

**AN EXPOSITION
OF
THE PARABLES
BOOK II**

Benjamin Keach

AN
EXPOSITION OF THE PARABLES,
AND
EXPRESS SIMILITUDES
OF OUR
LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

BOOK I

WHEREIN ALSO MANY THINGS ARE DOCTRINALLY HANDLED AND IMPROVED BY
WAY OF APPLICATION.

BY
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"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"
—JOHN iii. 12.

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AN
EXPOSITION
OF THE
PARABLES AND SIMILITUDES
OF OUR
LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.
BOOK II

I. Similitude, Mark 9:49-50
Every One Salted with Fire, and Every
Sacrifice Salted with Salt.

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.—Mr 9:49-50.

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.

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 Mt 18:10. 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, Ro 7:24. Observe, that the old man, or corrupt nature, is elsewhere compared to the natural body: and every particular sin as a member thereof; see Col 3:5, "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 believed sins, whether lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, or the pride of life.

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. j’ 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?

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?

Ans. 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.

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?

Answ. 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,” Ac 2:2.

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?” Ac 2:37.

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?” Lu 24:32. 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 3:2,

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," 1Pe 1:7. 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. 1Co 2:10.

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," Mt 13:42.

Answ. I. 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, 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,” Mt 8:12.

(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?

Answ. 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,” Ps 51:17.

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,” Ro 12:1.

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,” 1Pe 2:5.

Hence praises are called sacrifices. “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually,” Heb 13:15.

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, Ro 8:13.

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,” Ro 8:36.

So much for the 49th. verse.

“Salt is good, but if it hath lost its saltness, wherewith will ye shall season it?” Ver. 50.

Salt here refers unto the saints particularly, whom our Lord calls the salt of the earth, “Ye are the salt of the earth,” Mt 5:13. 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 1:9. 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?

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," 2Pe 2:21. 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 10:39. 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," Joh 10:28.

"Have salt in yourselves."

By salt, in these words, our Saviour no doubt means the true and saving meant by 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.

Doct. I. That it ought to be the special care of every professor, to have trine 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 out 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, Pr 6:5.

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," Joh 3:19. 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," Le 2:13. And so also were their meat-offerings. Happy are you, if you are well salted.

SERMON II

Have salt in yourselves—Mr 9:50.

I have opened this, and the preceding verse, and have proposed to speak to two points of doctrine.

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.

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," Ps 38:8. 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?" Ac 2:36. 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," 1Co 2:10.

(1.) Grace diffuseth itself into the understanding, and enlighteneth that. "The entrance of thy word giveth light," Ps 119:130. Ye that were sometimes in darkness, are now light in the Lord. "That the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," Eph 1:18. 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," Ac 15:9.

(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,” 1Jo 3:3.

(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 cleanses 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.

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,” 2Co 6:1-2. Now every soul should see that they are salted with this spiritual salt, before God treads 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 soultry. 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.

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 13:9. 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 6:6.

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.

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 15:19. 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,” Ps 104:34.

(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?” Lu 24:32.

(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?

2ndly. 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.”

3rdly. 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 4:6. 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,” Lu 4:22. Solomon saith, “The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; but the heart of the wicked is of little worth,” Pr 10:20; 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 3:14. 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 there 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?

Answ. 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 unbelief, 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 causeth 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,” Ps 42:1-2. 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, Joh 16:8-9.

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,” Le 2:13. 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 12:28. 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,” Pr 15:8; 21:27.

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 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," Ge 42:15. 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 Isral, 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 13:9. 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," Ps 119:11. 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 32:40. 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 discomfited, 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?" Mt 14:31. 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 12:28. 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," Ro 4:20. 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 4:16. 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,” Mt 5:13. 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?

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, 2Co 7:1. 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,” Mt 5:8. They are the sincere ones. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in

the law of the Lord,” Ps 119:1. 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.

2ndly. 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,” Pr 10:19. 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,” Pr 16:23. 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,” Jas 3:5. 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 2:8. 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. Be sure a backbiter is Lot 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,” Ps 15:3. An unsalted backbiting tongue God abhorreth. “An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is a burning

fire,” Pr 16:27. 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 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,” Nu 14:24. 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 flyblown, 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;" Joh 1:14. 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 55:1. 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 saltness.

(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.—Mr 9:50.

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 4:3. 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,” Jas 4:5. 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,” 1Th 5:13.

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," Ps 133:1. 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 4:6. 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 11:6-9. 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," Zep 3:8. 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," Ac 4:32. 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," Eze 11:19. &c. A faithful heart, an honest and sincere heart, a heart not divided between God and idols, not a 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 . 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," Zec 14:9; Jer 32:39. 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," Ge 13:8. 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 4:3; 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,” 1Co 10:17. 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?” Am 3:3. 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," Song 6:10, 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 alicoated 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, Ac 4:24, "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.

1. Labour after meekness and humbleness of mind; this is a great advancement of peace. “Only of pride cometh contention,” Pr 13:10.

Were men of an 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,” Php 2:3. 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 backbitings; 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,” Pr 15:18. “A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends,” Pr 16:28. 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,” 1Co 10:24. 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,” 1Co 10:33. 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, Mt 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," Ac 4:23. 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 10:23; 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 discountenanced as violaters 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. Jas 3:14,16.

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 givs 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 Jeremiah, “report, say they, and we will report,” Jer 20:10.

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 4:31-32. 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 enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” Song 4:12. 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,” 1Pe 4:10.

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,” 1Ti 5:19. 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 Jesus 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 wink 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 13:1. 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., 1Co 13:4.

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 3:14. 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," 1Pe 4:8. 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," Jas 5:9. 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 12:14.

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? Lu 8:30.

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,” Ga 3:28. “He hath made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” Eph 2:6. 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 brothers: 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,” Mt 18:6. 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,” Php 2:1-2.

II. Parable, Luke 10:30 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.—Lu 10:30.

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; 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. 25, 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.

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.

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.

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.

4. By “wounding him,” may be intended that sad and fearful privation of the soul in every faculty thereof by sin.

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.

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,” Eze 16:6,8. 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.

8. Binding up his wounds, and pouring in oil and wine, may be meant, binding up 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," Mt 25:4, 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 1:9. 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.

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 13:9. 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.

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.

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.

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.

1.1 shall show you in what respects sin and Satan may be compared to 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.

Mankind led by sin and Satan out of the way, and bound in strong cords

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 Satan 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," Ac 8:23. As well as robbed him of all that choice treasure which God was pleased to enrich him with in the first Adam.

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.

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.

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," Lu 21:36.

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?

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.

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.

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," Ac 2:23. 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.

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,” Joh 8:44. 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.

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,” 2Co 11:14, 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 heaven 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.

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 powerful 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," Mt 12:29. 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.

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," Da 9:24; Col 2:15. 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," 1Jo 3:8.

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.

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.

(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 enmity 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 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?” Jas 4:1. (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 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 Frenchman prefer, as it were, a part in Paris above all the riches and pleasures of paradise. “They say to God, depart from us,” Job 21, 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,” Pr 14:9. “They say, are we not in sport?” Pr 26:19. 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, or I perish, they are too strong 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,” Pr 4:23.

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,” Jas 3:8. 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 subtility, 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 3:13. 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," 1Jo 4:4. "Through Jesus Christ, we are more than conquerors," Ro 8:37.

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.—Lu 10:30.

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, Mt 16:26? 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 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,” Ps 12:4? This is the voice of the ungodly. “We will not have this man to reign over us,” Lu 19:27.

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,” 2Ti 3:4. 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 Jg 18:24, (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 caust 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 1:15. 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," Ro 3:13. 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 4:18.

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 hons 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.” Ro 5:18-19.

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?” Ac 2:39. “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,” Ps 38:6-7. 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 1:6; 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?

Answ. 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

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," Pr 1:25-26.

(3.) At that time when God awakeneneth 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., Lu 16:23.

(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." Mt 25:41.

O cry with David, "Lord, be merciful to me, and heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." Ps 41:4-5.

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?" 1Co 15:55. 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." Ps 103:1-3. Such who are pardoned, are healed; and they that are forgiven may rejoice. "Blessed is he whose sin is hid, whose transgressions are pardoned," Ps 32:1. 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," Lu 10:31-32.

"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," De 22:6.

"A certain priest," &c.

1 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.

No relief for wounded sinners by the law

(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," Ga 3:21.

"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," Lu 10:25-28.

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," Ro 8:3, 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, Ro 5:12, 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,” Ga 3:10. 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,” Ro 8:3. 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,” Ga 2:21. 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.” 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 10:5. “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 10:4. 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.

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. 6:7: 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, 10:3. 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," Ps 51:16. 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.,—Lu 10:33.

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.

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,” Pr 8:22,30. *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.

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," 2Co 8:9.

(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," Ga 3:13.

(5.) In his pouring out his own blood to heal our wounded souls; 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," Ro 5:6,8.

(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,” Mt 23:37. There is no creature, saith Bernard, that is moved with greater compassion 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 enemies 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,” Eze 16:5, 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, and carries 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.

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,” Ps 119:68. 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. 3:5. 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. 2:19. 12. Eternal, abiding, or everlasting mercy. "The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever," Ps 103:17. 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?

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 5:2.

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.

"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 cure our sealed," Joh 6:27. He received a commission, and it was miraculously sealed by the king's broad seal, "This is my beloved Son."

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 word, or of a slothful disposition.

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 he 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 6:14. 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.

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," Mr 9:43-44.

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 40:3; Mt 11:28. 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,” Joh 8:24. “He that believed not shall he damned,” Mr 16:16. “Verily, verily, I say into thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” Joh 3:3. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,” Lu 13:3.

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,” Mt 28:20.

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. Lu 21:34. 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,” Lu 18:1. 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,” Ps 27:13. 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,” Ac 4:12.

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,” Joh 6:68. 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,” Ro 3:20. “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. 2:21. and 3:21.

(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,” Joh 2:24. 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 55:1, 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 65:1.

(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 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," Re 3:20.

(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 assuage her pains, but the physician's blood! (F. Quarles.)

Quest. What way doth Christ heal sick and wounded sinners?

Answ. 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

1. 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," Mt 11:28. (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? Ps 38:5-6. 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? (4.) 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," Ro 7:17? (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?" 2Sa 12:13. Some excuse themselves, extenuate, nay, may be deny their sin; but a gracious person will rather greatness 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; Ro 6:14, 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 darest 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.—Lu 10:34.

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?" Nu 15:5,7,10, &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 cheers the 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," 1Pe 1:18-19. 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, Ac 20:28. (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, Joh 6:33-34. (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," Ro 5:9. (11.) It is soul-healing and soul-saving blood. May wine be called precious, much more is the blood of Christ precious.

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 53:5.

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," Joh 6:55.

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., Ps 27:13.

II. Why is the Spirit compared to oil? he poured in oil as well as wine.

Answ. The Holy Spirit, and the graces of the Spirit, may be compared to oil.

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 1:6.

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,” Ga 5:16.

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,” Zec 12:10. 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,” Ac 9:19. 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,” Ro 8:26.

5. Oil, physicians and naturalists say, is good to clear the eyes. Pliny saith it disperseth mists and clouds, that cause dimness of sight.

The Holy Spirit cleareth 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 1:18. 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," Ps 23:4.

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.

Ans. To show that Christ's blood, without the Spirit and grace of the 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 2:8; Ga 5:22. 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.

“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 13:9. 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.

“And brought him to an inn.” The inn I intimated at first, may intend 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, and so were carried,* or added to the church; and in the same manner were they at Samaria, Ac 8:12,14. 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.

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,” 2Co 1:2-4. 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 5:12-14.

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., Ps 27:4. 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., Ps 84:2.

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.

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 55:1-2. We are bid to "take the water of life freely," Re 22:17.

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. Ps 27:4.

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 his always likewise. O how sweet is the presence of God and Christ in Sion, and what glory of his shines forth therein!

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. Ac 2:41.

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.—Lu 10:34.

Doct. Jesus Christ takes care of all them that he heals, pardons, and brings into his church.

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,” Ps 23:1. 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.

(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,” Php 1:6, 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,” Joh 15:5. 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,” Ho 14:8.

(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,” Ps 10:14. 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,” 2Ti 1:12. 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,” 2Co 8:5. 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 7:25.

(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,” Joh 1:16. “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus,” Php 4:19.

(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 43:2. “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 43:10; 44:18. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” Heb 13:5. “Verily thou shall be fed.” “He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,” Ps 84:11.

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,” Joh 15:16.

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,” 1Pe 5:7. 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," 1Co 9:14. 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.

I. Our Lord commands them to feed and take care of those he brings into his house.

This appears by these texts. “Simon, Son of Jonas, Lovest thou me? feed my sheep,” Joh 21:16. 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,” Ac 20:28. “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, 1Pe 5:2.

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.

2. To feed and nourish them with sound doctrine, he must feed them with “knowledge and understanding,” Jer 3:15. 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.

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,” 1Th 2:20.

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.

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,” 2Ti 2:24. 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,” 1Sa 12:23. Paul made mention of those under his care, day and night, in all his prayers.

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,” 2Ti 2:15. Giving every one his portion in due season. “They are to seek out acceptable words, even words of wisdom,” Ec 12:10; not eloquent words, or words of man’s wisdom, but “sound speech that cannot be condemned,” Tit 2:8, 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.

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.”

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.

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,” Ac 20:29.

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 Mt 18.

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, 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,” Ro 15:27. It is the will of Christ, and “God hath ordained it, that they that preach the Gospel, should live by the Gospel,” Ga 6:6; 1Co 9:7-8. 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 3:8. 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 wantest 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,” Re 22:12. 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,” Da 12:3. 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.

III. Parable, Luke 15:3, 10

The Parable Of The Lost Sheep Opened.

SERMON IX

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 shouldors rejoicing,—Lu 15:3-10.

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," Mt 9:13, or to seek such that were lost, not such that in their own conceit never went astray.

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, 18:11, 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?"

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 2:1-2. 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.

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.

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,” Mt 9:10-11; 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 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 40:10-11, 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; Sion 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.

I. 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.

(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. 2Co 6:17. "I have chosen you out of the world," Joh 15:16. 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. (4.) "They must be as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with the hand," 2Sa 23:6. 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 6:7-8.

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, 1Co 15:32.

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 35:1. "The whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the water fills the sea," Isa 11:9: 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, 1Co 10:3.

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.” 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.

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, Ex 20.

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.

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 are children of the flesh, these are not the children of God," Ro 9:7-8; 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," Joh 9:39. 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?

Ans. (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," Mt 9:12.

(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,” Ac 4:11, 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,” Joh 1:11. 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.

2ndly. That it behoveth 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?" Song 8:5. Or trusting in, or relying upon a blessed Saviour.

Quest. How do sinners come out of the wilderness?

Answ. I. In spirit; they receive another spirit: we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God," 1Co 2:12. 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, Mt 18.

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 4:18. Eph 2:2.

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. 1. 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.”

2. Because they are not of this world—“because ye are not of the world, the world hateth you,” Joh 9:19.

3. Because they are redeemed out of this world, or out of every kindred, nation, tongue, and people. Re 5:9.

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. 2Co 6:17. “Come out of her, my people, and partake not of her sins,” &c. Re 18:4.

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. Ro 12:2.

6. Because the church of Christ is a garden enclosed, or a community of Christians distinct from the world. “A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse,” Song 7:12.

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 Sion. 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?—Lu 15:3-5.

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.

1.1 shall show what to be lost doth denote or signify.

II. Show the nature of being lost, or the woeful condition such are in.

III. Apply it.

1.1 shall show what to be lost doth denote or signify.

1. 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 6:5. All mankind are fallen into the sea of God's wrath, and none can help them, uo 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 respases," Eph 2:1-2.

II. I shall show the woful state and condition of such that are lost.

And this in three respects.

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.

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 9:3. 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 4:18. 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," Ro 3:23. The glory of God, which shone forth in our first parents in the state of innocence, 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?" 2Co 6:14-15. 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. Ro 8:7.

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.

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,” Ga 3:10. 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,” Joh 3:18; 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 22:5. 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,) Ps 69:5; and saith Job, "He knoweth the way I take,"

Job 23:10. 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.

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," 1Sa 2:30. "Ye have despised the Lord, saith Moses," Nu 11:20; they are called haters of God, contemnors of God. "Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?" Ps 10:13. 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 3:3.

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?

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 2:19. 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 besure, that hath lost the knowledge of himself. “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” 2Ki 8:13, (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,” Joh 12:35. 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 Php 3:5-8.

(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 2:2.

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," Song 1:7-8. 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 bewail 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 exposeth 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," Pr 21:4. 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 4:8. 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," Ac 8:22. 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 1:18. 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 19:20; Heb 7:25.

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.—Lu 15:3-5, &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.

What Christ doth in seeking his lost sheep

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 Adan, was one main reason why he came hither. "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost," Lu 19:10. He must come where his lost sheep were, be 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 astray. "I came forth from the

Father into this world; again I leave this world, and go to the Father,” Joh 16:28.

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,” Php 2:6, 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,” Php 2:6. 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 2:16. 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 Sinai, 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’s 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,” Ro 5:18; 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," 1Pe 3:18; 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 2:11: so (saith he) he that offers, must have communion in the same nature. 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.

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, Ro 8:1. 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.

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," Joh 16:33. He overcame the world, and the god of this world, death, sin, and the grave; Heb 2:14-15; 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 4:8, 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?" Ro 10:14. 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," Joh 10:5,27. 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," Ac 16:14. 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.

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 2:1, 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," Joh 5:25. 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," Lu 15:32. The Prodigal son was dead, so long as he was in his lost and sinful state and condition.

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,” Zec 9:11. 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,” Ps 40:1. 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,” Joh 6:44. This drawing is not the act of men, nor of the servants, but of the Master; not of ministers, but of the Father.

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., Re 3:17. 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 1:18. 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 4:18. And from hence also it is they cannot see the way home to God, but go every day farther and farther from him.

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 new-born infant, cast out naked in its blood and filthiness, no eye pitying it,” Eze 16:4,8. 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.

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,” Eze 34:8. “Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,” Ac 8:23. 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 58:6; 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," Ps 107:4,10. 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 61:1.

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," Ac 20:29. 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, lioness, 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 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," Ro 8:7. 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 sculk 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.

Why Christ doth seek his sheep

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.

1. 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 31:3. 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," Re 1:5. 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," Joh 10:16.

(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," Joh 17:6. 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 affections, 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 49:9,12. Wheresoever the sheep were lost in any land or nation, whether North, East, West, South, the 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 nut back: bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth," Isa 43:5-6. "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," Ro 8:29. 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; (2Ti 1:9), 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," Joh 6:37. 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 Eze 34:6. "My sheep wandered throughout all mountains, and upon every high hill. "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,” Ro 11:7. 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,” 2Ti 1:9. 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 14:27. 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 46:10-11.

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 2:14. 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.

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?

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

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," 1Pe 3:18. "Christ was wounded for our transgressions," Isa 53:5-6. "He was made sin for us, that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2Co 5:21. He died that his lost sheep might live.

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," Joh 10:17.

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 63:1, he is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1Co 1:24. 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 33:24.

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," Ro 8:7.

2ndly. 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.

3rdly. 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 1:18.

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 7:25. 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," 1Pe 2:25. 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, dare any 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,—Lu 15:4-5.

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, despairing 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 40:28.

(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 53:10. 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 55:10. 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 29:11. 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 46:11. 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., Joh 16:8-9. 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.

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 bands, his care is such, that neither sin, devils, the world, nor impostors, can devour or destroy it.

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," Joh 4:29. 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," Lu 15:18-19; 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 40:11.

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?

8. It denotes Christ’s removing that enmity that naturally is in every sinner’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,” Eze 36:26. 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?” Ac 9:6. 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.

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?

Answ. 1. He brings them from a state of death unto a state of life; the sheep of Christ before Christ finds them, he 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 2:1-2. Having now a principle of spiritual life infused into them.

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?" Ac 2:37. And as the jailor did, they cry out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Ac 16:30.

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 6:5-6. 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.

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.

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." Ps 34:8. 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."

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 2:2. He effectually before 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," Ac 26:18. 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 1:13. 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," 1Pe 2:9. 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," Ga 5:1. 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," Joh 8:36. Glorious freedom, soul-freedom, and eternal freedom.

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," Lu 15:22-24. 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 come to seek you, and finds you, he will carry you to his Father, who with joy and gladness will also receive you.

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 2:13. 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.

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," Ro 5:1. 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.

11. Jesus Christ brings them into a state of sanctification and holiness. "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness," 1Th 4:7. 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," Song 4:2. 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," Eze 16:6-7, 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,” Re 1:5. 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.

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,” Ps 23:1-2; Eze 34:14. 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.

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? Song 1:7. 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,” Ac 2:47. “Christ directs all his sheep, to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and to feed beside the shepherd’s tents,” Song 1:8.

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,” Joh 10:27-28. 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

be is the finisher of it also. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Lu 12:32. 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, be far exceeds all shepherds.

1. 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 2:9. 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, he 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," Ac 18:9-10. 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 be 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 be said to Moses, "I know thee by name," Ex 33:12. Some think in the eastern countries, the shepherds gave name to all their sheep, and that our Saviour alludes to that, in Joh 10:3. "And he called his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." Whatever your name is, by which you 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,” Re 1:5. 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,” Joh 10:15. 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.”

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,” Ro 1:4. 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 7:25. 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,” 1Sa 17:34-36. 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 of them openly, triumphing over them in it,” Col 2:15. 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 63:1.

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."

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 sleepeth at all, he keeps always awake. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber," Ps 121:3-5. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep." "The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right-band." O what a happy case are believers in. How safe are all Christ's sheep, who have such a watchful and careful 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," Ps 23:1. (1.) They shall not want seeking if gone astray. (2.) They shall not want pastures to feed and he 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, Ps 103:3. (5.) They shall not want strengthening, he will strengthen them out of Sion. "Be of good cheer, he shall strengthen your hearts," Ps 31:24. (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," Mt 28:20. 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 27:2.

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?

Answ. 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 29:13. 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 whoremonger? &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

1. 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?" Song 5:10. 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? Ps 73:25.

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," 1Jo

3:14. "He that loveth him that begat, loveth them also that are begotten of him," 1Jo 5:1.

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," Mt 18:2-3, 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, Joh 15:8, 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," Pr 12:26.

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.

SERMON XIII

He layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.—Lu 15:5-6.

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," Lu 11:20. 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 53:1. 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 Joh 15:5, “Without me you can do nothing.” 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 Joh 6:44, “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,” Ps 110:3. 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, Joh 1:13, “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, 2Co 5:18, “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,” Php 3:4-6. 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 Ro 9:16, “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 3:5-6. 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,” 2Co 3:5. 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," 2Co 4:7. 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 Php 2:12-13. "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," Joh 15:16. 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. 1. 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, Eph 2:8. "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," Ga 5:22; 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 1:9. 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 3:5. Moreover it is said, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ," Ro 3:24.

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 4:24. 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 43:21. 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. Jas 1:18. "And every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him that is begotten of him," 1Jo 5:1. 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, ray, 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 2:2. "They are taken captive by him at his will," 2Ti 2:26. 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 bath 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?" Mt 12:29. 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 1:12; 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.

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 40:29. It is not such an impotency as is in a branch in winter to bear fruit, but such as 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,” Ro 5:6.

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 2:10.

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,” Ac 7:51. 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, Joh 5:40. 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,” Joh 6:44,65. Lost sinners are averse to God, and all things that are truly and spiritually good. “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” &c. Ro 8:6. 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 13:23. 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,” Song 1:4. 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.

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.

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," Ac 5:31. 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.

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 53:1. 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 2:8. 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

1:19-20. 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 12:2.

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. Ga 5:22. Moreover, the grace of love, Paul tells the Romans, “Is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,” Ro 5:5. 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.

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 be 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., Ro 8:26.

7. A sinner cannot arrive to any sure hope of everlasting life,* until quickened by Christ, and be received the Holy Spirit; such who have no God, no Christ, are without hope: “Christ in you the hope of glory,” Col 1:27. 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,” Ro 8:8-9. 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,” 2Co 5:17.

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 7:17-18; Ps 8:4. 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 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 transcendant 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? 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 65:1.

7. This may be of use by way of reprehension to such who maintain free-will, and descry 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," Joh 10:16.

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," Joh 17:9. 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, Ro 5:18. "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," Ro 8:32. It 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.

Ans. 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 suasions, 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," Ro 8:7. 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 2:1, 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 horn 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 2:8-9; 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,” Ro 3:27.

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 be 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, descrys 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 he 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.

Answ. 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. —Lu 15:6-7.

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 2:19.

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,

I. 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.

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." Joh 15:14-15. 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 Jerusalm," Song 5:16.

Quest. Why are they called friends?

Answ. 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.

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." Joh 10:14. 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," Pr 17:17. 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 he, and so he was their Saviour," Isa 62:8. 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," Joh 15:13. 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," Ps 73:24. 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 disciples 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,” Joh 15:15. 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 3:7-10. 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 53:10; 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," 2Ti 1:9, 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," Ro 8:29. &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 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 1:4. 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.

(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 synagogue 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,” 2Co 11:2. &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 62:5. 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, contemn 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," Pr 13:12.

(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 53:12. 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 hath 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 perfect 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," Joh 6:63. 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," Joh 16:14. 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.

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," 1Jo 3:8. Or dissolve the frame of his kingdom, or overthrown 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. Sire, 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.

(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 spouse speaketh, and every believer may say, the king hath brought me into his chamber, what follows? "we will be glad and rejoice with thee," Song 1:4.

(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," Joh 8:36. 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.

(I.) 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 into salvation, unto every one that believeth," Ro 1:16. "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 owning 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 then 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 9:1-2. “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 4:30. 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.

IV. Parable, Luke 15:8 The Parable Of The Lost Coin 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.—Lu 15:8-10.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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," Pr 9:1-3. 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," Re 4:11. 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.

(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 Cesar, 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 6:3.

(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,

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," Mt 5:13. Indeed not fit to be cast on the dunghil, because it tends to make land barren.

2. Man is called an unclean thing. "We all are as an unclean thing," Isa 64:6. "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, they are altogether become filthy," &c., Ps 14:1,3. And again, saith the sacred text "How much more abominable and filthy is man," Job 15:16. 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," Pr 10:20.

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. Broughten 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," Ps 62:9. "And nations before him are as nothing, and counted to him less than nothing," Isa 40:15. 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!" La 4:2. 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.

“Doth not light a candle,” &c.

Quest. What may be meant by the candle, and by lighting of it?

Answ. 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.

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. “Thy word is a lamp (or candle) to my feet, and a light to my paths,” Ps 119:105. 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.”

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,” Pr 20:27.

Hence also David says, “Thou wilt light my candle, he will light my darkness,” Ps 18:28. By both these, nay, all these candles, Jesus Christ seeks his lost goat, 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.

How the gospel may be compared to a candle that is lighted

This I shall open parallel-wise in a few particulars.

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.

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 4:18. 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 acceptation, 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 acceptation, 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 giveth him understanding," Job 32:8.

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," Ec 11:7.

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," Joh 9:4, 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 23:29.

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,”

What the house is where this candle is lighted

Quest. What is meant by the house?

Answ. 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.

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.

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 groat) 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.”

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?

Answ. 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," Joh 4:29; Ac 2:26; 16:30-31. "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,” Joh 16:8-10. 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.

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," Eze 34:16. "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," Jer 32:40.

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. Re 19:10.

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 1:14.

3. Angels are much employed to help and succour Christ's poor ministers: an angel brought Elijah meat, and bid him eat, 1Ki 19:5,7. 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, Ac 12:7: 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?

Answ. 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, Joh 3:29.

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 hellish 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.”

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," Ac 1:24. 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 3:17. 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.

V. Parable, Luke 11:12

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.—Lu 15:11-16.

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 goat, 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 goat was lost.

The son also went from his father, and was lost.

2. Moreover, they again agree, the sheep was brought home, the goat 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 goat, 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," Lu 3:38. 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 goat, 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 overvalued 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.

Doct. 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.

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., Joh 16:8, 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 throughly convinced "till the commandment

came,” Ro 7:9; 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,” 2Sa 12:3,7, 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.

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 4:18.

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 throughly 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,” Joh 6:1.

“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 granted 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,

(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?

Answ. 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?" Mt 19:20. And doth not Paul say, that when he was a Pharisee, "as touching the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless?" Lu 18:21. Php 3:6. 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 eve rwith me, and all I have is thine;" how can this be said either of the Jews in general, or of the Pharisees in particular?

Answ. 1.1 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,” Ps 147. They were God’s visible church; his worship, his tabernacle, and temple was theirs: “To them was committed the oracles of God,” Ro 3:2. 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,” Ro 9:4. Now pray, what had God more to give under that covenant, or under the dispensation of the law? the words 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.

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,” Ps 17:14; 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,” Lu 16:23.

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.

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?

Answ. 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.

2. Also God gave them the blessings of natural light, they have the works of the law written in their hearts, Ro 2:14-15.

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,” De 32:15. 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 21:10-11. 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?

Answ. The region's 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.

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,” Ro 8:7.

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?” Ps 94:20. 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 2:3. —“Ye who sometimes were afar off,” Eph 2:17.

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," Jas 4:3.

"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.

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.

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," Mt 7:6, 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.

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.

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," 2Pe 2:22.

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?

Answ. 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.

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.—Lu 15:11-12.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

“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 be 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 29:8. 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.

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 4:18.

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, 1 persecuted them even unto strange cities,” Ac 26:11. 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, 1Ki 21:20.

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.

USE

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?

Answ. There is a twofold work of the Spirit upon a lost sinner; the first is conviction, "He shall convince the world of sin," &c. Joh 16:8. 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?

Answ. 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. Ro 10:3. I might add also,

2. 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 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.” Joh 14:6. 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, he 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 12:29.

I. 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.

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 axe 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,” Ps 51:4.

All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,” Heb 4:12.

“Thou knowest my down-sitting, and up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Ps 139:2.

Again the Psalmist saith, “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance,” Ps 90:8.

1. God is omnipresent, he is every where. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” Jer 23:24. 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 94:9.

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,” Pr 5:21.

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 65:6. 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, Ec 12:14.

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.

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," 2Sa 12:13, 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,” Joh 4:29. She confesses all her evil. “I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord,” Ps 32:5.

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.—
Lu 15:19.

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?" Ac 2:37.

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," Php 2:7, not of a master. "Though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things he suffered," Heb 5:8. 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.

Unworthiness nor worthiness should hinder any from believing in Christ

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.

“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., Song 5:5. And as David resolved, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after," &c., Ps 27:4.

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.

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 6:6-7. 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 31:18. Ver. 20. “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 groat; 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," Ps 2:12, and 1Sa 10:1. 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, Ho 13:2.

2. "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, 1Co 16:20, and Ro 16:16. 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.

5. Of a spiritual kiss; "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," &c., Song 1:2. 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 42:5. “Woe is me for I am undone,” &c., Isa 6:5.

4. Wonderful contrition, and sorrow of heart; “Peter wept bitterly.” And it caused “David to water his couch with his tears,” Ps 6:6.

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., Zec 10:10. 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.

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," Ps 51:4.

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," Ro 7:24. 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?" Ps 19:12; saith David. Job confesses the sins of his youth: a hypocrite is ready to confess public tins, 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?" 2Co 7:11. 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," Eze 16:60-61.

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 3:13.

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, be is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” 1Jo 1:9. 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,” Jos 7:19.

(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," Pr 28:13. 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.

USE

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 be sure, 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,” Zec 3:3-4.

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.

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.
—Lu 15:22.

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 actings 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.

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 30:18. 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 23.

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 61:10. “Friend, how comest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment,” Mt 22:12.

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.

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, Joh 3:18,36.

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 desends 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,” Eze 16:14.

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 discovers 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.

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.

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.

(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," Ec 7:20. 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," Ro 7:18: and the apostle John saith, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," 1Jo 1:8.

(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," Ps 143:2. "If thou shouldst mark iniquity, who can stand?" Ps 130:3. Paul tells us, "He knew nothing by himself, yet he was not thereby justified," 1Co 4:4. 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," Ro 4:6, 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," Ro 3:22.

Secondly, It is the best robe, not only comparatively, but also positively,

In respect of its own most excellent nature and quality.

I. 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," Ro 3:21-22. "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith,"

Ro 10:3. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness," &c. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2Co 5:21. 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.

(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 the material cause of our justification

(2.) It is called the righteousness of God, in opposition, and in contradistinction 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 2:10.

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," Da 9:24. 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," Ps 119:142 "My righteousness shall be for ever," Isa 51:8. He that is once justified, is for ever justified; whom he "justified, them he also glorified," Ro 8:30. "There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Ro 8:1. Our righteousness and justification is as certain as our salvation, which is, like the covenant, "ordered in all things, and sure," 1Sa 23:5.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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," Ps 45:13.

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," Re 12:1-2. 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.

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 42:21. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Mt 3:17. 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 5:2.

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 mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only," Ps 71:16. 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 45:24-25. (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," Php 3:8-9. 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.

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: Ro 13:12, 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,” 2Co 5:18. (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,” Ro 5:17. (3.) It is by God the Father that we are in Christ; “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus,” 1Co 1:30. Our union with Christ is of God the Father. (4.) 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.—Lu 15:22.

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 he withhold from such who walk uprightly,” Ps 84:11.

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.

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,” Jas 2:2-3.

“A ring was worn for ornament, such that were persons of quality, commonly only were decked with bracelets and rings on their hands,” Eze 16:11.

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, east out like a wretched new-born infant: "I spread my skirt over thee: I clothed thee also with broidered work," &c., Eze 16:8,10, 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," Ps 45:9,13, 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.

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 4:30. "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 1:234. 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," Joh 3:36. 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., 1Jo 5:13.

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, be 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," Pr 12:26. "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren," because he was a gracious person. Or,

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," Joh 8:36. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2Co 3:17. 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," Ro 8:1.

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," Song 4:9. By that one eye, most understand is meant the grace of faith, often called the eye of faith, which is a self-emptying 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 compares 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.

Six things concur in marriage:

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.

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.

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 sue 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.

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:" 1Co 6:16. 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,” 2Pe 1:4.

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 interest in all Christ hath, as well as interest in his person. “This is my beloved, this my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,” Song 5:16. 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,” Song 2:16. 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,” Re 3:20. “Enoch walked with God three hundred years,” Ge 5:23. 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,” 2Co 6:16. 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,” Ro 8:17. 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,” Lu 12:32. 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,” Re 3:21. 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,” 2Ti 4:8. 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., Joh 17:24. 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 transcendant 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 acceptation; 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.

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.

2. Shoes are an ornament to the feet. “How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O princes, daughters,” Song 7:1. 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 curious 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.

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 6:15. 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.

4. Shoes were anciently a sign of freedom, and of a comfortable state; slaves went barefoot, 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.

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.

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," 1Sa 2:9. "Wilt thou not keep my feet from falling?" Ps 56:13.

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.

1. 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 their former conversation,” Eph 4:22; and as they are made free, and become the servants of “righteousness, they have their fruit unto holiness,” Ro 6:18,22.

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 3:1-2. Before their feet carried them perhaps to play-houses, to music-houses, and to tipping-houses; but now their feet carry them into the courts of God’s house, and they delight more in praying than they did playing.

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,” Php 1:27.

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, Eze 1:7. 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?” Song 7:1, 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.

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?

1. 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 2:14.

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 briers 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.

USE

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.

MOTIVES

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 other ways 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.— Lu 15:23

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.

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, 18:12. "It is said of Asher, his bread shall be fat," Ge 45:18. He shall have the best bread, and abundance of it. "They shall be fed with the fatness of thy house," Ge 49:20, "I will feed them in a fat pasture," Ps 36:8, 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 I have shall not be withheld from him; he shall eat that which is "meat indeed, and drink that which is drink indeed," Joh 6:55.

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 bath 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. “Verity, verity, 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 swines’ 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 2:21-22.

(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," Ga 1:9, and let all that receive any other 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," Ac 2:23. Hence, also it is said, "He was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" Re 13:8. 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., (Pr 9:2,) 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?" Mt 15:26.

Again, our Lord saith, "Give not that which is holy to dogs," Mt 7:6. 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,” Song 5:1. 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,” Ps 36:8. And again, he saith, “Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness,” Isa 55:2. 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,” 1Jo 3:23, 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. Ps 84:11. “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing,” Ps 34:10. “He will give meat to them that fear him, he is ever mindful of his covenant,” Ps 101:5. 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.

Ans. 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.

1. 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.

2. 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,” Ps 90:1. 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 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," 1Ti 4:8.

3. 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 48:22. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the revenues of many wicked," Ps 37:16.

4. 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.

5. 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," 2Co 4:17.

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 winterly 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,” 1Co 1:23.— Philip went down to the city of Samaria, “and preached Christ to them,” Ac 8:5; and St. Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached, though some “preached him out of strife and contention,” Php 1:15. 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 hardly 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 4:1. 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.

(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?" Joh 6:27. 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," Joh 6:27. 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.?" Ro 8:32.

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," 1Pe 2:7. 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," Ps 19:10. 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," Ps 3:8.

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," Pr 27:7. 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 failed calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.— Lu 15:23

Doct. 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.

I. The Lamb of God (signified by the fatling 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., Joh 3:16. 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," 1Jo 4:9. 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 herewith, 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 12:9, 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 hanged 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," Joh 1:1-2; 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," Ps 34:8. 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., Joh 6:27. 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, today, and for ever," 1Pe 1:25; Heb 13:8.

(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," 1Pe 1:19. "And the Lamb of God," Joh 1:29. 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," Song 5:10; 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 55:1-2. 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," Joh 6:35; 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? besides, 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," Joh 6:51. "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?” 1Co 15:6. 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, or on our side, and against all our enemies, and to be our God for ever? What can be more refreshing, 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,” Joh 17:23. Perfect in one; that is, in one body, whereof Christ is the Head: 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,” 1Co 6:17.

(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 life, and for ever freed from condemnation? O how good is this food? Ro 8:1.

(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’ ” Php 4:6.

So doth the peace of God.

(7.) Is not adoption sweet meat to feed upon? “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father,” Ga 4:6. The people of the Jews were an adopted people. Israel was called God’s son, “To them belonged the adoption,” Ro 9:4. 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 2:19. “Ye have not received (ye Gentiles) the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father,” Ro 8:15.

(8.) Is not, a marriage with Christ a sweet thing? Is it not inconceivably consolatory? What! married to Jesus Christ, and sit with Jesus Christ at his table, and eat with him, sup with him, and he with us, at this banquet prepared to solemnize the marriage between the Lord Christ, and a poor believing sinner?

(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.

(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 fatling, 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 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.

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,” 1Pe 3:18.

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 the priest's family was allowed to eat thereof. So Jesus Christ was not only 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," Joh 6:55. All the saints of God are the anti-typical priesthood, 1Pe 2:5. 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).

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," 1Pe 2:7. "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" Ps 34:8. 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!

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 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 2:19. "Desiring the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," Ac 2:2.

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 3:1. 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,” Joh 6:57. “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,” 1Jo 5:12.

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.

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.

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.

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. The woman of Canaan had a great faith, and she eat the very best of this gospel feast. "O woman, great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt," Mt 15:28. 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," Mr 5:25,28. 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," Lu 8:46. A strong faith fetcheth mighty virtue from Jesus Christ, and such are fed with the best food. Babes cannot Heb 5:12-13. 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 5:13-14.

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 10:38. 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," Joh 14:19.

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 23:10. 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," Re 3:19.

(2.) They that live on 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," Ps 73:26. 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 45:24. 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 2:10.

(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,” 2Ti 2:1. 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,” 2Co 12:9. 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,” Joh 1:14,16. 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 glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,” 2Co 12:9.

(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,” Ro 8:35. 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.

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 13:8. 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," 1Co 10:13. 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, be not dismayed; I am thy God, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee, yea, I will strengthen thee," Isa 41:10. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb 13:5. This made Jonas when he was in the whale's belly, to say, "Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple," Jon 2:4.

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," Mt 4:4. And though they are in darkness, yet they can "stay themselves upon their God," Isa 1:10.

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.

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.

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 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 55:7. 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, an 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 harbour 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.—Lu 15:23.

“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,” 1Jo 1:3.

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 fulness 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,” Re 3:20. 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. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" Ps 94:20. 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?" 2Co 6:15-16.

(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?" Am 3:3. Utter enemies to each other, can have no fellowship together. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," Ro 8:7. 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 22:21, 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 3:10.

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? 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," Ga 3:10. 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," Joh 3:36.

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.

(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.

II. I proceed to prove, there is such a fellowship or communion betwixt God and a believing sinner, and shall show wherein it doth consist.

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," 1Co 6:17. 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," Joh 17:21.

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," Pr 23:26. 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 5:30. And he gives us his Spirit, his likeness, “And so we partake of the divine nature,” &c. 2Pe 1:4. Christ’s riches is ours, and our poverty was his. “He became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich,” 2Co 8:9. 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,” 2Co 5:21. 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,” Ga 3:13. 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,” Joh 17:22. 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,” Joh 14:23. “Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest I love thee,” Joh 21:17

(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," Joh 15:15. And they call him their friend. "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem," Song 1:16.

(2.) They walk together: "Enoch 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, Re 3:20, "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," Song 6:1. 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," Song 4:9.

(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," Song 2:14. And they love to hear his voice. "It is the voice of my beloved that kneeketh" "My sheep know my voice, and they

follow me,” &c., Joh 10:27, 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,” Song 1:1, 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,” Ps 45:11. And what saith a believer? “with my soul have I desired thee in the night,” Isa 26:9.

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,” Php 1:20.

(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,” Ps 51:18. 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,” Ps 137:5-6. 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 practices 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," Ps 119:139. 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 unlearned, 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?

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?" Ac 8:4. 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," Zec 2:8. Moreover, they that feed, clothe, and visit the poor saints, feed, clothe, and visit Jesus Christ, Mt 25:35. 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 1:1.

2. And the saints are called the heirs of all things, Re 2:17. Or joint heirs with him. Ro 8:17. Christ is God's elect, 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, Re 5:10. 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 preeminence above them.

"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.

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, nay, 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!" Song 1:4; 2:6. 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.

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.

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.

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 sweetsmelling 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," Ps 4:7.

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," Ho 14:4. 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.

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," Pr 4:18. 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," Ps 84:7. 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," 1Jo 1:1. "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., Ho 14:5. 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 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," Ps 36:8. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causeth 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," Ps 65:4. The prodigal eat before, but he was not satisfied, but now he had what his soul desired.

It causeth the soul to contemn 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,” Ps 78:25. 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.”

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, 2Co 12:1-3; he was not often feasted in that manner.

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,” Song 1:4. 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., Ps 44:4; 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.”

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?” Lu 1:43, 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 42:5. And thus it was with the prophet Isaiah also, he cries out, “I am undone,” Isa 6:5. The more we see and enjoy of God, the more low we lie at his feet, and are abased before him.

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,” 2Co 3:18. Compare this with Song 5:5, “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.

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.

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,” Ps 16:11.

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,” Ps 36:7. 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?” Ps 42:1. 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 26:9.

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.

1. Is not the world got to much into your hearts: are not earthly consolations overprized 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

2ndly. 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.

3rdly. 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.—Lu 15:24.

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.

“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."

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 6:1-2.

2. A dead man's beauty is gone, and his countenance is changed, he looks ghastly: so the spiritual beauty of sinners, by reason of sin, and death in sin, is gone: innocent man was a beautiful creature in God's sight. Virtue puts

beauty and glory on the soul; but sin is the worst deformity, it is that which marred God's image on the soul, so that there remains no more comeliness in the sinner in God's sight, than is in the face of a dead man in our sight.

3. A dead man is as cold as clay, or as a stone: so sinners without a principle of true spiritual life are cold to spiritual or heavenly things as a stone; and this all unrenewed sinners discover at all times; there is no divine warmth or heat in them. If you talk to them about spiritual matters, tell them of 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 1:31. 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.

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 Zec 12:10. 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.

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, Ac 7:51. 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,” Joh 5:40. 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 rebellions 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,” Joh 3:8.

6. A dead man cannot speak, he cannot praise and magnify God. “The dead cannot celebrate thee. The living shall praise thee,” &c., Isa 37:18-19. 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.

USE

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.

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 2:1,4. 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,” Joh 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.

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 1:18. 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,” Song 5:10,16. 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,” Ps 34:8; 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,” Ro 8:11; Ga 5:25; Ro 8:14. 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?” Lu 24:32.

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,” 2Pe 1:4. 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, 1Jo 1:2-3.

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 frame. 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.

(6.) 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," Ga 2:20. None have Christ but such that believe truly in him. "He that believes hath the Son," Joh 3:36. "And he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life," 1Jo 5:12.

(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," Ro 8:5.

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," Joh 14:19. 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,” Ro 9:4. 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.

VI. Parable, Matthew 18:12 &c. The Parable Of The Importunate Widow.

SERMON XXV

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?—Lu 18:1-8.

Year of Christ 33.

Year of his ministry 4.

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 spoke. 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.;

(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 sum of his whole design, in speaking this parable.

As to what is contained in the several parts of this parable, and how to be improved, I shall in the next place speak briefly to that.

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. De 10:17-18. 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," Ps 68:5.

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," Ps 103:13.

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.

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.

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. Zeeh. 12:10. Hannah prayed to the Lord, and what did she say? "I have poured out my soul before the Lord," 1Sa 1:15.

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. Ro 8:26. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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, Da 6:10. 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 10:25.

It appears that Cornelius prayed in his house or family always; it was, no doubt, his constant practice, Ac 10:2-3.

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.

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,” Jas 5:13. 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,” 2Co 12:8; that is, many times: how often that thrice might be, we know not; he means he cried often and earnestly to God.

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., Ps 50:15, that is, more than at other times.

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, Ge 32:24,26. 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, 2Ki 18:10,15.

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,” 2Ch 7:13. 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, Da 9:3-4.

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,” Mt 17:21.

8. I shall show you of what parts prayer consisteth. Prayer, my brethren, consisteth of three parts.

(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," 2Sa 9:7. He did not mean, he should do nothing but eat.

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.

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. Php 4:6. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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,” Mt 26:41. “Watch and pray always, that ye may escape all those things that shall come to pass,” Lu 21:36.

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.

1. Prayer is a God-honoring 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.

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.

(2.) Prayer tends also to glorify God in his infinite power, omnipotency, and allsufficiency: 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 too hard for thee,” Jer 32:17. 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.

(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.

(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," Ps 140:12. This we plead, and this we are obliged stedfastly to believe. "He is faithful that hath promised, and he will do it," 1Co 1:9.

(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," Da 4:35. 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.— Lu 15:1-8

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,” 2Ch 20:12. 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.

(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.

(4.) 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.

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,” 1Jo 2:1-2; 1Ti 2:5; *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., Ps 36:6. “It pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell,” Col 1:19. 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 2:3.

(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,” Ro 9:5. Amen.

3. Prayer tends also to glorify the Spirit, or God 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,” 1Co 12:3. 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.” Ro 8:26.

(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 influences 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.

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,” Joh 15:7. 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,” Joh 16:24. 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,” Joh 14:13; 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 1Jo 5:14.

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.

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. Ps 32:5-6.

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! Da 3:4.

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," 2Co 12:9. 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.

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 overthrown by the prayers of Samuel and all Israel: also the mighty hosts that came against Jehoshaphat. 1Sa 7:7-10.

7. Prayer, importunity in prayer, is the way to get the loaves, and to have God to avenge us of our adversary.

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," Eze 9:5. 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," Zep 2:3. 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."

9. Prayer is the way to have or obtain fulness of joy. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," Joh 16:24. 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," Ps 4:6. And again, "restore to me the joy of thy salvation," Ps 51:12. 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," 2Ch 30:18-19.

11. Prayer is the way to have every thing sanctified unto us. “Every thing is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer,” 1Ti 4:5. 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.”

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.

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,” Pr 3:6.

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.

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., Jas 5:16. 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 1:15.

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,” Pr 15:8. 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 16:17. Prayers are then pure, when the heart is clean, and sanctified by the Spirit.

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,” 1Jo 5:14. (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 6:18. The Spirit helps us to indite 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.

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,” Ro 4:20. Nothing is too hard for prayer, when it is put up by faith in God. “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering,” Jas 1:6. 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,” Jas 5:15.

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?”

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 23:4. Thus Jacob prayed also, “Thou sayest I will surely do thee good,” &c., Ge 32:12. 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?” Jos 7:9. What arguments did the church also make use of: “We are thy people,” Isa 63:16.

“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,” 2Ch 20:12.

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,” Ro 8:15. Such prayers God is well pleased with, and they tend to his glory.

10. They are prayers put up with humility, with self-loathing, and self-abhorrence; we must lie low before the Lord. “I that am but dust and ashes,” &c., saith Abraham. “I abhor myself,” saith Job;” Job 42:5: not like the prayer the proud Pharisee made, who boasted he was not like other men.

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 6:18. “Watch and pray always,” saith our blessed Lord. Watching may be considered as threefold.

(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.

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,” Php 4:6. 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 farther 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.

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 (1.) signifies the 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. 94:3

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. (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.

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.

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.

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," Jas 4:2, 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," Ac 9:11.

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," Song 2:14. 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," Re 11:6, 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," Zec 12:12; 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.— Lu 18:7-8.

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," Ps 42:10. "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," Ps 57:4.

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 9:8. Some smite openly, and others secretly. "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me." 20:7. "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., 2Co 11:20-21. "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., 2Co 12:10. 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," Mt 5:11.

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," Ac 24:14. 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," Ac 28:22. 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.

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. Mt 27:63. “Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil,” Joh 8:48,52. 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. 6:8. What could they say that was worse, or more hard to bear?

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.

5. They have been, and still are wronged by cruel threatenings, “Behold, Lord, their threatnings,” &c. Re 13:6. 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 then 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, 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 Protestant 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 forementioned 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.

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,” Mt 24:7. May be this prophecy is begun; O look up! the days of vengeance draw near. “Blood e’er long shall come out of the winepress, up to the horses bridles, for the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”

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,” Re 11:13. And so the second woe will pass away, seven is a number of perfection; it is a certain number put for an uncertain.

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,” Re 17:16. 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 mouth, shall 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,” Re 18:4. 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.

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 destroy and devour at once,” Isa 42:14. 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 59:17. 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 28:21. 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 34:7-8. And hence it is said, “He will roar out of Sion,” Joe 3:16. 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?

Answ. 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,” Ge 9:6. 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.”

2. Because vengeance belongs to the Lord, it his his right to execute it. “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,” Ro 12:19. “To me belongs vengeance,” De 32:35. “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs, show thyself,” Ps 94:1. 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.

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. 7:9. “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 47:3. “Be strong, fear not, behold your God will come, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you,” Isa 35:4. 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,” Na 1:2.

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

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 50:15. "Declare 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," Lu 21:22. As there are days of mercy, so the days of vengeance will come, when mercy will be turned into fury.

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.

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," Ps 12:5. 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!" Re 6:9-10. 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?

Answ. 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 "king-doms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ," Re 11:14-16. 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, Ge 15:16: 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," Re 18:7; Isa 47:8. The enemy shall seem very secure, just when her ruin comes. Thus was Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar his son, when judgments came upon them, Da 5:21-23.

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," Zep 3:8. 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, Re 11:11.

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.

VII. Parable, Matthew 18:23

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.—Mt 18:23-35.

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, 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 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.”

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.

“Likened unto a certain king, who would take account of his servants.”

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.

“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,” 2Ki 4:1.

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.

“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.

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.

Answ. 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,” Mt 18:18; 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 convinceth 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 bath 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., shouldest 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," Jas 2:18. 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 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.

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 for giving 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 this life; or it not here, yet in the life to come. To this purpose our annotators speak.

I shall note, and speak briefly unto three or four propositions from hence.

Doct. 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.

Doct. 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.

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.

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,” Ps 40:12.

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.

1. Sin is a vast debt, or an exceeding great evil in respect of God, 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 22:5.

(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.

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.

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.

5. Because it requires unmeasurable hatred: if it were possible we should hate sin with an infinite hatred; we can never hate it enough.

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 respect 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?

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.

USE

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," Joh 5:24. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Ro 8:1.

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 he 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," Joh 3:36; Mr 16:17.

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 55:1.

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.

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 debter 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, Ga 5:3; Mt 25:26-27.

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 whoredoms they have in secret committed and of the wrongs by a detracting and backbiting 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 21:30. They will not come willingly, but they shall be haled before the Judge of heaven and earth.

2. Ill debtors are commonly attended with shame. Ambrose speaketh of some, who for shame and distress made themselves away, fearing more *opprobrium vitae*, 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.

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.

4. 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.

5. A debtor doth not love to see or meet his creditor, he will avoid it, go some byway; 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,” Ac 24:25.; 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.”

6. A debtor far in debt, and having nothing to pay (that is in the hands of a severe and just creditor) is continually afraid of an arrest, and is much perplexed and troubled in his mind, for fear of a prison. So guilty and ungodly sinners are afraid of serjeant Death; and being awakened through the convictions of their consciences, dread the thoughts of hell, or of being sent to the prison of utter darkness.

Secondly, The debt sinners owe to God, renders their case such, that they are the worst of debtors; no such debtors among men.

This appears,

1. Debtors among men oftentimes compound their debts, and so get a discharge; but no guilty sinner can do thus, for God requires the whole debt, 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 Valentiman, 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," Re 14:10. Or as our Saviour saith, "They shall be cast into a furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Mt 13:50.

2. 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?" Ps 139:7.

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 notorious debtors, are insensible of their state, and never are troubled, nor think of what they owe to God's justice.

USE

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," Ac 13:39.

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," Ps 103:1,3.

SERMON XXIX

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him that owed him ten thousand talents, &c.—Mt 18:24.

I have showed you that sin is a great debt, and that sinners are debtors 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.

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., 1Pe 1:6. But legal threatenings denounce unmixed and unallayed wrath and the curse. Now these two vastly differ, not only in their nature, but end also.

1. 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 (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.

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.

1. 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 be 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,” Mt 5:18; “and that every disobedience received a just recompense of reward,” Heb 2:2; 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,” Ex 34:6-7; 1Pe 3:18. (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 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,” Ro 3:13. 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, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle of the law shall in no wise pass away, till all be fulfilled,” Mt 5:17-18. 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.

(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. “Cursed be he that continueth not in all things written in the law, to do them,” De 27:26. 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,” 2Co 5:21; Ga 3:17; Ro 5:7-8.

(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.

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.

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,” Lu 7:47. “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven,” Mt 9:2. “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. 7:18. “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and that

healeth all thy diseases?” Ps 103:1-2. 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 Ro 3:25, “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 1:7. “As God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you,” Eph 4:32. 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 55:1-2.

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 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?

Answ. 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 10:7. 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 1:5-6. 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., Joh 10:17-18. 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.

Answ. 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, nay, 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 benefits 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, 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 acquitment (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*, follow 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 (he 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 Son, and Holy Spirit, all honour, glory, and praise, for evermore. Amen.

VIII. Parable, Matthew 21:33 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.—Mt 21:33-44.

Year of Christ, 33

St. Mark hath also this parable, Mr 12:1. Likewise St. Luke, chap. 20:9, 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.

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 5:7.

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.

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. Joh 15:1. 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 paled 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.

"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.

"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 5:2. 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.

“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, Ro 11:3.

“And he sent other servants more than the first, and they did unto them likewise.” Ver. 36.

“Him they stoned,”* saith Mr 12:4; “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?”

“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,” Mr 12:6. 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,” Lu 20:13.

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,” Joh 1:11-12. 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 so 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.

“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?” Mr 12:9.
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.

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 unto 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.

1. 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., Ac 4:11.

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,” 1Co 3:11. 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. 1Co 3:9. Eph 2:12.

“This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes,” verse 42.

1. 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 28:16. "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 ministration or dispensation of the gospel from them, and giving it to the Gentiles; not to one Gentile nation only, nor to make or constitute 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 2:15. "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. 44.

Some take these words differently.

I. 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.

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 rained 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. 44. 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.

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.

Doct. I. 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,

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?”

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 bath 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.

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.” 1Co 4:1-2. 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.

God will call to account for the gospel, &c.

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-race; 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," Mt 25:22, 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?

Answ. I. 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, 18:17. 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.

I. 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,” Mt 12:33. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,” &c., Ga 5:22 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,” Php 1:27; Ro 6:22. Again the 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,” 1Ti 6:17-18.

2ndly. As the fruit should be right in quality, so it ought to be much 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 5:4. 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!

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 5:12. They had made but a poor proficiency in knowledge, considering the time they had been planted.

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,” Joh 9:4. 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.

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.

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," Joh 15:8. 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 61:3.

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?

Severe reproof to such as neglect Christ's vineyard

(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 1:6. "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 2:2. 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," Ps 77:2. 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 5:2. 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 shining 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,” Ro 7:4. 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 briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned,” Heb 6:8. 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 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,” Jas 2:18.

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.

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.,—Mt 21:42.

I told you by builders here, our Saviour meant the Scribes and Pharisees, and masters of Israel.

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," Mt 7:24.

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., 1Co 3:10.

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 3:4. 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; 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., 1Co 3:10.

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 28:16.

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 kings 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., 1Pe 2:5,

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, Mt 7:27.

(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," 1Co 3:11. 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 workmongers, 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 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, Ho 6:5; Jer 23:29.

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,” Pr 24:27. (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 51:2. “Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite,” Eze 16:3. (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,” Mt 28:18-19; 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,” 1Ki 5:7. 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,” 1Pe 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.

(1.) Fundamentals of salvation, or all the essentials of the Christian religion, which every believer should be established in, nay 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 6:1-2; 5:12; Ac 8:12,17; 19:6. 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.

Ministers must do all by the rule of God’s word, &c.

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 2:20-22.

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.

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,” Mt 16:16. 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?

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?

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,” 1Co 3:13.

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 cornerstone.

III. Show who reject Christ, as the only foundation, and chief cornerstone.

IV. Apply it.

I. I shall prove that Jesus Christ is the only foundation, and chief cornerstone, upon which the souls of all true believers are built, and the true church is built.

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 28:16. In another place he is called the chief corner-stone; "Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious," 1Pe 2:6. 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," 1Co 3:11. Therefore such that build not upon Jesus Christ, build without a foundation; "Like a man that builds an house without a foundation," Lu 6:48.

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.

Christ actually laid for a foundation The Father found good ground in laying Christ for the foundation

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 dependance. (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,” Re 21:21.

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 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 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., Zec

13:7. 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.

All believers, like stones, are united to Christ the foundation. Eph. 2:21

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,” 2Co 1:20. 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,” Mt 16:18. Christ the rock of ages, rocks are firm and unmovable, 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 13:8. “I am God, and change not,” Mal 3:6. Can he that laid the foundation of the earth decay, “And thou, Lord, in the beginning (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 1:10-12.

5. A foundation is oftentimes 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," 2Ti 1:12. O blessed souls that build upon Jesus Christ! "They shall never perish, neither can any pluck them out of my hands," Joh 10:28.

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," Ps 89:34,38. So much as to this.

Question. But of what use is Christ to the spiritual building, as he is called the cornerstone?

Answ. 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 cornerstone, cements and joins all believers together in the bands 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 be 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 1:17. 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 oftentimes 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 cornerstone of God's building!

Know that Christ far excels 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," 2Sa 23:5. 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,” Re 5:12.

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.

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 he 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.

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,” Ro 10:17. 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

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.—Mt 21:42.

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," (Joh 14:9.) saith our Lord Jesus Christ; no, nor can they, for out of Christ "God is a consuming fire," Heb 12:29. 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.

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., Joh 3:16. 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,” Ex 37:7; 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.

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?”

2ndly. 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,” Ro 2:17. 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,” Ro 9:31-33. The very stone which they should have built upon, they stumbled at. Let me give you an argument here to confirm this particular.

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.

Answ. 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?

Answ. 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.

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.

Answ. 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 possessions 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 Cornerstone.

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.

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.

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 18:2. 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?

Answ. 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., 2Pe 2:14.

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 21:14.

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," Ho 4:11.

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.

Despairing persons dare not sin against God, nor yet rest on Christ

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 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," Mt 16:18; and again saith, "No man cometh to the Father but by me," Joh 14:6. And the apostles declare that there is no "other name given, by which men must be saved," Ac 4:12. 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," Mr 16:16; Joh 3:36. 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?

Answ. 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 greatest 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.

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.

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 backbiter, &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," Eze 18:23. Wilt thou not believe God upon the highest 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,” Mt 11:28. “The whole need not a physician, put such that are sick,” Mt 9:12. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,” Mr 2:17. 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, 18:1, i.e., such who are lost in their own sight. “Ho every one that thirsteth, come to the waters,” Isa 55:1. But for encouragement consider further.

1. 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?” Zec 13:1.

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? 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 55:8. 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,” Ro 5:20.

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 Mr 16:16. comest to him, throwest thyself upon him; and if thou dost not thus, 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?" Joh 6:37, And that "he that believeth on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life," Joh 3:16.

Comfort. This may administer comfort and sweet consolation to believers, who are built upon Jesus Christ.

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.

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.—Mt 21:42.

Quest. What is the Lord's doing?

Answ. 1. 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,” 1Jo 3:1-2. 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 Sion for a foundation, a stone,” &c., Isa 28:16. “All things are of God,” 2Co 5:18; 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,” Joh 3:16. This is wonderful love, marvellous love, “For verily he did not take on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,”

Heb 2:16. 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," 1Jo 4:9-10.

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 33:24. 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 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.

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?

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.

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., Joh 4:10.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," Ro 8:32. 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 1:3-4.

How often is God the Father called our Saviour? "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people," Lu 1:68. And hence he is called, "the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort," 2Co 1:3.

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., Ac 2:23. 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," Ac 3:18.

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., Ps 40:5.

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," 1Pe 2:4. 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 10:5.

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," Joh 10:36. 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.

(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 5:5, (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 53:11. (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 53:6. (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 belov'd 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," Ro 6:4. "Whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead," &c., Ac 4:10 (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," Ac 5:31. (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 Sion." (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., Ac 3:22. (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., Zec 13:7-8. (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," Ac 3:26. "He hath raised up an horn of salvation, in the house of his servant David," Lu 1:69. (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 49:3.

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 2:14.

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."

It is a marvellous thing that Christ should be rejected

Quest. What is marvellous in our eyes?

Answ. (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.

I. 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.

A thing which is above man's reason is marvellous

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 things 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., Joh 3:16. 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? why his enemies, yea, such that had enmity in our hearts and minds against God; we that were rebels, 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," Ro 5:8. 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 1:21. My brethren, it is counted a strange and marve'ulous 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," Joh 15:13. But what saith the apostle, "But Christ died for us, while we were enemies," Ro 5:8. 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,” Ps 31:20; 97:1. 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 cast 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 Pharisees, 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? Re 3:21.

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*.

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,” 1Co 2:7-8,14. “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh,” &c., 1Ti 3:16.

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,” 1Co 1:18. 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," Ex 34:7.

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-pluss 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 29:14.

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., 1Co 13:12.

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 3:15, that is, with wonderment. "Which things the angels desire to look into," 1Pe 1:12. 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,” Mt 11:27. 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 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 3:9-10.

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,” 2Th 1:10.

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.

(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 31:22. 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

(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,” Ga 3:13-14.

(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.”

(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, 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.”

(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,” Ro 9:32-33. 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.

(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?

(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."

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. 1Ti 3:16. 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 condemn 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," 1Co 2:1. And not to regard any notions, 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? "Caust 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 11:7-9.

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," Ho 8:12; 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 contemn these mysteries, and count them as idle stories, mere fictions and dreams of men's imaginations?

Answ. 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 religion, 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, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men wondered at: for behold I will bring forth my servant the Branch,” Zec 3:8. 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 8:18.

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,” Ps 119:18.

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, —Mt 21:42.

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.

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,” Mt 24:14.

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,” Mt 16:18; 28:20.

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, Re 2; 3 chap. But,

II. That the kingdom of God, or a visible church-state, may be lost or taken away from a people.

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 miracles 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 Alcoran 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.

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?

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," De 32:2. 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 5:6. 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.

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 ministration 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," Joh 20:31. Therefore to lose the gospel, or to have the kingdom of God taken away from a people, must needs be the greatest loss.

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,” Ro 1:16-17, &c. Where no gospel is preached, the power of God is not revealed, nor the righteousness of God made known, not the means of faith in Christ. “Can men believe on him of whom they have not heard?” Ro 10:14. 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 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 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 are taken away from that people; “and woe to them when I depart!” 1Sa 4:21. Such may cry, Ichabod, 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;” La 5:16. The gospel is the symbol of God’s presence, and when he departs, fearful judgments succeed and break in upon that 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?

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.

2. Another sin for which God takes away the gospel and kingdom of God is apostacy, 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 apostacy 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.

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 candlestick 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 candlestick out of his place, except thou repent," Re 2:5. *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 1:13. 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 2:3. “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 provoking 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 5:4-5. 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, Re 3:16. 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.

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-boar 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 nonsensical 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," Ps 68:11. 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., De 33:29. 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," Joh 9:4. 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!

IX. Parable, Matthew 20:1 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.—Mt 20:16.

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.

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 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,” Ps 24:1.

“Who went early in the morning to hire labourers into the vineyard.”

By 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 5:7.

“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 Jesus Christ. The covenant of works, it is true, was a conditional covenant; do this and live. But the law was not given on Mount 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," Ro 4:4.

"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.

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 fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partake of his promise in Christ by the gospel," Eph 2:6.

"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 unt 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 two 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 Bud^{us} 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, Mt 25, (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.

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.

“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.

1. 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. Ro 11:25.

“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." 1Co 1:26,29. 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," De 7:6, &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.

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.

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 5:7. "Hence called the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified," Isa 16:3.

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," 1Co 3:6.

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," Ho 10:12, &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.

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."

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 notwithstanding 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," Ps 92:12-14.

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." De 30:2. 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 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," Ps 121:5,7.

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 5:6-7.

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., 1Co 4:7.

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,” Song 4:12. “Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you,” 2Co 6:17.

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 boar 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 Mt 15:13. 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 vice. 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.—Mt 20:1.

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.

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 restipulation 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," Ge 12:3; 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 31:33. "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., Eze 36:26. 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.

Object. This only refers to the Jews, when they shall be called in the last days.

Answ. 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 8, 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 2:13. (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.

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,” Ro 4:2; 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 3:5. Whatsoever 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,” Ro 11:6.

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., Ro 4:5. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” Ac 16:31. 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,” Lu 17:10. But he is certainly no unprofitable servant, whose works commend him to God, for which he deserveth the penny, or Php 3:8-9. 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 band, 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.

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 55:3. 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 bearing 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.

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.”

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., Ro 6:16.

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," Ro 8:15.

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," Joh 15:5. 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," Mt 11:29. 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 11:26. 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 be said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?—Behold, to me thou hast given no seed,” Ge 15:2-3. 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,” Ps 16:5-6. “The portion of Jacob, is not like them, for he is the former of all things,” Jer 51:19.

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,” Song 2:16. “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," Lu 12:32. 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 acceptation 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 quickened 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," Joh 6:37. 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.

3. He exceeds all in love, goodness, and rich bounty, be espouseth all such that accept of him and his service.

4. 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 their 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 services 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.

Thirdly, We also learn from hence, That the happiness of Christ's servants 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.

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.—Mt 20:1-15,

1. 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 Abraham, and then of the whole house of Irsael 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,” Mr 13:34.

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?
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.

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," 2Ti 2:15. 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," 1Ti 5:17. Again he saith, "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them," &c. 1Ti 4:15. "Preach the word, be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine," 2Ti 4:2.

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 consolating 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. 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,” 1Ti 5:17, (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., De 4:9. 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,” Pr 4:23.

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,” Pr 4:23. (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.

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.

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,” 1Co 12:15-22. (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 for saken all, and followed thee,” Mt 19:27. 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 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," Ps 73:25. 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?

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 3:8. Christ's faithful servants wear one and the same garment; they "are all clothed with humility," 1Pe 5:5. 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," Jas 4:6. 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.

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," Ps 84:10.

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," Joh 8:49, (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," Php 1:20.

(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; thine is the kingdom, O Lord,

and thou art exalted above all,” 1Ch 29:11. And again he saith, “For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,” ver. 14. 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?” 1Co 4:7.

(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,” Ac 20:35. 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,” Ac 20:20. 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,” 3Jo 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 marketplace.—Mt 20:3.

Though 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.

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. I. 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," Pr 14:34. (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 list of wickedness, or to contemn 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 loathsome 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 loathsome, and cometh to shame," Pr 13:5.

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," Pr 23:21. What poverty and sorrow have many brought upon themselves, through idleness? so those that are spiritually idle, or careless of their precious souls, bring rain 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 raiseth not only to honour, “but righteousness delivers from death.” Pr 10:2.

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,” Pr 6:11. Nay, such shall beg in harvest, and have nothing,” Pr 20:4. 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,” Pr 1:28. 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,” Lu 15:16. 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 cockleshells? 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 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.

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," Joh 9:4.

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.

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,” Ec 11:7. 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.

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,” Pr 4:18.

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 bath 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. 3:6. 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," Am 8:11. 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.

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," Pr 7:9: 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 smooch things preached unto them, as if they had a mind blindfold to go to hell.

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!

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," Mr 16:15.

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 XXXIX

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said, go into the vineyard, &c.—Mt 20:3

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.

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," 1Pe 5:8. And next to Satan you serve another enemy, that is, sin,* which is as had 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 3:3. And not our sin, but this evil world also, which hath by its deceits 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 2:14. 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,” 1Pe 1:18-19. 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?

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,” Ro 6:16. 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 Hock, 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,” Ro 8:17. 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?

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., 1Pe 4:3. 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 above 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?

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 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," Joh 12:26.

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 what 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," La 3:27; 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," Mt 11:29-30.

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,” 2Co 7:1.

(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 is our reasonable service,” Ro 12:1. 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,” Ga 6:16.

(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.

(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.

(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?

Answ. (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.

(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," Ec 12:1; 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," Ps 119:106. 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,” Ps 65:4. “Godliness is profitable unto all things,” 1Ti 6:6; 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,” Ps 16:3. And from hence, “Jabez was more honourable than his brethren,” Chron. 4:9, 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,” Song 4:9.

(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 4:24. 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 43:4. What is it to have honour of men? “They that honour me, saith the Lord, I will honour,” 1Sa 2:30. Wicked men are a base and ignoble sort of people. True honor 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,” Ps 91:14-15. 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.

(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 2:2. 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.

(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 east 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?

(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 10:27. 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.

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," Ps 25:7. 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 Caryl,) 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.

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; nay, a bit of bread may end our days as soon as the pestilential fever. A seaman (as one noteth) 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," 1Ki 18:12.

SERMON XL

And he went out about the third hour, and found others stand idle, &c.—Mt 20:3.

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?

Answ. 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 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 away.

1. Consider, that all sinful pleasures are brutish, sensual, and devilish, bein 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 contemn 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 contemn God in your hearts? these things God calls youthful vanities,* and for which he will bring you to judgment.

4. Sinful delights and pleasures are the devil's bait to catch fools,* and destroy their 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 4:22. 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," Jon 2:8. 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," 1Pe 1:8. 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," Pr 7:7. 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 blear-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," 1Co 4:5. 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," Pr 2:18. Again it is said, "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death," Pr 7:27.

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.

(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," Ps 81:14. 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," Ro 5:6.

(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," Ps 27:4. "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 shall make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,” Ps 36:8. 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.

Answ. 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 loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh,” Isa 1:5-6; Matt, 23:27; Ps 33:5,7. 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,” Ro 2:5. They that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh “reap corruption,” Ga 6:8. 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.

Answ. 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 17:9. 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,” Ho 14:9.

2. You may thank the Arminians for this objection, who affirm, a man may be 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,” Joh 14:19. 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 32:40.

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.

Answ. 1. Doth not Christ say, his “yoke is easy and his burden is light?” Mt 11:29-30. 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 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 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.

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.

Answ. 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.

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 east into hell?

Object. We shall be reproached and scoffed at, and had in derision, and who can bear such things?

Answ. 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 byword," Job 30:9. And saith David, "When I wept and

chastened my soul by fasting, it was to my reproach,” Ps 69:7-8,12. “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,” Ps 69:9. “I hid not my face from shame and spitting,” Isa 50:6. Which is hardest, the cross Christ bore, or that which we bear?

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 11:25-26. And did not Paul say, He took pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, and distresses for Christ,” 2Co 12:10. 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,” Mt 5:11. And thus the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ.

5. Which is the best, to hear 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? Mr 8:30.

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.

Object. There are such diversity of opinions, what way shall I choose! were there but one religion, I might soon resolve what to do.

Answ. Because there are many religions, will you be irreligious, or of no religion at all?

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 who shut out of heaven all that in every thing are not of their opinion, or of their church, No necessity 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 boldest 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.

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 9:22, 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," Ac 5:31.

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,” Ac 11:18. 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 12:12, 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 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.

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," Lu 13:3,5.

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," Ro 8:13; 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 unholy 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 word, 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 Pr 1:25-27. 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," Php 1:6.

SERMON XLI

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said, Go ye also into the vineyard,—Mt 20:3-4.

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,” Ec 11:10.

No age is more subject to folly and vanity than childhood and youth. “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,” Pr 22:15. Moreover, the way of young people is very filthy; and hence it is said, “Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?” Ps 119:9. 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,” Pr 7:7. 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.

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 savingly 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.

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,” Pr 26:16.

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.

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.

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 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," Ps 58:3. 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," Joh 8:44. 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?

Answ. 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?" Ro 7:24. 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," 2Ti 2:22. That more especially which I would exhort you to, is that you labour after 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 inclinious. 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 6:4. 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.

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.

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," Ge 18:19. Joshua likewise said, "I and my house, will serve the Lord," &c., Jos 24:15. And thus all the godly ever did; and therefore it should be our care to do the like, and follow their example.

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," 1Sa 2:30. 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.

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 2:1-3. 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.

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 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 3:15. Ignorance is dangerous. “They know not me, saith the Lord,” Jer 9:3.

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," Joh 15.

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.—
Mt 20:14-16.

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,” Ro 8:26; Eph 1:4: 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?

Answ. 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," Ro 9:22, 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 1:4.

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? Ro 9:11.

Answ. 1. 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.

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," Ro 11:5-6. 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," Ro 9:16.

(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,"

Joh 15:16. 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 17:8.

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," Ro 9:15. 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," Ro 9:23. 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 55:11.

Thirdly, Because Paul says, "by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of your selves, it is the gift of God," Eph 2:8. I have also in opening other parables proved, that repentance is God's free and sovereign gift, Ac 5:31; 2Ti 2:25; 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," Joh 1:13. 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," Mr 4:11. 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," 2Ti 1:9. 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," Joh 17:2. 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 3:5.

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." 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 listeth up: he setteth some among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory, whilst others sit on the dunghill, or roll in the dust," 1Sa 2:7-8. 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 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," Da 4:35. "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 33:13. 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," De 32:39. "He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardens," Ro 9:18.

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 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, Mt 11:25. "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," Mt 13:10. 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," 1Co 3:6. 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?" 1Co 4:7.

Lastly, is it not said, "Of his own will begat be us, by the word of truth?" Jas 1:18, not of our will, but of his own will and sovereign pleasure; see Joh 1:13. "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. 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,” Joh 11:48.

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,” Ro 11:21. “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.

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 28:17. “Who ever perished being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off?” Job 4:7. 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 resulting from the perfect rectitude of his holy nature, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good," Ro 7:12. 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 commended 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.

7. Because he will "judge the world in the great day, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ," Ac 17:31. 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.

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 latter, 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," 2Ti 3:2-5. All men are bound to submit to God their Maker, to bow their knees before him. "He is the Lord, and worship thou him," Ps 45:11. 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 9:4.

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 executed 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.

Answ. 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?

Answ. 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 lovingkindness have I drawn thee,” Jer 33:3. 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, Joh 10:16.

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. 16:4, 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.