spirit in us, and dwell with us? "For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," 2 Cor. vi. 16. They have life in them, the Holy Spirit is that life, which is as "A well of water, springing up unto everlasting life," John iv. 14.

VII. See what care God takes of such; no sooner did the prophet see his own filthiness,

or that he was a man of unclean lips, but he cries out he was undone; and immediately God sent one of his angels to him to comfort him, "Then flew one of the seraphims unto him, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar and laid it on my mouth." This shows the work and office of the Holy Spirit, who applies the blood of Christ, the righteousness and merits of Christ, and comfort to a poor undone sinner, denoting the great speed and haste God takes to comfort poor, dejected, humbled, and broken-hearted sinners; as if God should say to one of the seraphims, Be gone, behold, my servant Isaiah is almost pressed down into despair under the sense of his sin, and uncleanness of his lips—assure him that all his sins are passed away and pardoned for ever. The Holy Spirit must first come, and touch our hearts and lips, before we have ease and cure; "And he laid it upon my mouth, and said this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged."

VIII. Our Lord pronounceth in the first place (in the beatitudes) blessedness to them who are humbled souls, who see their own nothingness, and cry to God for mercy, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 3. They are the only heirs of eternal glory above, and have not only a true title to it, a right to the heavenly inheritance, but a proper meetness for it also: and, therefore, such that are poor in Spirit, who see their own poverty, and cry unto God for mercy as this publican did, are exalted and in a blessed state and condition.

APPLICATION.

Infer. I. I infer that sin is of all undoing nature, it hath brought all men into a woeful state and condition. Adam was once rich (and we in him), but by sin he and all his off-springs were undone, and so remain in a miserable state until they are transplanted out of that dead root and united to the second Adam, or implanted into Jesus Christ.

Infer. 2. We may also infer that the Pharisees and self-righteous ones are woeful blind, for if believers see themselves (as in themselves) to be so poor and miserable, and cry unto God to have mercy upon them, what blindness is in such persons, who think themselves rich and have need of nothing.

II. Admirat. God's love in Jesus Christ, who hath out of his infinite wisdom, grace, and goodness, found out a way to enrich undone sinners, and to raise our admiration.

1. Consider that the remedy was provided before we were wounded, a garment prepared to cloth us before we were naked and needed it.

2. Consider also that God hath raised us to greater honour, and bestowed better riches in the second Adam than those we lost in the first, "Where sin abounded grace hath much more abounded," Rom. v. 20.

3. Consider, God hath not only brought us into Christ, into a better state, or bestowed greater riches and honour upon us, but it is also firm, more sure and abiding: we can be undone no more. all our wealth and riches is put into a safe hand to secure it for us; it is all laid up in our head, in our Lord Jesus Christ! Our life, and riches, "Our life is hid with Christ in God." It is hid with Christ, by virtue of our union with him: as Christ is one with the Father, so are believers one with Christ, "Because I live ye shall live also," John xiv. 19.

Trial III. Examine yourselves. Did you ever see yourselves in a miserable state, ever made sensible of your spiritual poverty, and that you stood in need of God's mercy? did you see justice and Divine wrath pursuing you (like as the avenger of blood pursued the man-slayer), and are you still at the foot of God, and poor in spirit, bewailing the filth and corruptions of your own hearts, and evil of your lives or are you not proud and conceited, and glory in what you have received, or think you are full. O, let us all see how it is with us in this case.

Quest. But why doth the Lord bring poor sinners into such a condition as to see themselves to be in a miserable state, as in themselves, and to cry out to God for mercy, when he is about to advance them to a state of happiness?

Ans. 1. It is to imbitter sin unto our souls, that we may know how hateful it is unto God, and that we may the more sympathize with our blessed Lord in his sorrows (when our sins lay heavy upon him): though we satisfy not Divine justice yet is reasonable we should mourn and be grieved that we have offended, and be in bitterness for him whom we have pierced.

Why God brings poor sinners to see the great need they have of his mercy, Zech. xii. 10.

2. It is to show the insufficiency that is in us, to help or relieve ourselves, and that we might be abased to the dust, and for ever be delivered from pride and vain-glory, and have no confidence in the flesh. Man being born under a covenant of works Phil. iii. 3. is naturally a proud creature, but God, by letting in true light into our understandings,

discovers our odious and filthy hearts to us, and so pulls down our pride and abaseth us to the dust.

3. It is to discover the absolute necessity of Jesus Christ to us, and the great need we have of such a Saviour, of such a physician, and of such a righteousness, which Christ hath wrought out for us, to render us lovely in the sight of God.

4. That we might be brought to ascribe all the glory of justification, sanctification, and salvation unto God; or that it is wholly of God's mercy and free-grace, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and so magnify rich bounty, mercy, and goodness as long as we live in this world. It being the grand design of God in the work of our redemption to advance his honour, and the honour and high praise of his blessed Son, our redemption, for ever. Who can admire sovereign and undeserved mercy more than they that have been in the depths of sorrow and misery, and are for ever delivered and raised to glory and eternal happiness?

5. Moreover, that we may never trust in ourselves, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we might not trust in ourselves but in God that raised the dead." Though we are weak in ourselves, yet are strong in the Lord; and though sinners in ourselves, yet righteous in the Lord; and though dead, yet God can raise the dead; and though we have no sufficiency in ourselves, yet that the grace of God is sufficient for us.

Inform. IV. This may inform us what the reason is that sinners cry out no more as being distressed. Alas! they see not, know not their misery, or that woeful state they are in; nor, indeed, will they until their eyes are opened, they neither know God, the law, sin, nor themselves.

V. And from hence, also, we may be informed what kind of persons they are in their own sight that God justifies, or when he pronounceth them righteous and pardoned persons; viz., they are sensible sinners, humble, and nothing in their own eyes, and that such who justify themselves God justifies not, but, contrarywise, leaves them under His wrath and condemnation; and therefore all self-righteous persons may see cause from hence to be afraid and tremble.

VI. And lastly. Let this be matter of encouragement to great, nay, the vilest of sinners, to fly to God in Jesus Christ. O, what great sinners have obtained mercy! many of those very sinners that put to death the Lord of life and glory found mercy; nay, our Saviour willed his disciples to offer mercy first to them when he gave them commission to go and preach the Gospel to all the world, and begin at Jerusalem. Let those very persons that cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him," (as if our Lord should say), see what mercy and bowels, what pardon and mercy is in my heart. And thus I close with this parable.

THE

PARABLE

OF A

SERVANT PLOUGHING AND FEEDING CATTLE.

SERMON XXV.

But which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do.—Luke xvii, 7—10.

THE scope of this parable seems to be two-fold.

1. To discover what kind of servants we ought to be, namely, such who are wholly devoted to our Lord's service, and to attend upon him at all

The scope of this parable.

times, though they did neglect some things that good servants in the proper season ought to do or might do.

2. To discover that no thanks, no honour is due to us from Christ our Lord and Master for what service we are capable to do; no, though we do all things he commandeth us yet we merit nothing, or deserve not so much as thanks from the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Which of you having a servant ploughing, &c.”

As the learned note, our Lord refers to servants, who, in those countries and in those days were bought with their money, or taken in war, and so were wholly their masters, and at their command, and all their time, and all they could do, was to be laid out in obedience to them, and to attend upon and honour their master.

Such servants are, or ought we to be to the Lord Jesus Christ, we being bought with a price, yea, with the price of his own blood.

“Will say to him by and by, when he is come from the field, go and sit down to meat?”

“And will not rather say, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself,” &c.

Supper-time being come, though our servant has laboured hard, yet we do not say to him, go, eat your supper first; or, at leastwise, they did not say so to their servants; no, but provide my supper first, before you serve yourselves. Such servants we should be to the Lord Christ, not attend upon him when we have served ourselves; no, but though we have done that business he commandeth us, yet still we must attend upon him and forbear eating and drinking, or minding any secular business; if our master hath any further service for us to do, we must observe his motion, and honour him, and prefer his glory above our good, though we go with hungry bellies.

We must observe the proper season to feed and provide for ourselves, and not neglect our attendance on Jesus Christ.

Secondly, And when we do thus, even everything our Lord requires of us, we are not to think we deserve anything of Christ Jesus, but say, we are thine, Lord, our lives are thine, our time is thine, our talents are thine, our service is thine, and we, when we have done all, see cause to be ashamed we have done it no better; we deserve to be blamed rather than commended, much less not think that we deserve wages, or thanks from Jesus Christ for what we have done.

USE.

1. From hence we may note, that as we are bought by Jesus Christ, we must not seek to please ourselves, in anything, in the neglect of our attendance upon him.

2. That we are wholly our Lord's and not our own, being obliged to love him with all our hearts, souls, and strength, and that our labour for our Lord must not cease, until the Lord cease commanding us, or we have no more to do for his glory in this world, which cannot be said until we die.

3. That we should not murmur if our Lord should command us to do such things that may seem hard to the flesh; no, but attend upon his word and ordinances, when some may say perhaps you may first mind yourselves and families, and provide what you and they need.

4. That when we have done all Christ hath commanded us, to acknowledge all is of free grace, and that we deserve not anything at his hands.

5. That the Lord may delay allowing us that which we may think is necessary in our time, and yet commanded us to show our sincere love to him, and honour him with a ready mind and willing heart.

6. That we should not so much mind what we shall have or receive at the hands of Christ in doing his work, as we should to glorify him and promote his honour, owing Christ to be our master, and we his servants.

1. This may reprove such who call themselves Christ's servants, but choose rather to serve themselves first, and their Lord afterwards; when they have done their own business, and have little else to do, they will obey Christ's commands, and attend upon him and hear his word.

2. Also it reproves such that murmur at the service of Christ, thinking it too hard.

3. And such that are proud and conceited, or that look for praise from men for what they do, or expect something at Christ's hands for what they have done.

4. Such that mix their own faith and obedience with Christ's merits, these cannot think they are unprofitable servants, if by their inherent righteousness they are justified in God's sight.

Lastly, By this we may know who is a true and faithful servant of Jesus Christ; it is the honour of Christ such seek in all he doth, and accounts himself unworthy of the least

favour and mercy of God, and also will do whatsoever the Lord Jesus Christ hath commanded should be done.

THE

PARABLE

OF

CHRIST THE DOOR INTO THE SHEEPFOLD.

SERMON XXVI.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep.—John x. 1, 2, &c.

THE holy and beloved disciple, the evangelist John, only hath recorded this parable, and (as I think) but one more.

The scope and main design of this famous parable (as our annotators

The scope and design of this parable.

call it) is, as I conceive,

1. To prove our blessed Lord Himself was the true Shepherd, the true Messiah, and only Saviour.
2. That all that came before him pretending that they were the Messiahs, or teachers sent of God, and yet had not their mission from the Father, were false teachers or thieves and robbers.
3. To show that the Scribes and Pharisees and the teachers of those times were none of the shepherds of the sheep of Christ, but thieves and robbers also.
4. To show the nature of the infinite love of the true shepherd to His sheep.
5. To prove that no man can be a true leader or shepherd who is not sent of God.
6. To discover who the sheep of Christ are, and their great safety and happiness. Some conceive that this parable reacheth to verse 31.

Ver. x. 27, 28.

The parts opened.

But to proceed to the parts thereof. Our lord confirmeth the truth of that he is about to say, as he commonly used to do.

“Verily, Verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door in the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way,” &c.

The sheepfolds, I find, in those eastern countries were houses (and not like unto those among us) which had doors, by which both the shepherd and the sheep entered in. By the sheepfold is meant the Church of God, which, under the law, was the national Church of the Jews, or the commonwealth of Israel; and the door into that Church was by God’s institution by the first birth, i. e., all the seed of Abraham proceeding from Isaac were born members of that Church, by virtue of that covenant God made with Abraham and his carnal seed as such, though none of his male children could partake of all the privileges and blessings of that legal Church without they were first circumcised, which rite did not only simply belong to the children of godly parents that proceeded from Isaac, but to the children of ungodly or unbelieving parents also, which some good men among us seem not willing either to see or confess; they pretending to prove the right of infants (born of believers) from thence to baptism and church membership under the Gospel, which is far enough off to prove any such thing; for the Church of God under the Gospel dispensation is not national but congregational, it consisteth not of the natural seed of believers as such, but only of those who are the true spiritual seed of Abraham, who were comprehended in the covenant of grace, or free promise of God made to Abraham, namely believers, or such who obtain the faith of Abraham, and walk in the steps of Abraham. And if any man be in Christ he is one of Abraham’s seed, and an heir according to the promise. Gal. iii. 29; it is

The Church under the law was national, but under the Gospel it is congregational.

the second birth that gives right to Gospel Church privilege ; yet, pray note, it was not the covenant as such that gave right to the male children of the Jews to circumcision, but God's mere positive precepts given to Abraham ; and so it is Christ's own mere positive precept or institution that gives right to baptism under the Gospel, and not a person's being in the covenant of grace : for both those ordinances were of mere positive right, depending wholly on the pleasure and will of the great lawgiver ; so that if there is no precept nor president for infants' baptism and Church membership in the New-Testament, that tradition is gone for ever, and all the pretended proofs taken from circumcision and the covenant made with Abraham's natural seed as such signifieth just nothing, unless it be to please men's fancies, and blind the eyes of the ignorant.

Circumcision under the law, and baptism under the Gospel, of mere positive right.

From hence note, that Christ in His institution is the door into the visible Church under the Gospel ; the door is of God's appointment, or of his ordination, and not that of man's making.

Secondly, Christ is not only thus the door into the Church, but he is also the door into heaven, even as He is the only way to salvation, so He is also the door.

“Neither is there salvation in any other,” &c., Acts iv. 12, John xiv. 6.

1. My brethren, whatsoever Christ is made to us, as He is the way into the Church, and the way unto the Father, that He is made as He is called the door.

2. And whatsoever may be said of the usefulness, end, and excellency of a door into a sheepfold, or into a house, in respect of appointment and necessity (according to the scope of this parable), that is the Lord Jesus made as mediator by the Father, as a spiritual door both into the Church below and into heaven above.

First, A door refers sometimes to a house, and sometimes to a sheepfold ; so, Christ the door, sometimes refers to the Church, and sometimes to salvation itself, and also sometimes to the success the Gospel meeteth with, which door Christ is also, for all success of the Gospel is by Christ : “A door was opened unto me of the Lord,” 2 Cor. ii. 12, &c. ; “For a great door and effectual is opened to me,” 1 Cor. xvi. 9 ; “I have set before thee an open door,” &c. Rev. iii. 8.

Secondly, A door is appointed by the owner of a house, or the builder thereof, and so of a sheepfold, also the form and manner of it : so the great God, whose the flock is, hath constituted, ordained, or appointed His Son, considered as Mediator, to be the door in His institutions into the Gospel Church, and the way to heaven, and the door into it.

Thirdly, A door is fitted (by the wisdom of the shepherd who owns the sheep) every way to answer the great end and design thereof : so Christ is every way fitted, according to the wisdom of God, who contrived the whole platform of our salvation and of the Gospel Church, to answer His great end and design. Moreover, there is the like necessity of Christ to let us into communion with Himself here, and into heaven hereafter, as there is of a door into a sheepfold, or into a house, or palace, &c. ; it is by him we enter into both.

Christ is fitted by the Father as a door into heaven.

Fourthly, And such that know not, or cannot find the door into a house or sheepfold, such cannot enter into it ; so they that know not Christ, or cannot find him who is the only door, know not the way into the Church nor into heaven : no, all must find the power of the Spirit of Christ upon their hearts (as well as what Christ is made of God to all that are saved) and be truly regenerated, if they are by the Lord let into the Church below, and heaven above. Therefore, if men let any into the Church and not by the door, but some other ways, will they not be accounted worthy of great blame ? Look to it you that receive into the Church the carnal seed of believers as such, who know nothing of regeneration, or you receive adult unbelievers and unholy persons : will you open a door, that Christ, who hath the keys of David, hath shut ?

They that cannot find the door into the Church, or into heaven, cannot enter rightly into one, nor shall ever enter into the other.

Fifthly, A door into a palace gives such who enter in a full view of all the glory and excellencies thereof, or, if it be into a sheepfold, of all the benefits, safety, and privileges of that sheepfold. So Jesus Christ gives to believers who enter into the Gospel Church by Him a clear view of all the blessings, security, and privileges of the Church or House of God, they partake of the riches of grace, and take a view of the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ ; they by him enter first into a state of union with him, and into a state of life, justification, pardon, peace, communion, sanctification, adoption, and of free access unto the Father, and are fed there, lie down there, and have rest and safety there : in the Church is a place of security, it hath strong walls about it, “Walk about Zion, go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks,” Psal. lxxviii. 12, 13, &c.

He that climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

My brethren, as Christ is the door, so He is said to come in at the door, that is, by God's appointment, or by the ordination of the Father, from whom He had His mission to be both the door and the shepherd also. Now, for any to come and pretend themselves to be shepherds of the sheep, and teachers of the people, and have the conduct and government of a Church, who come not in by the door, that is, by the authority, commission, and appointment of God, or having no regular call from God, according to His ordination in the Gospel, they are thieves and robbers, and their design is to make prey of the sheep, or to shear them to have the fleece, but care not to feed the flock; nor will an human constitution or appointment of man give them any right to that work and office. Every true shepherd hath a true and right call from God; he that preaches the Gospel must be sent, and not thrust himself into the fold, or into the ministry, without a due and regular call, for such come not in at the door, but climb up some other way, and so are thieves and robbers, whose pride and ambition, or secular advantage, prompt them to do what they do, and are not owned by the Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that entered by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

Our Lord in these words shows His great mission, which He received of the Father, to be the only Mediator, Saviour, and great shepherd of the sheep, having before showed that all whom God sent not were thieves and robbers; and, indeed, the first argument the apostle uses to prove Christ to be an High Priest, is His regular call, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So, also, Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee," Heb. v. 4, 5. Aaron had a divine call to his office; and so had Christ, as he saith in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec," Psal. cx. 4.

The first thing that every minister is to do is to show by whose authority he is made a minister, or produce his mission to preach the Gospel, being sent according to the appointment of God in the New-Testament; he must prove he came in at the door, that is, by God's ordination and constitution, and that his call is *Jure Divino*; for, if he hath no Divine right or call of God, he comes not in at the door.

Now this call, or being sent, is either extraordinary, or ordinary: the Father gave His Son, as Mediator, an extraordinary call, and sent Him into the world, and He confirmed His mission by extraordinary miracles, and Christ gave His apostle also an extraordinary call and mission; but none have an extraordinary call now, no, only an ordinary call, viz., Christ having given them ministerial gifts and grace, and they being members of a true visible Church, and approved of by the Church, are sent or authorised (according to the rules Christ hath left in his Word, and authority given to each particular, regular congregation): and what regular Gospel call any can pretend to besides this, I know not.

See Dr. Tho. Goodwin and Dr. Owen.

"To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice," ver. 3. &c.

By the porter I understand is meant the Holy Ghost; for it is he that opened the hearts of men to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. The work of a porter is to open the door, and give entrance to persons who may be admitted into the house: now every man's heart is shut against Christ till the blessed Spirit opens the door.

"And the sheep hear his voice."

The sheep, historians tell us, in those countries will know the voice of their shepherd: so Christ's sheep know His voice, (i. e.) the true doctrine of Christianity; they do not only hear the voice of ministers, but the voice of the Son of God, whose voice raised them from the dead. This refers to the internal operations of Christ's Spirit on the soul of his people.

"And he calleth his own sheep by name."

The shepherds, also, in those eastern countries gave names to every one of their sheep; and our Lord, it is thought, alludes to that. The Lord Jesus knows all His saints, as He said to Moses, "I have known thee by name;" so He knows every saint by name, also where they live, and what estate and condition they are in.

"And leadeth them out."

The shepherds lead out their sheep into green pastures, and by the still waters, and into shadowy places in the heat of the day. So Christ leads His sheep out. Psal. xxiii. 1, 2, Cant. i. 7.

1. Out of themselves, wholly to rest upon Him for righteousness and justification, also for food, refreshment, succour, protection, shade, and safety, in the day of persecution.

2. He leads them out of the world, and from idolatry, and false ways of worship.

3. And out, also, into a visible profession of His truth, and into universal obedience to all His holy ordinances.

“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice,” ver. 4.

Our shepherds follow their sheep, but those shepherds always went before the sheep. So the Lord Jesus, the good Shepherd, went before His sheep; He went before them in His obedience and suffering, and hath left “us an example, that we (and all his sheep) should follow his steps,” 1 Pet. ii, 21; and hence they are said to follow “the Lamb whithersoever he goes,” Rev. xiv. 4. Also, His sheep will not follow a stranger; they know false teachers, such who hold not the Head, who neither preach the true Saviour, or not the true Christ, nor the true doctrine of Christ, and others not his true worship, and ordinances, though, through temptation and Satan’s delusions, Christ’s sheep may for a while be misled or carried away into errors, yet they are again recovered; for the elect cannot finally be deceived, so as to perish by damnable heresies.

“This parable spake Jesus, but they understood not what things they were he spake unto them,” ver. 6.

From hence it appears, that a parable is not easy to be understood; they did not know what our Lord meant by these metaphorical allusions; and therefore he condescended so far to them, as further to explain what he meant hereby.

“Then said Jesus again unto them, I am the door of the sheep,” ver. 7.

Before, He said He was the door by which the Shepherd entered in, here He saith He is the door of the sheep; He Himself entered in a regular way by His Father’s commission into His work and office, and He is the door by His commission given to His disciples, and of all His sheep, entrance or admission into the visible Church, but chiefly it may refer to Him as He the door into a state of peace, reconciliation, and union with God, and so into heaven itself.

“All that came before me, were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them,” ver. 8.

Not that the holy prophets, who went before Him, were thieves and robbers; God forbid; He speaks not of them, but all that went before Him, who pretended they were the Messiah; or such who were false prophets, and deceivers, that bore no testimony to our blessed Saviour, but taught another way to be saved, than by the Son of God, (who was to come and suffer for our sins in the flesh, even in that flesh which He was to assume in the womb of the virgin, or the same flesh and blood that the children partake of, (Heb. ii. 14, 15). And as all such who went before Him, who were false Christs, or false teachers, were thieves and robbers, so are all those false Christs and false prophets and teachers that come after Him; but His elect, as they did not follow the false prophets of old, so they do not, will not, follow such cursed deceivers, who He foretold would after Him arise, and beguile many.

“I am the Door,” ver. 9.

See how our Lord repeats the same great truth of His being the Door, as if He should say, There is no salvation but by Me; no obtaining eternal life, except ye believe in me; no coming to the Father but by Me. John xiv. 6; “He that findeth me, findeth life,” Prov. viii. 35; and he that knoweth and followeth My doctrine, shall find the way into the sheepfold, and be led into green and fat pastures; Psal. xxiii. 1, 2.

“If a man enter in he shall be saved,” &c.

He that believeth on Me shall be saved; he that obtains true faith in Christ finds the door to peace and safety.

“He shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

He shall find whatsoever his soul needeth, or whatsoever is truly good, (*i. e.*) he shall have grace and peace here, and eternal life hereafter.

Go in and out; that is, he shall go into the pastures where I feed my sheep, viz., into, the assemblies of my people, and out, and be blessed in coming in and in going out, in lying down and in rising up.

“The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy,” v. 10.

Though by the thief here may be meant any deceiver, yet perhaps our Lord chiefly may by this thief refer to Satan. Indeed, when deceivers come, Satan, the grand thief, comes, whose purpose is to steal, kill, and utterly to destroy. Many deceivers are deceived, and they may not come with an intention to kill and destroy, but that is Satan’s design. Yet the poisonous doctrine of grand impostors kills and destroys all that suck it in. I come regularly in at the door, deceivers climb up some other way; and that shows they come not to feed the sheep, but to make a prey of them.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it much more abundantly."

"That they might have life," that is, my sheep, mine elect, or them that my father hath given to me, that was the reason I came into the world; it was with an intention and absolute purpose to save them for ever. They were dead in sins and trespasses, and condemned, or under the sentence of death and wrath, and I am come to bear that sentence, and suffer that wrath that was due to them, or to die in their stead, "the just for the unjust;" unless I came and lay down my life for them, they could not live; I am come to discharge them from condemnation, to acquit them, that they by me might have the life of union, and have a principle of spiritual life infused into them, and have the life of justification and of sanctification, and the life of comfort and consolation, and of glorification also.

"And that they might have it much more abundantly;" or a life far exceeding that life they had once in the first Adam, a righteousness far exceeding man's original righteousness; also a more sure and certain life, a life that far excels in its nature and quality; for they being united to me, their immutable head, cannot die, "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. So, in quantity, it is much more abundant, more abundant peace, joy, and comfort, their joys shall be full, they shall drink, "yea, drink abundantly," Cant. v. 1, and their peace be like a river, Jesus Christ is their life, and, O, what a superabounding life is in the Lord Jesus Christ!

"I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

I. Christ is the chief shepherd of the sheep, and "When the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory," 1 Pet. v. 4.

(1.) All other shepherds are his servants, they have their authority from Christ the chief shepherd.

(2.) All particular flocks or each company of true believers are under the care of the Lord Christ.

(3.) And so is also the whole universal Church; he provides, leads, feeds, and governs them all.

II. Jesus Christ is the great shepherd, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. xiii. 20. He is endowed with almighty power, no lion, no enemy, no devil, can rescue one sheep out of the hands of this shepherd, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," John x. 28.

III. Christ is a wise shepherd.

(1.) He is the wisdom of God, nay, the only wise God.

(2.) He knows all his sheep throughout all the world, the sheep of ten thousand folds, he knows their names, their hearts, their thoughts, their wants, their diseases, their fears, their sorrows, their temptations, trials, and dangers, and knows how to supply all their needs.

IV. Jesus Christ is the good shepherd, a loving, tender-hearted and compassionate shepherd; "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young," Isa. xl. 11.

V. Christ is a living shepherd; he lives when other shepherds die; he can raise his sheep that are dead to life.

But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, leaveth the sheep and fleeth, and the wolf catcheth the sheep, ver. 12.

An hired servant will not expose his life for the sheep, but the owner perhaps will do as David did, he will run great hazards before he will lose his sheep. He that taketh care of Christ's sheep merely for filthy lucre is an hireling, and he cares not what becomes of the flock; so he hath but the fleece he matters not though the sheep perish, so that he hath his wages; he seeks not them, but their's, and this shows he is a false teacher; deceivers and cruel wolves may enter and devour the flock for all him.

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep," ver. 14, 15.

I am no hireling, I have tender bowels to my sheep, and a peculiar knowledge of love and approbation of them all, and my Father knoweth me perfectly, and I have a perfect knowledge of my Father, I know his divine essence, his eternity, his decrees, and counsels. "My Father and I are one." In these words he shows that he is the great, the chief, and the good shepherd indeed, because this maketh it appear that Christ is the great, the good, and only wise God; for none hath a perfect knowledge of God but God himself, or he that is one in essence with the Father.

"And other sheep have I, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring," &c.

Our Lord refers here to the Gentiles, and he calls them His sheep, that is, His elect among the heathen nations, they were His sheep decretively, though then in their sins and idolatry, and not His sheep actually, they not having then the nature of His sheep.

I shall go no further, but observe one or two points of doctrine.

Doct. That Christ's sheep lay dead, dead in sin, and unless He came to give them life, they could not live.

1. They were dead in a law sense, the sentence of death had passed upon them.

2. They were without a principle of Divine or spiritual life. And,

(1.) Such that are dead cannot quicken themselves. Moreover,

(2.) No angel could satisfy for sin, which brought this death upon them, and on all mankind.

(3.) And the law could not give them life, "For if there had been a law that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. iii. 21.

(4.) It must be by Christ alone, because that death which we were sentenced to die, and were under, He must undergo that gives us life.

(5.) And he must be such a person also that could quicken or raise himself from the dead, and who could do that but he that was God? he must be man, or else he could not die, and also he must be God, or else he could not satisfy; and therefore he must be God and man in one person, for God could not die, nor a mere man satisfy Divine justice.

(6.) It must be one that could quicken his dead sheep, and raise them to life, and conquer Satan, who had power over death.

Quest. What a life is it Christ came to give His sheep?

1. Ans. I answer, it is a discharge from that sentence of death, that passed upon them in the first Adam, and by the law, that they might be freed from that obligation they were laid under. "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," Rom. v. 18. Or, as all in Adam died, so in Christ, all united to Him, or whom He was the common head of, are made alive.

2dly. Christ came to give them life by infusing a vital principle into them by which they are quickened, "Wherein also you are risen with Him through faith of the operation of God, and you being dead in your sins and uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened," Col. ii. 12, 13. This life is by His infusing of His Spirit into their dead souls.

(1.) And this life it first appears in convictions.

(2.) In regeneration.

(3.) In a farther progressive work of mortification and sanctification.

3dly. They shall also have the life of glorification.

(1.) And they shall be all made like to Christ, both in body and soul. Phil. iii. 21.

(2.) Be crowned with glory. To be crowned with glory, is to have the highest glory creatures are capable of, they shall sit with Christ on His throne, and judge the world with Christ. 1 Cor. vi. 2.

For, is Christ a King and their Bridegroom crowned? yea, well then they are His Queen, and shall be crowned also, and have the same glory with Him, they being "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17.

3dly. They shall be with Christ where He is, and behold His glory, and have His celestial attendance or retinue; this is the life Christ came that they might have.

Quest. Why shall Christ's sheep have this life?

Ans. Because Christ lives, "Because I live, you shall live also," John xiv. 19. This refers to the twofold life of Christ.

1. To Christ's life on earth; I now live (as if Christ should say) on earth for you, to procure or work out a righteousness and life for you by my actual obedience (because I live.) He lived that life as our Surety for us, to obtain the life of justification, and a title or right to glorification, and if Christ lived this life on earth for His sheep, they shall have life in both these respects.

2dly. Because Christ lived after He was dead, and doth live for ever for them. "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore," Rev. i. 18. Well, what of this?

Quest. Some may say, wherein lies the stress of this argument? (i. e.) because Christ lived after He was dead, and now liveth, therefore His elect shall live?

See my Golden Mine, which opens the latter part of this parable.

Note. The substance of what here is said was delivered at the funeral of Mr. James Willmott, June 8., who died Jan. 5. 170..

What a life Christ's sheep have.

Ans. It is the greatest argument of all.

1. Because He died to pay our penal debt, or debt of eternal punishment, our sins were laid upon Him, charged on Him as our Surety, and He was carried to prison, and kept awhile under death; death we owed, yea, such a death as to pacify divine wrath, or God's offended justice. Now if Christ our Surety lives no more, or riseth not again, we are undone; for our life of justification, as it refers to a discharge from hell and wrath, depends wholly upon Christ being discharged out of prison, and so living again. For if God doth not discharge Him, or justice doth not acquit Him, we cannot be discharged; and justice, be sure, would not acquit Him until our debt be fully paid. I shall (as if our Lord should say) in a little time die, but I shall live again, and because I shall live again you shall live also. I shall be raised from the dead, or have a resurrection, and, lo! I die personating you that are my sheep, and, when I rise again, I rise for your justification, to free you for ever from condemnation, and the wrath that is to come. Now, therefore, since He was discharged from death as our great Representative, all His sheep were then virtually discharged also in Him, and shall actually also be all discharged when they obtain a vital union with Him.

3rdly. Christ lives now in heaven for His sheep, and therefore they shall live; for he ascended up into heaven as their Representative or Forerunner, to show that justice had now nothing to charge His sheep withal; the Father took Him into heaven, and set Him down at His own right hand, and the world sees Him no more. To convince us that His righteousness will carry us to heaven, he shall convince the world of righteousness, "Because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more," John xvi. 8. 10. Nay, my brethren, all Christ's sheep were virtually glorified, when Christ was glorified in heaven; and therefore they shall all be glorified in heaven also. And see what a life Christ now lives in heaven, such a life His sheep shall have, because His life is the cause of their life, and the assurance of it, "Which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered," Heb. vi. 19, 20.

See what I say, Paul confirms in this place, viz., that Christ took possession of heaven for all his sheep.

4thly. Christ's sheep shall live by virtue of that union they have with Him, I mean that blessed vital union; doth the Head live always, and die no more? and can the body or any member thereof die! no, surely, that is impossible. Christ is the mystical Head, and all united to Him in the sense I speak of, are His mystical body, and our Head lives, ever lives, and therefore the whole body shall live also.

Shall the root of the tree live, and may the branches of such a root who can preserve its branches, (die which hath such abundance of sap in it)? Christ must not suffer one branch of His to be cut off! nor can He lose any member without having an imperfect body; will a body suffer a member to die and be cut off, that can preserve every one of them? And though a natural root, or a natural body, cannot preserve every branch or every member, yet Christ can, and He says, His sheep shall never perish. Therefore, because Christ lives, they shall live also.

5thly. Because Christ lives in us who are His sheep, therefore, we shall live; neither sin, devils, nor death can separate us from the Spirit of Christ, nor from the love of Christ; though death may separate our souls from our bodies, yet death cannot separate us from the Spirit, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter," John xiv 16. What to do, to abide with us for a day, a month, or a year? see what he says, "That he may abide with you for ever." My brethren, it is Christ in you the hope of glory, and having the Spirit in you, and dwell in you for ever is a sure ground of hope of your living for ever. "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Our souls or spirits are life, or alive, because the Holy Spirit dwelleth in them, or is the vital principle of our souls, as the soul is the vital principle of the body. Death doth not, cannot separate the Spirit of God from our immortal souls, and by that spirit that eternally remains in our souls, shall our bodies be quickened at the last day. "He that raised Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you;" not dwelleth in your dead bodies; no, but in your living souls.

6thly. Because Christ lives now in heaven for us a life of intercession; He prays that we may live, and not die, or that our faith may not fail, or never fail, and that the Spirit may supply all our wants, and that we may be kept alive in our souls, and be at last with Him, where He is. "He ever lives to make intercession for us," Heb. vii. 25. "Father, I will that they that thou hast given me, may be with me where I am," &c. John xvii. 21.

7thly. Because Christ lives as our Guardian, Surety, or Trustee, to take care of us, and to supply all our needs, and because we have eternal life in the seed and earnest of it now, and by the Spirit are also sealed unto the Day of redemption; and thus Christ is come that his sheep might have life, and have that life made sure to them for ever.

Eph. i. 13, 14,
vi. 30.

USE.

1. I infer the love of Christ to his sheep is wonderful.
 2. That it is not because our graces are alive and lively, or that we are in lively frame, that we shall live; no, but because he lives, and came that we might live, or because he lives with such a fulness in him.
 3. I infer the life of Christ's sheep is a sure and certain, nay, an everlasting life, "He that believeth in me shall never die," John vi. 47.
 4. Then let us not fear death, nor mourn inordinately for such that die in the Lord. But to proceed;
- "Other sheep have I that are not of this fold, and them I must bring," ver. 16.
2. Doct. That all Christ's sheep, or all his elect, who are not yet called, he must bring into a state of grace here, and unto a state of glory hereafter, he calls them the sheep. They are

1. His by choice, or decretively they are his sheep, "I have much people in this city," &c.—"The Lord knows them that are his."

In speaking to this,

1. I shall show what his bringing them doth denote.
2. Show why he must bring them.
1. It denotes they are before called afar off, or in a state of alienation from God.
2. It signifies his absolute design of love, and purpose of grace towards the Gentiles, "I know the thoughts I have towards you, thoughts of peace," &c. Jer. xxix. 11; "Yea, I have spoken it, and I will bring it to pass, I have purposed it, I will do it," Isa. xlvi. 11; Eph. i. 9, 10.
3. It denotes the means Christ was to use in order to bring them home who were not yet called, or their effectual vocation, and so his removing that enmity that was in their minds, and darkness that was in their understanding, "He will give them a new heart," Ezek. xxxvi. 26.
4. It implies his putting forth his almighty power in bringing them to God, or his working faith in them.

5. It denotes his bringing out of a state of wrath into a state of grace, or out of a state of death into a state of life and peace, and from a state of bondage into a state of liberty, and out of the world into his own fold, or his adding them to his Church, and making them fellow-heirs with the saints and household of God, Eph. ii. 19, 20.

6. Or as he died for them, so he will renew and save them.

Secondly, Why must Jesus Christ bring them?

Christ must bring them unto a state of grace,

1. Because they were given to him by the Father, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me," &c., John vi. 37.
2. Because he struck hands with the Father in the covenant of peace, and engaged to bring them, and his covenant he cannot break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips.
3. Because he died for them, and in their stead; "The just for the unjust, that he might bring them unto God," 1 Pet. iii. 18.
4. Because the decree of election must stand.
5. Because naturally they are all dead, and none but he can quicken them, and so bring them.
6. Because they are given to be members of his mystical body, and his body cannot be perfect without them.

USE.

2. O! wonder what Christ hath done to bring His sheep home, and also at that obligation he laid himself under to do this, "Them I must bring let it cost me what it will, my blood must be shed, I know, to bring them," "I lay down my life for my sheep," John x. 15. Our Lord showed to his disciples how he must suffer, Matt. xvi. 28.

2. This pre-supposeth there was a necessity of Christ bringing his sheep home, 'the glory of one holy attribute must not be eclipsed to magnify another, "That God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 26. We were all obliged

to keep the law, and to die for the breach of it, and Christ must therefore in our nature perfectly keep it, and die for our violation of it.

O, what love hath God showed to His elect in their redemption ! how is His love, His pity, His wisdom, His justice, holiness and power manifested thereby.

4. What fools are they, and how blind, that think they can return to God by a reformation of life, or by repentance, or by trusting in the mere mercy of God, having no saving knowledge of Christ crucified.

5. What evil is in sin, and at what a distance had it set us from God ?

6. Be thankful, and also be filled full of joy, you that Christ among the Gentiles hath brought home. And,

7. This also may stir us up to pray for the fulness of the Gentiles to be brought in ; for Christ must bring them in, even all of them that are His sheep

THE

PARABLE

OF

GOD BEING AN HUSBANDMAN.

SERMON XXVII.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman ; every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, &c.—John xv. 1, &c.

THE occasion of this parable some think, was from our Saviour's celebration of the holy supper ; for he newly had administered that unto his disciples. Others think, that he saw a vine as he passed over the mount of Olives ; see our late annotators. It is doubtful what might be the immediate occasion thereof.

We will therefore proceed to consider the scope and chief design of our Lord herein.

I. It may be, as I conceive, to show that God the Father is first in all spiritual operation, or the prime or original author of all spiritual blessings.

1. Is Christ, as Mediator, planted as the true vine ? Why our Lord shows us here that it was the Father, that blessed Husbandman, that planted him. He is the first and chiefest plant of God's right-hand planting. And

1. He was first planted in that eternal covenant, or holy compact, that was betwixt the Father and the Son.

2. And the Father also planted Him in this world, by preparing Him a body to do and suffer for us.

2. The Father also grafts or planteth all those plants that are united to the Lord Jesus Christ, provided they are truly united to His person, who are fruitful ; for such, and none but such, bring forth fruit to his praise.

2ndly, It may be to show the necessity of our being united to Jesus Christ if ever we bring forth fruit to God ; and that we have no ability or power of our own, to do any thing which is truly spiritually good.

3rdly, To show that in Christ mystical (for so is Christ taken sometimes) are some barren branches, I mean in the visible church, and that such shall in time be cut off and cast into the fire.

4. To discover to us that all who obtain to true spiritual union with Christ (who partake of the holy Spirit) do abide in Him, and bring forth fruit unto eternal life, as our Lord himself positively shows in ver. 16. and that there is a necessity of our abiding in Him, in order to our fruitfulness.

But to open the parts.

“I am the true vine,” &c.

That is, I am the true Messiah, the true Saviour, the right plant, and the true root of all grace ; even He only that communicates life unto the souls of men, or He whom my Fa-

ther hath ordained and planted to be supported of all his elect, out of whom they must grow, being first united to me if ever made fruitful unto God.

Quest. But why is Christ compared to a vine ?

1. A vine is not a stately and amiable plant to look upon, as some other trees are ; it is not so lofty as the cedar, nor so strong as the oak, nor so beautiful as the palm tree.— So the Lord Jesus in his humiliation appeared not to carnal eyes, to be beautiful or glorious, as many princes and kings of the earth, who shine forth in outward glory, beauty and grandure. But as it was prophesied of him ; “ He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and a root out of dry ground, he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” Isa. liii. 2. 3. So what form is there in a vine ?

2. Yet perhaps it may be, also because of the honourable names given to the vine above all other trees.

(1.) It is called a goodly vine.

(2.) The noble vine.

The vine hath honourable names given to it. Jer. ii. 21. Ezek. xvii. 8.

Now, however contemptible our blessed Lord seemed to be when on earth, yet he hath a name above every name, “ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,” Phil. ii. 9. (not at the naming of Jesus.) What a name hath he who is called the Son of God, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful Counsellor ; and what name excels His name, Jesus ? “ And his name shall be called Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins.” Matt. i. 21. And what a sweet and noble name is that Immanuel, “ They shall call his name Immanuel,” viz., God with us, or God in our nature.

Psa. lxxx. 9. Christ hath honourable names.

3rdly. A vine wonderfully aboundeth with sap and inward virtue, bearing and nourishing branches, which shoot forth perhaps beyond most plants. So the Lord Jesus Christ is full of spiritual sap, full of Divine life. “ In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Col. ii. 3. No vine is so full of sap as Jesus Christ is full of grace, “ And we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” John i. 14. And as the vine communicates of its sap to the branches, so doth the Lord Christ communicate of His grace. “ And of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace,” John. i. 16. And, O, how fruitful is the true Vine, and what a multitude of branches grow out of this sacred plant, many churches, and multitudes of true believers.

A of vine is full of sap, so is Christ the true vine.

4thly, The vine is a most fruitful plant ; what tree excells it in this respect ? when God promised fruitfulness, it is expressed by the vine ? “ Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine,” Psal. cxxviii. 3. But how fruitful then is the true Vine ? (1.) Unto God ! what glory hath He brought unto God the Father ! He produced much fruit to God in one day, even three thousand souls. (2.) And also how fruitful hath He been, and is unto us, in His life, and in His death, and in His resurrection, and in His intercession !

5thly, The vine bears and brings forth choice and pleasant fruit. What are more sweet and pleasant than grapes in some countries ? and how good, pleasant, and reviving is the richest wine ! it is a cordial, and makes glad a heavy heart, “ And wine that maketh glad the heart of man ;” “ Give wine to those that are of a heavy heart ; let him drink and forget his poverty,” Psal. civ. 15. Nay, wine is said to “ Cheer the heart both of God and man,” Prov. xxxi. 6, 7 ; “ When the new wine faileth the merry hearted sigh, and all joy is darkened,” Isa. xxiv. 11. Jesus Christ, the true Vine, far exceeds the vine in this respect ; for how pleasant is that fruit which he hath brought forth by His obedience unto God the Father ! it is of “ a sweet smelling savour,” Eph. v. 2 ; and unto us what can be so sweet and delicious, or so excellent and precious to our taste ? His “ love is better than wine.” Cant. i. 2 ; more cheering, more restorative, more reviving ; nor is there any such cordial in the world to revive a drooping and heavy heart ? How sweet is the vine of reconciliation, redemption, union and communion, pardon of sin, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost ! All is the fruit of the true Vine, for all this sweet fruit hath Christ brought forth, by His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession. And they that drink of this wine, forget their sorrows, it is so cheering, so reviving, so strengthening, so restorative, no cordial in the world is like this. “ Are the consolations of God small with thee,” Job xv. 11.

The vine bears choice fruit.

See the parable opened of the Marriage Feast. Book 3.

6thly, The vine is a shadowy plant ; we read of men “ Sitting under their own vines,” what pleasant arbours are made of vines ! So Jesus Christ is a shadow to us, he shadows us from the scorching heat of God’s wrath, and from the wrath, rage, and fury of the devil and

wicked men; and hence he is also said to be an "hiding place from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," Isa. xxxii. 2.

7thly, The fruit of the vine is bruised and pressed that the wine may flow forth, so was Jesus Christ bruised under the pressure of divine anger, that we might drink plentifully of his fruit. Without the bruising and pressing the grapes we can have no wine; so unless the Lord Jesus Christ had been bruised we could have had no wine of true consolation, viz., no peace with God, no justification, no pardon of sin; therefore it is said, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief," Isa. liii. 5.

But this spiritual Vine (as I hinted) far excels all vines.

Christ the true vine excels all vines.

(1.) Other vines only bear fruit but once a year, in the summer only; but this Vine bears fruit for our souls continually, both in the winter of afflictions and tribulation, or adversity, as well as in the summer of prosperity; go when you will to Christ the true vine, and you shall find he is full of fruit, full of grace; there is comfort in him, strength in him, consolation in Jesus Christ.

(2.) Other vines bear fruit only that comforts and cheers the body and natural spirits; but the fruit of this Vine cheers, revives, and strengthens our immortal souls.

(3.) The fruit of other vines, viz., grapes or wine, may and doth soon decay, and is good for little, but the fruit of the true Vine never decays, but yields us everlasting strength, everlasting consolation.

(4.) The fruit of other vines may be taken to excess, nay, it may surfeit, and prove mortal to him that receives it, but no man can eat or drink of the fruit of this vine to excess, neither can they be surfeited thereby; no, they that are Christ's friends are bid to eat and drink, yea, to drink abundantly of this fruit, Cant. v. 1.

(5.) Other vines are feeble or weak and need to be supported; but this Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the eternal God, and needs none to support him; no, he is able to support us, yea, the whole Church, and every weak believer, though never so feeble; and no marvel, because he "Upholds all things by the word of his power," Heb. i. 2, 3.

And my Father is the Husbandman.

That is, he is like unto, or may be compared to an Husbandman. Now God may be compared to an Husbandman in respect of these things following.

What an husbandman doth denote.

elect, whose hearts naturally are hard, rocky and barren. Our Saviour compares men's hearts to ground, Matt. 13; nay, to four sorts of ground.

See the parable of the sower opened, Book 1.

1. A husbandman hath ground to till, seed to sow, and trees to plant, and servants to employ; so and in like manner the blessed God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath ground to till or manure, viz., the hearts of all his

elect, whose hearts naturally are hard, rocky and barren. Our Saviour compares men's hearts to ground, Matt. 13; nay, to four sorts of ground.

2. God, also, hath seed to sow, which is his Word and holy doctrine; this is called "the incorruptible seed," 1 Pet. i. 23.

3. God also hath trees to plant; he, indeed, as you heard, first planted Jesus Christ, this true Vine; Christ was early planted, and reason for it, because all other spiritual trees or plants grow out of his root: also, all the godly are called "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he may be glorified," Isa. lxi. 3. Moreover, it is said, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap," Psal. civ. 16. All trees which our heavenly Father hath not planted will not bear any good fruit, but shall be plucked up.

4. God hath also servants to employ.

(1.) Jesus Christ considered as Mediator is God's servant, "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen," &c., Isa. xliii. 10; "Thou art my servant, O Israel," Isa. xlix. 3. The Lord Jesus is the best servant that God ever had, and he had done the hardest work; no other servant indeed could do what Christ hath done, nor ever brought that glory unto him; he did not only sweat at his work, but bled also, yea, sweat great drops of blood.

(2.) His ministers also are his servants whom he employs in his work; "We, then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain," 2 Cor. vi. 1. O, what an honour is it to be fellow-workers with Jesus Christ!

(3.) All believers are God's servants, whom he employs to work in his vineyard. Moreover, he having the command of all in heaven, earth and hell, he can make use and sometimes doth, of wicked men, and devils also to do some work for his glory.

Secondly, An Husbandman denotes one that is skilful, one that is wise, and knows how to manage husbandry. God is all-wise, wisdom itself; he is wise in heart, he knows all the mysteries of his own counsels, purposes, and decrees, and how to do all his work, and to do also in the proper time and season; some husbandmen are unskilful, but God is infinite in wisdom and knowledge, no winds nor weather, storms nor tempests, can hinder him from

working, no, not men nor devils. "I will work and who shall let it," Isa. xlii. 13.

Thirdly, an husbandman hath a stock; a great husbandman must be rich, and have a good stock to manage all, or to defray the charge of all his husbandry; now the great God cannot want a stock, for all things in heaven and earth are His. Jesus Christ is God's, "All things are your's, ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. He is not only His Son, but His servant; also (as you newly heard), all the riches of Christ as Mediator, he received from God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and all grace is His, the word and ordinances, and the promises are this husbandman's, the angels are His, and ministers are His, therefore he hath stores of riches, or stock sufficient to manage His spiritual husbandry.

God the Father hath a vast stock to manage his husbandry.

Fourthly, a husbandman's life is a laborious life, and great diligence also it requires. God is an Almighty workman. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Yet nothing is hard with God, though his work is too hard for men or angels to do, and that also as He is considered an husbandman. Is it not hard work to make hard and rocky ground good ground, and to cause seed to grow in rocky hearts? also to make trees that naturally are evil, and that bring forth evil and bitter fruit, to bring forth good fruit, and turn them into good trees; nay, he can cause trees that never bear, to bear abundantly, this husbandman can make the proud, humble; the carnal, spiritual; the earthly, heavenly.

God's work too hard for men or angels.

Fifthly, an husbandman denotes an employment that there is an absolute necessity of; for without the labour of the husbandman the world cannot long subsist or stand: if there was no ploughing nor sowing we should all in a little time be starved; we have need therefore to say "God speed the plough," so also there is as great necessity of this great and gracious husbandman's labour, for if God had not planted Jesus Christ the true Vine, we and all mankind must have perished for ever, and if He doth not plough up the fallow ground of our hearts none can, and also sow the seed of the Word, and plant us in Christ, we must perish; "Ye are God's husbandry," 1 Cor. iii. 9. It is this husbandman that causeth the seed to take root in our hearts; it is God that transports us out of the first Adam into the second Adam.

An absolute necessity of an husbandman's labour.

Sixthly, An Husbandman, in all his labours aims at his own profit, though thousands receive advantages by his cost and pains also. So God, in all he doth working about our salvation, designed his own glory: nay, in his creating, preserving, and governing the world, this was that which he aimed at; though his work properly profits him not. Can there be anything added to his perfections? but if we have profit, God reaps glory to his own name, that is, it tends to raise his honour and to magnify his name; for there is no addition can be made to his essential glory, "And he said, thou art my servant in whom I will be glorified," Isa. xlix. 3. These are the words of God the Father unto the Son as Mediator; also, in His forming us, renewing us by His Spirit, what doth He say? "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise," Isa. xliiii. 21; "The Lord hath made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. Also in our fruitfulness, our Lord saith, "Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," John xv. 8.

God in all his husbandry aims at his own glory.

Seventhly, An Husbandman fences in his ground, his fields, and makes walls about his vineyard; so the good Husbandman by his common providence preserves all the things that he hath made; all things are governed by his wise providence, but about His Church and every true Christian He makes a strong wall, that is, His special providence is over them, "Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about all he hath," &c., Job i. 10; "I will be to her a wall of fire," &c., Zech. ii. 5; which some think refers to the holy angels, who are compared to fire, and they are as a wall round about His people, that no wild beasts may hurt or devour them; for a wall of fire is the best defence in a wilderness from cruel and devouring beasts.

The spiritual husbandman makes a fence about his people.

Eighthly, An husbandman views, and often well observes how his corn and trees grow or thrive; and takes good notice which of his trees are barren, and also expecteth fruit according to the cost he bestows, and the pains he takes; so the holy God views and well observes His Church and all His saints, and takes notice how they grow in grace, and who are barren among them, and also looks for fruit according to the cost and pains He is at, "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes," Isa. v. 2. But,

God views his corn and his trees, to see how they thrive and bring forth fruit.

2ndly, God excels all husbandmen.

1. Other husbandmen many times want stock, and some of them want skill, and so wax poor, but in God are all perfections of riches and wisdom.

2. Other Husbandmen cannot cause it to rain, nor give increase to their labours and pains, or make their corn and trees to grow, but God giveth, and can give rain at His pleasure. "My word shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Isa. lv. 11.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away," ver. 2.

Some are in Christ mystical, viz., in His Church, who are not united to Christ by the Spirit, or by the faith of the operation of God, and these bring not forth fruit.

There is a two-fold being in Christ.

1. By an external or visible profession.

2. By virtue of a true spiritual union; and such that are internally in Christ, or have a vital union with him, shall bring forth fruit, see ver. 16.

"Every one in me that beareth not fruit."

By branches are meant professors of the Gospel, or Church-members; and some from the original read it, "Every branch that bringeth forth fruit in me," or that is not truly united to me. This seems to be the true sense of the text; for without a person is in Christ, or savingly united to the Lord Jesus, God regards not that fruit he brings forth; no, it must be fruit brought forth in Christ, or of such that are in Him: and what seeming fruit soever such bring forth that are not in Christ, God taketh away; hypocrites may bring forth some kind of fruit for a time, but it is not by virtue of their union with Christ, and therefore not good or right fruit; so that there is a being in Christ and not a being in Christ, or a being externally in Him, but not savingly or spiritually being in Him, and these bring not forth fruit in Him.

"He taketh away."

How God may be said to take away withered branches.

Either He takes away their gifts or leaves them to a carnal or worldly spirit, or else give them up to strong delusions, or lets them fall into some one sin or another, and so He cuts them off by the bill of Church discipline, or by excommunication, or otherwise He may take them away by withdrawing His restraining grace and common influences of His Spirit from them, or smite them with blindness of mind and hardness of heart, and that is a dreadful taking away of such fruitless persons, or unfruitful branches.

And every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth that it may bring forth more fruit.

The Husbandman prunes and purges fruitful plants; so God purges by His Spirit and by His Word, and sometimes by His rod, all fruitful Christians, "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is the fruit to take away his sin:" by this, that is by

What ways God hath to purge His saints.

affliction or sharp trials also, and this shall cause Jacob to blossom and bud. God hath many ways to purge His fruitful branches, though the blood of Christ alone cleanses from all sin, yet God may make use of this or that way to purify through Christ's blood our souls: by a live coal from the altar the

iniquity of the prophet was purged: Isa. vi. 7, 8, also Solomon saith, "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the Lord men depart from iniquity," Prov. xvi.

6. By God's mercy in Christ, and by His promises (which are sometimes called His truth,) which He hath made to them that believe in Jesus. "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1.

They are all fruitful, God will make more fruitful, "Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you," ver. 3. Now the traitor is gone out from you, ye *Annotators.* are clean; you that remain are holy persons, ye are clean, (i. e.) no hypocrites; but not clean by their own works, no, but by Christ's Word, by His promises, by believing in Him, and applying of His faithful Word to their souls, by His Spirit, for without that His Word cleanses none.

"Every branch."

Quest. Why are believers called branches?

1. Answ. The vine bears the branches; so Christ supports believers.

2. Branches grow out of the vine, and by partaking of the sap of the vine they bring forth fruit. So believers grow out of Christ that blessed Stock, they being first grafted into him: "From me is thy fruit found."

3. According to the nature of the vine such is the nature of the branches: so every believer grafted into Christ partakes of His Divine nature; they are like Christ, holy, humble, meek, &c.

"Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me," ver. 4.

Those words do not intimate there was a possibility that they might not abide in Christ, but.

To show the necessity of a vital union with Christ, no man being able until then to bear fruit of himself.

2. To show this union must remain, they must for ever abide united to Christ if they cease not in bearing fruit.

3. To show the reason why some who seem to be in Him, (or externally in Him by a visible profession, or in Christ mystical) do not bear fruit, viz., because they are not indeed and in truth savingly in Him.

By abiding in Christ is partly meant abiding, believing his Word; so ver. 7, by abiding, loving Him, or in the strength of their love and affections to Him, though a dismal storm was coming upon Him and them; and also abiding in His Spirit or remaining spiritual, and also abiding in keeping his commandments.

Our Lord strove by these words to convince them from whom, or by what means they should remain fruitful, and also to stir them up to a constant witness to him, and in using all means for their abiding in him, and faithful to him, and also to let them know the time was near when many who seemed to be in him, and to be his disciples would forsake him as indeed they did.

“I am the Vine, ye are the branches.”

Even as the vine feeds, nourishes, supports and makes the branches fruitful; so it is by Christ: we are fed, nourished, supported and made spiritually fruitful: and as the branch that is not in the vine partakes not of its sap, so such that are not united to Christ partake not of his spiritual virtue.

“He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.”

These words more clearly open our Lord's design, in repeating the same things, viz., that he or that person who hath a spiritual union with Christ, being in Him by His Spirit, and he in Christ by faith, shall never cease bearing fruit. Also, it is observable that our Lord presses them to see that He Himself did abide in them; neither of which was in their power, for the branches are passive in being grafted into the stock, the husbandman doth that, all know: so are we in our union with Christ and in regeneration. It is the good spiritual Husbandman that grafts us into the true Vine, and he that prunes us, and doth all that is necessary to be done, to make us fruitful, and to abide fruitful.

“For without me ye can do nothing,” ver. 5.

I am to my members that which a vine is to the branches; I give life, strength, and fruitfulness: the vine may be said to abide in the branches by conveying juice and nourishment, whereby they grow, flourish, and are fruitful: so Christ abideth in His saints by His Spirit and spiritual influences, upon which depend all their life, strength and fruit.

“Without me.”

1. Without union with Christ.

2. Without influences from Christ, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit.” If they had been really in Christ, they had been fruitful. But some are only in Him by appearance, and “so can do nothing;” nothing, that is, spiritually or truly good. This union is reciprocal: “Abide in me, and I in you.” The Jews were said to be in the “True olive,” else they could not have been said to be broken off, (*i. e.*) they were in and of His visible Church, but not really in Christ; and so are some in the Gospel-Church, but not in Christ, nor Christ in them; for the union between Christ and believers is inseparable and indissoluble, like that of Christ's being in the Father, and the Father in him. John xvii. 23.

Man's natural impotency to do anything that is spiritually good.

3. “Without me;” that is, without Christ's concurrence, co-habitation and co-operation, we can do nothing.

Christ is a Head of influence to the body and members: how can a branch cut off the vine bear fruit, it being dead? and so is every sinner that is not united to Christ, “dead in sins and trespasses,” Eph. ii. 1. Christ must quicken us by a principle of life, and also excite that principle and habit of grace; there is in all natural men a privation of power to do that which is spiritually good, an absence, nay, a total privation, not an absence of radical power, and not only a suspension of acts, as may be in us when asleep; and as it is a total privation in respect of power, so it is universal (as one observes) in respect of the subject of that power. Every faculty is wholly depraved, the judgment, will, affections, memory, &c.; and not only so, but in the “carnal mind is enmity against God,” Rom. viii. 7, they resist all good motions, they have no power, nor any will to receive power, until their hearts are changed, and their will is made willing. “Ye always resist the Holy Ghost,” &c., Acts. vii. 51. “Ye will not come to me,” your wills are rebellious.

“If ye abide in me, and my Word abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

Such abide in Christ, in whom His Word abides, His promises abide in them, so as to believe them, and His precepts abide in them, so as to obey them, and the prayers of such in all things agreeable to the Will of God shall be answered.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit and so shall ye be my disciples,” ver. 8.

By virtue of our union with Christ we bring forth much fruit, and that fruit which glorifies God, or is to the praise of His rich grace: were the fruit the product of man's own natural powers it would glorify the sorry creature, and be to the praise of man's free-will, and not tend to glorify God's free grace. But all spiritual fruit, being solely from God, it tends to the glory of God, as it causeth such to shine forth in holiness and good works before men.

But this parable might seem yet dark unto the disciples, and our Lord might perceive they might fear, that though their hearts were right with God, and were truly in him, that they might cease bearing fruit, and wither, and so be cut off. He, therefore, (finally to satisfy them that none of his words should be so understood) tells them in ver. 16. “Ye are my friends;” and again saith, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain,” &c., ver. 16.

It is im-
possible for
true be-
lievers to
cease bear-
ing fruit, or
to wither
and perish
for ever.

I have, as if our Lord should have said, told you of some that bring not forth fruit in me, though they seem to be in me, and are members of my visible Church; but do not you think that you are of that sort that abide not in a profession of my name, or may become withered branches, and be cast into the fire; for you are not only called, but also chosen, chosen to salvation, and not that you chose me first, and so I chose you, as being fruitful persons; no, but I have chosen you, you have not chosen me first. I loved you first, and therefore you love me, and have chosen me, and I have ordained you to be holy, as well as to be eternally happy; yea, I have ordained you to bear fruit, and that your fruit should also remain, that you might not cease bearing fruit, and so like others wither, and be cut off, and perish for ever. Do not think it is possible for you to fall finally and totally away, and be cast into hell; O, mistake not my meaning in this parable.

Indeed, my brethren, had not our Saviour added these words, and explained his sense and meaning to us, some expressions might seem to favour what the Arminians too boldly affirm from this parable; but what is said in this verse tends utterly to stop their mouths, and silence them for ever.

Now from the whole I might note these propositions following.

1. That God the Father is the prime or original Author of all spiritual blessings and privileges.

2. That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, considered as Mediator, is the Root or blessed Tree, Vine and true Olive, into whom all the elect are grafted, united, and so become fruitful.

3. That some who seem to be in Christ, and to bring forth fruit, do not bring forth fruit in him, or by virtue of a real and spiritual union with him, and so they wither and shall be cut off, or taken away, and perish eternally.

4. That all God's elect are chosen and ordained to be fruitful, and to remain fruitful all their days on earth, as well as to eternal life in heaven.

But I, having prosecuted the substance of all these truths under other parables, and wanting room, shall not speak of them here.

U S E.

1. Let all hypocrites, from what hath been said, tremble, or such who seem to be in Christ, but are not.

2. Let all believers who are united to the Lord Jesus, rejoice, and see what a happy and secure state they are in, though they may seem to wither, yet they shall revive again.

1. Be exhorted to admire the love of God the Father, and ascribe all glory unto him as the Author of all grace, and the First Person in all Divine operations, as well as He is the First Person in the Godhead, or of the Trinity.

2. Ascribe all glory to the Son, for as all things are from the Father, so all things are through the Son; all grace and Divine blessings were purchased for us by his blood, and we have them as the fruit of His mediation.

3. Ascribe all glory to the Holy Spirit, by whom we are renewed and helped to believe, and to apply the blood of Christ to our souls, and who by his immediate influences hath made us fruitful, and shall be helped to abide so unto eternal life.

And now to close all, let "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such that are in the sea, and that all that are in them, say, blessing, honour and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever," Rev. v. 13. Amen.

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THE BONMAHON

Infant, Embroidery, Printing, and Agricultural Schools, CO. WATERFORD.

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Having recently returned from a visit to my friend, the Rev. D. A. DOUDNEY, at Bonmahon, it has occurred to me that a brief narrative of what I saw and learnt, during my sojourn, might prove of interest to the friends of the BONMAHON INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS, and at the same time, be productive of good to the great work of improvement now in progress there. Under this impression, I venture to relate, in a plain manner, the facts which came within my observation, either as relates to the Schools themselves, or the peculiar circumstances out of which they have arisen, and are now surrounded.

To those not immediately interested in such a matter, a visit to Industrial Schools, in one of the wildest regions of the South of Ireland, would present features more interesting than many remoter and more celebrated scenes; but to those who have aided, by personal endeavours and sacrifices, a work so eminently in accordance with the teaching of Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," the facts of the case, as seen by a visitor, must, I think, have a peculiar and pleasing value.

I left London on Monday morning, May 26, and after experiencing the usual trial of a passage from Holyhead to Kingstown, arrived in Dublin the same evening. On Tuesday morning I proceeded by railway to Waterford—a journey occupying about seven hours. A pleasant drive of two hours and I reached Bonmahon. On entering the village I found that my arrival had been expected; I saw the flag waving about the Printing School, and the lads gave me an Irish welcome.

Bonmahon is a retired, out-of-the-way nook on the coast of the county of Waterford. It is built irregularly, in the bight of a small bay, between Tramore on the east, and Dungarvan, a small port on Dungarvan Bay, on the west. The sea view is bold and open, the cliffs rugged and picturesque. To the south-east lies the wide expanse of St. George's Channel, dotted with white sails in the distance, and with rude fishing-boats near the shore. The village itself lies in a valley which runs down by a sandy slope to the sea, forming a magnificent strand, from which rises, at the distance of half a mile, a splendid wall of dark majestic rocks. Northward the valley runs back from the village, and terminates in the green slopes of the Comeragh hills, which encloses the scene on the land-side with a charming panoramic background. The hills are ten or twelve miles off, but to me they appeared much nearer.

Adjoining the village, are mines of Knockmahon the property of the "Mining Company of Ireland." These mines are noted for the excellence of the ore which they furnish, and afford the chief employment of the inhabitants of Bonmahon, which is strictly a mining village. The name, Bonmahon, is from two Irish words, signifying the *heel* or *foot* of the river—Knockmahon implying the hill of the river.

Though the land is barren, and the constant drift of sand and sea-spray renders farming difficult, all the elements of worldly prosperity are to be found here. The population does not much exceed 1500 souls of all ages. Amongst these the mines distribute a weekly sum of £350 in wages, while the tillage of the land contributes something additional to the common resources of the place. A weekly expenditure of £350 in so small a village should produce far more comfort than is visible here; and for the *cause* of the destitution and vice which exists, we must doubtless look to that *power* which has desolated so many of the fairest portions of the earth.

But at Bonmahon, as elsewhere in Ireland, the capability for something better exists, as my recent visit proved to my satisfaction.

On Wednesday morning I visited the Schools. There are five of these. First, the Infant School; second, the Embroidery School; third, the Printing School; fourth, the Agricultural School; fifth the Parochial School.

Each of the Schools is conducted in a separate building, situate at an easy distance from each other, and all presenting a pleasing scene of busy life.

The School buildings are substantial and roomy. There is the *Industrial Printing School*, with its five young women employed in the binding department, two compositors, five pressmen, fifteen boys, and three presses, full of bustling activity, yet as orderly and business-like as a London Office.

The *Infant School* interested me exceedingly. It was a pleasing sight to see fifty infants so well trained, and apparently happy, and to hear them sing, in that dark, Popish village—

"We won't give up the Bible,
God's holy book of truth," &c.

Now comes the *Embroidery School*. Here forty-seven girls are taught and employed, many of them earning Five to Eight shillings per week, and producing work of a high order of merit. I was soon convinced that, though at first unable to thread, or even to hold a needle, such teaching as they obtained here would soon enable them to earn their bread honourably, wherever their future lot may be cast. This School, conducted by a competent Mistress, is under the immediate superintendence and control of Mrs. DOUDNEY. In the same building is opened a *Bible Depository*, for the sale of Bibles and Testaments at a reduced price.

Having had some experience in Printing matters, it may be supposed that I should readily detect any short-comings in the mechanical arrangements of a *Printing School*. The intelligent perseverance in the teaching of these lads is well rewarded in the order and activity of the

establishment—the completeness with which industry and skill combine their forces for the production of a noble result, afford a reflection of that presiding mind, which under God's blessing, has wrought so successfully in the projection and establishment of this admirable institution. The lads are very skilful, not in the manual labour only, but in those departments which require judgment, shrewdness, and care. The overseer brought a proof-sheet of the reprint of "Keach's Metaphors," which had been read, and was about to be given out for correction in the usual way. It was as clean and perfect as the work of any ordinary compositor, though the production of boys who, but a short time previous, had neither seen printing-type nor press—such is the change effected by culture and kindness. There are in these various Schools one hundred and fifty young persons who enjoy these advantages, and thus far removed from the debasements of poverty and a vagabond life, and placed in a position to acquire useful handicrafts.

Any one who will open the pages of DR. GILL'S COMMENTARY, OR AMBROSE SEARLE'S CHURCH OF GOD, and criticise the character of the typography, may see to what perfection of skill the hand of an Irish peasant may be brought under *opportunity and tuition*. Dr. Gill's work contains nearly 47,000,000 separate letters, covering about 6,000 pages of close and beautifully clear letter-press. Previous to the 12th of October, 1851, when the only suitable building came into the possession of the indefatigable Curate of Monksland, not one of these lads had seen a printing-type; yet by the January following, they had produced one part, of about 240 pages of the Commentary, containing 1,200,000 letters, mixed with no small amount of Greek and Hebrew quotations—the Bishop of Cashel witnessing the printing of the first sheet. Who can say how many lads were rescued from the dark apprenticeship of vice by the timely opening of these Schools?

On Thursday evening I attended the weekly lecture, held in the building used for the Infant School. To this Thursday evening lecture, and the usual Sunday services, all the children are free to attend, though it is a rule, essential to the success of any Protestant movement here, that they should not be requested to attend; *nor is attendance ever made a condition of employment*. A little incident occurred in my presence, illustrative of the policy of such a course. One of the guardians of the poor, meeting Mr. Doudney and myself in the public street, mentioned the case of one of the girls belonging to the Embroidery School, who, having become a dependent on the parish funds, alleged that she could earn five shillings a week, but, having refused to attend the Protestant services, she had been dismissed. "Oblige me by going over to the School, and hear the reason for her dismissal, from the lips of the mistress herself," said Mr. Doudney. "No," said Mr. —, "I do not wish that; your word is sufficient that the girl's story is false." Mr. — at last consented to go up into the work-room of the Embroidery School. Mr. Doudney at once put the question to the whole School:—"Did I, or Mrs. Doudney, at any time ask one of you to attend any of our weekly or Sunday services?" A universal "No!" was the response. Again Mr. Doudney put the same question, and the same answer, "No!" was repeated in a distinct, truthful, and unmistakable tone, at which the guardian became still more satisfied, and then was informed of the *real cause* of the child's dismissal, viz., idleness, unwillingness, and conduct injurious to the School generally. Such is the craft of babes under Popish teaching and example!

It was with much pleasure that I walked over the grounds of the *Agricultural School*, in company with my friend, the Rev. D. A. Doudney. This School has only recently commenced operations, and the land at present in a preparatory state. The object of the School is to teach practical husbandry, in combination with a sound course of mental training. The Boys attend four hours at their lessons in-doors, and four hours are spent in tillage. They are taught to ridge, furrow, and drain the land; learn to preserve the strength of the soil, and to adapt the crops to the seasons, &c. Some of these will be fitted for service as gardeners, or for other similar capacities; while they will be taught to cultivate profitably, the patch of cottage ground—*an art here at present comparatively unknown!* Indeed, the need for such training is evident enough in the wretched aspect of the land, which reads to one's mind the painful narratives of the *Times'* Commissioner. The soil is overgrown with weeds, undrained, badly ploughed, and planted over and over again with potatoes, till from utter exhaustion, it literally refuses to produce a scanty crop. The hedges run wild, and eat up large tracts of land with briars and thorns, while ditches are suffered to roam at will, for want of slight repairs to their banks, converting fields into noxious quagmires, the home of filth, fever, and vermin. Manure is not thought of till they are about to quit their tenancies; then they cover the land with sea-weed, which extracts the last miserable relic of its strength, and ruins it completely for the succeeding tenant. Barns, cottages, and homesteads fall into decay, and as they fall so they remain: there is no energy to repair, no desire to make things better. Everywhere one sees destitution, spiritual degradation, and ruin—ruin stalking over the land, and before which the people seem perishing from the soil—perishing of bodily and spiritual exhaustion. The aspect of the land, the broken mud walls, the stagnant, fever-producing pools, the wretched crops that scarce pay the labour of reaping, and the besotted superstition which darkens over all, speak plainly enough of the nature of *that dark shadow* under which Ireland pines and withers, and to dispel which there is only one light that can be effectual—the light of the glorious Gospel. May similar blessings attend the progress of the Agricultural School as have followed in the wake of the Printing, and Embroidery, and Infant Schools, already established!

On Thursday morning the monthly packages of the *Gospel Magazine* were made up, and despatched, by post, to the Subscribers. I have heard, with pain, the frequent complaints of friends that they do not obtain their copies until many days after the time when they should be delivered. Now I saw and understood the cause of delay—*another* of the many impediments to

industrial and Protestant progress in Ireland. To save the village postmaster the usual labour of stamping, and the messenger the additional labour of carrying a large number of Magazines, Mr. Doudney despatched them, in the care of a lad, with a donkey-cart, direct to Kilmacthomas (a distance of five miles,) the post-town of the district. The boy returned after having delivered his parcel of stamped Magazines, and the question was asked him, "Have the Magazines gone forward?" "No please," said he, "the man said there was no room for them on the car, but they'll go to-morrow." The next day the lad was sent again, and returned with the same answer—"No room on the car—they'll go to-morrow." From day to day this is repeated; the stamped papers lie at the post-office, during the pleasure of Hibernian caprice; the subscribers waiting in anxious expectancy, annoyed at their non-arrival, while the Editor has to bear the blame for unpunctuality. Here is the secret of the delay—*There is no room on the car for the conveyance of Protestantism!*

I left Bonmahon on Friday morning, and proceeded from Carriek-on-Suir direct for home.

I may suitably close this letter with a few remarks on the nature of the labour in which Mr. Doudney is engaged, and the results which, up to this time, have flowed from it.

It may truly be said that he found this place a desert, and has made it a garden. Yet he owes his success, under God, to those who have aided him by sympathy and means. The income arising from contributions has, up to this time, averaged nearly £300 per annum; but the Schools are not at all—some of them cannot be—self-supporting. The difficulties of instructing a rude peasantry, the outlay for implements, the difficulty of finding a market for all the goods produced, tend to increase the expense far beyond the limit of production.

He is, moreover, surrounded by adverse influences. Priests terrify the parishioners by cursing him from the altar; false reports are in constant circulation:—Now that he is in possession of untold wealth—now that the scheme is a failure, and must be abandoned for want of funds. He is, in fact, just in that position in which it has been said no man should be who is "*not prepared to die by bullet or by fever.*"

The feeling of party jealousy, which pervades all classes in Ireland, manifests itself with terrible malignity and power when any, however laudable, attempt is made to turn back the tide of ruin in which the country has been so long immersed. Before the first press was landed at Bonmahon, the curse of the priest had gone forth, and the people had ejaculated "Amen." But when the first portion of material arrived, a storm of opposition showed itself; the country around was alarmed, and the altars rang with expressions of bitter and unscrupulous jealousy. Eight-and-forty hours had not elapsed after the arrival of the steamer at the Quay of Waterford, ere the so-called liberal newspaper of the place denounced the Industrial School as a proselyting scheme, and the assistants as braggarts and scoundrels! The inhabitants were cautioned to shun it, and to withhold their children from the work and instruction offered them. Yet the cherished ignorance of the Romish Church was successfully baffled, and the most promising scholars of the Parochial School, and afterwards many belonging to the National or Roman Catholic School, were initiated, and the presses were set going. The difficulties which the friends of the movement anticipated sunk into nothingness before the real difficulties that had to be conquered. Only stout hearts, supported by hope and faith, could have performed a labour such as this. If the storm without raged fiercely, the labour within doors was indeed no trifling task. What the excellent friend of Ragged Schools (Joseph Payne) said of the children received into London Ragged Schools, applied with double truth to these; for they might well be described as "precocious, and ferocious, and mendacious, and capacious; and odd in attitude, but great in gratitude—always tameable, but never irreclaimable."

The Schools of Bonmahon have been established a period of nearly four years. In this brief space, spite of obstacles, the presses have thrown off a mass of sound works of so high an order of typographical excellence, that many London houses would be glad to point to them as specimens of their work. Those acquainted with the mechanical details of the printing art, will best know how to appreciate the production of that superb Commentary which, while it is an imperishable monument to the learning, labour, and piety of its great author, Dr. GILL, is, in its present form, a noble and enduring proof of the genius of Irish peasant boys, when brought under wise and kindly instruction.

Of this great work, two thousand two hundred and fifty complete sets, or thirteen thousand five hundred volumes, were produced in two years and two months. Of this stock, only a few remain on hand, and there is little or no probability that so voluminous a work will be again reprinted, at least for another half century. Those who desire copies should therefore secure them forthwith.

The great Commentary was followed by a reprint of two thousand five hundred copies of *Dr. Gill's Exposition of the Canticles*, a work which is considered to be the author's masterpiece for savour and power. Following this, came a reprint of *Dr. Hawker's Morning and Evening Portions*, of which five thousand copies were completed in a few months. Four-fifths of this large impression have been sold already. Other works were simultaneously put in progress, and the presses sent forth successively an edition of one thousand copies of a reprint of the *Rev. B. Keach's Key to Open Scripture Metaphors*.* This work had become so exceedingly scarce, that the edition was sold in about three months, and orders for quantities refused. It is now in course of reprinting, and is expected to be ready early in October. One thousand copies of *Hart's Hymns* were ready immediately after the completion of Keach's Metaphors, and but few copies of the Hymns now remain.

* Rev. B. Keach's Exposition of the Parables has since been published.

Next came the print of two thousand copies of *Ambrose Searle's Church of God* (to which is added *Christian Husbandry*), a choice work of established reputation. An edition of two thousand five hundred copies of *Dr. Gill's Cause of God and Truth*—"a sterling work, that plucks up by the roots the Arminian heresy"—is just published, and, in its beauty of typography, affords a pleasing instance of the capabilities of the Irish peasant boys, when directed to definite and beneficial purposes. Since November, 1852, the *Gospel Magazine* has been produced at Bonmahon. The *Gospel Cottage Lecturer*, *Dr. Haacker's Sermons and Tracts*, and other sound and valuable works are in progress; and Bonmahon—all shrouded in sin and darkness—now shines forth among neighbouring sister villages, and sends into many corners of the world the bright rays of spiritual truth.

But though so much has been done, the position of the Projector of this enterprise is by no means free from anxieties and difficulty—he has about one hundred and fifty mouths to feed! A scheme which distributes nearly £1200 a-year among the poor of a remote Irish village, often taxes its Manager severely to provide the necessary means of support. Yet, if the sale of goods is slow, Mr. Doudney dares not discharge superfluous hands. It is a machine which, once set going, it is dangerous to stop. In this district, 'here is no outside sea of labour into which the hands would flow—seeking employment elsewhere, as in any of the large towns in England. Once out of the walls, they must go back to hereditary vagrancy, to afford real grounds, in place of those imaginary ones, out of which the Romish clergy have wrought their bitter anathemas—the more bitter from the conviction that industry and enlightenment are the death-blows to the priestly power of the Papacy.

To continue the scheme in its present or increasing success, it is necessary that a market should be found for the goods produced. There are few who cannot purchase, or who do not purchase, Books and Embroidery. The lady friends have so often shown their earnestness in the support, that it may be superfluous in me to call their attention again to the fact, that the ready sale of the needlework is vastly beneficial, and promotive of the welfare of those humble but useful Irish children who produce it.

The sale of the work produced, is, of course, the primary source of income; but the Schools are not yet self-supporting, and therefore contributions are respectfully solicited, both from friends who have not hitherto subscribed, and from those who have already so liberally assisted.

Though priestly influences work in opposition, though they dread the spread of that light which blinds and confuses them, there is little fear that this good work will come to a pause. Glad hearts and ready hands have helped, so far, the energy of the Promoter, who started the enterprise at his own risk and peril; such hands and hearts are as vigorous as ever; the band of instructors are strongly knit together with their hearts in the work, and with God's blessing on all their efforts, we may look forward to the realization, at the lone village of Bonmahon, of the conversion of the thriftless, the untaught, and the spiritually benighted, to a knowledge of the amenities of civilization, and the blessing of the Gospel.

My letter has already run beyond the limit—I will therefore subscribe myself,

Your's faithfully,

WILLIAM HILL COLLINGRIDGE.

Price £3 18s., six royal 8vo. vols., cloth, of 1000 pages each, and Portrait of the Author (the Old Testament may be had separately, 4 vols., price £2 12s.); calf, 5s. per vol. extra,

An Exposition of the Holy Bible; by JOHN GILL, D. D., containing the Old and New Testaments. In the former are recorded, the Origin of Mankind, of the several Nations of the world, and of the Jewish nation in particular; the lives of the Patriarchs of Israel: the Journey of that People from Egypt to the land of Canaan, and their settlement in that land: their Laws, Moral, Ceremonial, and Judicial; their Government and state under judges and kings; their several Captivities, and their Sacred Books of Devotion; in the exposition of which it is attempted to give an account of their several Books, and the Writers of them; a summary of each Chapter, and the genuine sense of each Verse; and, throughout the whole, the Original Text, and the Versions of it, are inspected and compared; Interpretation of the best Notes, both Jewish and Christian, consulted; Difficult Passages at large explained; Seeming Contradictions reconciled; and various passages illustrated and confirmed, by testimonies of writers, as well Gentile as Jewish. In the New Testament, the Doctrinal and Practical Truths are set in a plain and easy light; and whatever is material in the various readings and several Oriental Versions is observed. The whole Illustrated with Notes, taken from the most ancient Jewish writings.

* * * This work contains nearly 47,000,000 letters, and was composed, or put in type, by a little band of Irish lads.

It is clearly and beautifully printed in Royal octavo, and will, when completed, form a very handsome edition.—*Earthen Vessel*.

It is elegantly printed—good paper....*Zion's Casket*.

We have no hesitation in saying, that it will bear comparison with any of the beautifully-printed books of the day; and when we consider the deeply-interesting circumstances connected with the Irish nativity of the work, our hearts are wholly rejoiced. We see here a beautiful instance, redeemed from the darkness, of the singular capacity of the human family to wait at the posts of learning, and become—not the ravens of Israel—but the honoured instruments of telegraphing the truth. Wherefore, let us not fear to take children

by the hand, for we know not what they can do; but rather let us derive a lesson from the wild sea-washed village of Bonmahon. The Work is worthy of the Publisher, the Printer, and the Purchaser—*Pot of Manna*.

The republication of Dr. Gill's Commentary of itself constitutes quite an epoch in the history of literature; there are circumstances connected with this new edition which invest it with peculiar interest; they are such as prove the projector to be possessed of marvellous fortitude, patience, and perseverance.—*Spiritual Magazine*.

For a sound, consistent, Scriptural Exposition of the word of God, no Commentary, we believe, in any language can be compared with Dr. Gill's.—The Editor of the present edition has, in the face of most arduous and numerous difficulties, been favoured with health, strength, and perseverance, to surmount them all, and to bring his laborious undertaking to a successful termination.—*Gospel Standard*, third notice.

A scheme noble in intention—admirable in principle—and worthy of imitation, is the Industrial Printing School. Distant from any immediate source of supplies, and raw Irish Lads for his assistants, the productions of his press are lasting records of his Christian perseverance. First and foremost was a splendid edition of Gill's Commentary on the Bible, and latterly a complete and well-printed edition of Hawker's Morning and Evening Portions, and Hart's Hymn's.—*Zion's Trumpet*.

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