

AN EXPOSITION
OF
THE PARABLES
BOOK III

Benjamin Keach

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

BOOK III

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

BY
BENJAMIN KEACH,

AUTHOR OF "TROPOLOGIA," A KEY TO OPEN SCRIPTURE METAPHORS.

"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 III

**1. I. Parable, Matthew 22:1-5
Of The Marriage Feast, &C.**

SERMON I

And Jesus answered, and spake again to them by parables, and said, &c. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, that made a marriage for his Son. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come to the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize.—Mt 22:1-5.

Brethren, I shall in speaking unto this parable, take my usual method, viz.,

1. Give the scope of the parable.
 2. Open every part of it particularly.
 3. Raise several propositions from divers chief things that are contained therein.
 4. Make application of each proposition.
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1. As to the chief or main design or scope of the parable.

1. Our blessed Saviour hereby strove to convince the Jews of God's great love unto them. And not only of his love to the Jews, but it tends to manifest his infinite love and goodness unto the Gentiles also, and of God's gracious calling of them, upon the Jews rejecting of his Son. Brethren, what an amazing condescension is here showed, that the great King, or Almighty God, the Creator of all things, should send his own Sou to become a Surety for, and a Suitor to the lost children of Adam.

Here is no marriage offered, nor designed, for the fallen angels; God did not send his Son to espouse angelic nature, "Verily, he took not unto him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," Heb 11:16. Look what nature the Son of God took hold of, that nature, or those of that sort, he came to espouse and to marry unto himself for ever; and that was the nature of man.

2. We, by the design and scope of this parable also, may see Jesus Christ discovereth to all the world, the horrible sin and ingratitude of the Jews, who had the first offer of his great love and mercy; he said himself, "He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." That is, not first sent, for he was also sent to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not," Joh 1:11; they rejected him, and barbarously murdered him, instead of espousing him.

3. This parable seems to show the cause or reason of the ruin, rejection, and utter destruction of the Jewish nation, and the city Jerusalem; or what was the cause why wrath came upon them to the uttermost?

4. It also discovers that many who have the outward ministration of the Gospel shall perish eternally; though many are called, by the external preaching thereof, yet but few are chosen; the gospel comes in word only to the most of those who have it, and in power to none but those who are elected unto eternal life, they are such only that are ordained to everlasting life, that believe.

5. The design and scope of this parable,* shows also, it was the gracious purpose of God, upon the rejection of the Jews, to call the Gentiles.

6. Moreover, it discovers that great unworthiness of poor sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, to have this most gracious offer of Christ made unto them. For,

1. Those Jews, which were called and invited to this marriage, who came, were such that lay in the streets and lanes of the city, which were “the poor, the maimed, the halt, and blind; such who were mere beggars, the baser sort, such that were utterly unworthy to come into the presence of such a king’s court, and much more unworthy to have an offer to become the spouse of Jesus Christ, or to be embraced in his arms.

2. And those of the Gentiles, who were effectually called, were such that were found in the high-ways, and under hedges. “And the Lord said unto his servants, go to the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.”

7. It shows also that every man and woman, that rejects the offers of grace, (though not such that were elected) shall be left without any excuse at the day of judgment, they shall be all speechless; and it will be manifested unto their own consciences, that it was for their own horrid wickedness, and refusing to accept of Christ, that they shall be cast and condemned at that day; they preferring the things of this life, viz., their sinful profits and pleasures, above Jesus Christ, or eternal life and glory in heaven.

St. Luke hath this parable, chap. 24, and in some things, is more large and full than Matthew, which has occasioned some to think, that our Saviour spake the same parable twice, upon different circumstances, or reasons; let that be how it will, I purpose to speak unto this parable, with respect had unto both the evangelist, and not give a distinct exposition. But to proceed,

1. By the kingdom of heaven, here, I understand, is signified, the proceedings and equable, or righteous, dispensation of God in the dispensation of the gospel, with the children of men, in order to their entrance to the kingdom of glory.

2. By the certain King, is, no doubt, meant the great God and King of heaven and earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

3. By his Son, is intended, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, by an eternal generation, as well as by that wonderful conception of his in the womb of the virgin, and as so considered, he became a more fit and suitable match, and Bridegroom, to espouse and marry sinners, being “flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone.”

4. By the marriage, is, meant, the soul's union with the Lord Christ, or that divine and spiritual marriage with him,* according to the nature of the covenant of grace, it being evident, that in divers places of the holy scripture, that our union, by faith, with the Lord Jesus Christ, is set forth by a marriage; he is called a bridegroom, and the church his bride, he an husband, and believers his spouse or wife.* "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin unto Christ," 2Co 11:2.

5. "I have prepared my dinner." Luke calls it a supper, "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many," Lu 14:16. Both signify the same thing this great feast represents.

1. (As some conclude) the marriage itself, because our feeding upon Jesus Christ by faith, or our first receiving him, is our espousing of him. I will not deny, but in a more strict sense, this may be held forth hereby.

2. Yet more comprehensibly, it may signify those rich and heavenly dainties, or all those spiritual varieties God has provided for all those who believe in him, or that come to this marriage; which I purpose hereafter more particularly to open.

Some think our Lord may allude "to the marriage supper of the Lamb," Re 19. But I can see no reason for that; none certainly, that are invited to that supper, will refuse to come; nor can that refer to the soul's first espousing of Jesus Christ.

6. The persons that were first invited to this marriage feast, to eat of the king's dainties, or espouse Jesus Christ, were the Jews, who refused generally to come.

7. The servants, that were first sent to call persons to the wedding, may, and doubtlessly doth, signify the holy prophets, and John the Baptist, unto whom the Jews, or people of Israel refused to hearken.

8. "Again, he sent forth other servants," ver. 4; which may intend the holy apostles, and other faithful ministers of the gospel, in the primitive times.

9. By the oxen and fatlings being killed, and all things being ready, may refer to the sacrifices that were under the law typically, but to Christ and the

gospel feasts chiefly; they were types of Christ, and of his bloody sacrifice, but the Antitype being now come, every thing is more perfectly completed, and so all things made ready; that is, God is ready to receive all that comes to him by Christ, he is ready to give Christ to the souls of sinners.

Jesus Christ is ready to espouse them, and all of them, that come to him by faith. Justification, pardon of sin, and adoption, &c., is ready, Christ being now actually slain, or crucified for us.

10. By their making light of it, ver. 5, is showed the Jews slighting, and contemning the grace, glorious privileges, and blessings of the gospel.

“And went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize.”

This signifies, that it is for the sake and love of the world, that sinners do reject Jesus Christ is more particular; pray see what he saith, “and they all with one consent began to make excuse,” Lu 14:18.

The first said unto him, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it, I pray thee have me excused.”

“And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray have me excused.”

“And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” The Two first seem more modest in their answer, they pray to be excused; the last said peremptorily, I cannot come.

We may perceive what is the cause that men and women refuse to accept Jesus Christ.

1. Wordly cares, incumbrances, secular business, or the concernments of this life, in providing earthly things.

2. The riches or love of wealth, or earthly honour.

3. But it appears that sensual satisfaction, or the inordinate love of pleasures, is that which hath the greatest power over men, and which drowns and swallows up the spirit and soul of mortals; for this sort say, they cannot come.

11. “And the remnant took his servants, and intreated them spitefully, and slew them,” ver. 6.

This refers unto that cruelty which the Jews used towards the holy prophets, the apostles, and ministers of Jesus Christ.

They slew many of the prophets, and cut off the head of John the Baptist; and also persecuted unto death divers of Christ’s own disciples; they stoned holy Stephen, and slew James with the edge of the sword, Ac 7; 12:2.

12. “But when the king heard thereof, he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt down their city,” ver. 7

This no doubt containeth a prophesy of the Roman armies, who made such a fearful slaughter of the Jews, which fell out about fifty years after the death of our blessed Lord; and by this city is meant Jerusalem, which was burnt and consumed to ashes, as also was the holy temple. Let men boast if they will, in persecuting the saints, that they do not execute the law upon them, yet it is clear they are murderers; let them do it by law, or without law, as cursed murderers, God will judge them, and many times, for this great evil, he brings temporal punishment and death upon them in this world.

13. “Then he saith to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden, were not worthy,” ver. 8.

These were the Jews; they were first bidden. “He came to his own, and his own received him not.

Luke is here more particular: “The master of the house being angry, said unto his servants, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt and the blind,” Lu 14:21. The rich and honourable ones, the Pharisees and lawyers, utterly rejected the offers of grace by Jesus Christ. Therefore God sent his ministers to call the poor, even such who were accounted the base things of the world, even mean, low and contemptible persons, set forth here “by the maimed, halt, and blind.” Which may also denote the sense that those persons have of themselves, who do receive Jesus Christ, even such that are lost and utterly undone in their own eyes. “I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The poor, is said, had the gospel preached unto them, and they

received it. The maim, and halt, and blind, therefore signifieth the worst of men, such as the Publicans, harlots, or great sinners; not only low and mean in the world, but such as were lost and undone in their own sight, or helpless ones; such who could not help themselves, but stood in need of the charity of others, denoting, that those who refused to come unto the wedding, saw no need or want of a Christ, or of his righteousness to clothe them, nor of his eye-salve to give them sight, nor of his flesh and blood to feed them, nor of his wine to cheer them.

14. “As many as you find, bid to the marriage,” ver. 9.

Luke saith, “Bring in hither the poor,” &c. Not that ministers can bring them by any power of theirs, no, none can bring them but Christ himself, Joh 10:16, it is he that must bring them in, or bring home the lost sheep, by laying them on his shoulders, or by exerting his own most mighty and irresistible power, by the operations of his own Spirit upon their hearts, Eph 1:18-20.

But ministers are to do what they can, they are to invite them, press them, entreat and persuade them to come.

15. “So those servants went into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests,” ver. 10.

They brought in all they could persuade to adhere unto them, though some were not true converts: the net of the gospel and visible church, take good and bad, some wise and some foolish virgins.

Luke saith, “And the servant said, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room,” Lu 14:22.

A faithful ministry will do what the Lord commands them to do, “and yet there is room.” Let as many as will come unto Christ, yet there is still room for more; in God’s heart is room enough for millions of souls; and in God’s house there is not only bread enough, and to spare, but room enough also.

“And the Lord said unto the servants,* go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled,” Lu 14:23.

This last commission, no doubt, refers to Christ's sending his servants to invite or call in sinners, of the Gentiles, though the Jews were first to have salvation offered unto them, yet the grace of God is extended further, even to the Gentiles also, that so Christ might be God's salvation to the ends of the earth. The Jews were such that dwelt in the city, i.e., were in covenant with God, according to that covenant of peculiarity made with Abraham, and his fleshly seed, as such. But the Gentiles were said to be afar off, or out of the city or church of the Jews, as strangers and stragglers, or poor outcasts, such that lay in the highways, and under hedges.

“Compel them to come in.”

There hath been long contention amongst Christians and learned men, what our Saviour meaneth by his compulsion; some would from hence infer that outward force and violence is hereby intended, even to pull them in by head and shoulders, or drive them by whips and cudgels, or by penal laws, or by fire and faggot to frighten them; which certainly is far from the sense of the text, for the will of man admits of no violence or external force, by the civil magistrates; so that outward compulsion, hath no colour of foundation from hence; for neither Christ or his apostles ever used any such way, to make men Christians, or to receive the truth.

Those that refused to come in, or would not embrace the gospel, they were only “to shake off the dust of their feet, as a witness against them.”

Therefore this compulsion only denotes the powerful arguments they should use, together with those efficacious influences and operations of the Spirit, which Christ put forth with the preaching of the gospel; it being by the ministration of the word, that he makes the souls of obstinate sinners willing; they are said to compel them, whereas indeed it is Christ by them; they are but instruments in Christ's hand in the doing of it: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us,” 2Co 4:7. The gospel hath to do with men as rational creatures, and as such Christ is presented unto them, and arguments are used to persuade them to accept of him, but because all men are naturally blind, and their wills are stubborn, and obstinate, “ye will not come to me, that you may have life,” Joh 5:40. Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, and operations of his Spirit, onlighteneth their understandings, and bows and inclines their wills. And this is that which is only meant by compelling them to come to the

wedding. Neither can this seem strange to any that observe divers places of scripture, where the same word is used, it is said Christ “Compelled his disciples to go into a ship;” Mt 14:22; ἠνάγκασεν, but it is evident, he used no sword, staves, or whips, or pecuniary mulcts to force them. Also, it is said, the two disciples compelled Christ to stay with them, “They constrained him, saying, abide with us, παρεβιάσαντο,” Lu 24:29. Moreover, it is said, Peter compelled the Gentiles to do as the Jews, Ga 2:14. Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? yet this doth not signify any act of violence; no, but this was done by his example. Such virtue sometimes example hath on men’s spirits; he did not call in the power of magistrates to force the Gentiles. Likewise, it is said, that the whorish woman compelled the young man to commit folly with her, “With much fair speeches she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him,” Pr 7:21. This was a forcing or compelling to do a wicked deed, but external violence she used not, neither was she able that way to compel him. It is true, all that believe and receive Jesus Christ are compelled; grace hath such power in it, that it doth in some sense constrain the soul, “the love of Christ constraineth us,” 2Co 5:15. And as the spouse says, Song 1:4, it draws, but how is it? Is it against the consent of the will? Is there any force put upon that noble faculty? No sure, the will acts freely, and is not denied its own proper choice, but it is overruled and persuaded by the workings of the Holy Ghost, cheerfully and freely to choose accept of Jesus Christ. “My people shall be willing in the day of my power,” Ps 90:3. Jesus Christ, as I have formerly told you, will accept of no pressed soldiers, no, no, they must be all volunteers, but naturally the will is corrupt, depraved, and wills only that which is evil, and it is averse to all things that are truly and spiritually good, and so it remains, until grace, or the Holy Spirit, take away that enmity and averseness which is in it, and so makes it willing; and this is done generally by the powerful preaching of the gospel, God being pleased to accompany it with the operations of his own Spirit and divine power; and this is all, no doubt, which is meant by compelling them to come in.

16. As many as they found, both good and bad. This denotes, some of all sorts are called by the preaching of the gospel, good and bad; not that there are any good before grace and effectual vocation; no, no, all are gone out of the way, all are become filthy; there is none that doth good, no, not one, Ro 3:12.

1. But yet comparatively, some may be said to be good, that is, not so notoriously wicked as others are, *i.e.*, they may be merciful persons, who are

called good, that being a choice moral virtue, but much more precious when it proceeds from the Holy Spirit, as the fruit thereof.

2. But I rather take it with respect had, to what they prove in the end, viz., some appear to be sincere and gracious persons, and others hypocrites, or false professors, and have no wedding garment.

17. “And when the king came to see the guests,” v. 11.

This certainly refers to the day of judgment, or second coming of Jesus Christ, when it will appear who are sincere ones, and who are not; or who are wise virgins, and who foolish. Many unholy or unsanctified souls get into the church, which may not be discovered until that day that the king comes to view the guests; Christ then will make a discrimination, then all shall “discern between the righteous and the wicked,” Mal 3:18.

18. “He saw there a man that had not on a wedding garment.”

The custom of the Jews was such (some note) that all that were bid to weddings had a wedding garment, or if not, they were with great shame put out, it is thought that our Lord alludes to that practice: the wedding garment, no doubt, is Jesus Christ, whom we are to put on, “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,” &c. Ro 13:14.

Jesus Christ must be put on two manners of ways.

1. For justification, by which the soul is clothed with the righteousness, this is, as I conceive, principally intended here, and is properly the wedding garment, and so generally understood by all sound expositors.

2. Yet Christ is also at the same time put on by faith for our sanctification, and this is chiefly meant in that place, Ro 13:14.

These two,* my brother, though they are distinct in some respects, and are not to be confounded, yet the one is never without the other, for where justification is, there is also sanctification; a man is not sanctified that is not justified, nor are any actually justified that are not sanctified;* though it is true, “God justified the ungodly, i.e., They are ungodly just at the time when God first justified them, they are not holy and sanctified persons before they are justified, because it is the righteousness of Christ alone that is the matter

of our justification before God, which no man hath imputed unto him until he believe in Jesus Christ; but though they are all ungodly ones, just at the time when God justified them, i.e., he finds them ungodly, when he comes to pass the act of free justification upon them; yet God doth not leave them unsanctified by the Spirit; “But ye are sanctified, but ye are justified,” &c. 1Co 6:11-12.

Therefore it is evident, that faith (which is God’s free gift) hath a twofold office (as elsewhere I have showed.)

1. By the ordination and appointment of God, in respect had to Christ, whom it apprehended and applies; it is said to justify us, not a divine habit, or act, but only in respect of the object it taketh hold of, and receiveth.

2. Also in respect of its own blessed inward virtue and quality; it also purges the soul, and sanctifieth the whole man, “and puts no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith,” Ac 15:9. But pray note, that faith is an instrument, and that Christ’s righteousness is the material cause of our justification.

So that some conceive the wedding garment, may comprehend both our justification and our sanctification also, though more primarily and directly the righteousness of justification; without which there is no acceptation here, nor will there be hereafter.

18. “And he said, friend, how comest thou hither, not having a wedding garment,” and he was speechless.

How camest thou into my church, or amongst my people, who are my welcome guests, seeing thou hast no true faith, no robe of righteousness? Thou art naked, O wretched soul, darest thou appear in my presence, naked, and not be ashamed and confounded? thinkest thou that thy own good works or inherent righteousness, will render thee accepted?

“And he was speechless.”

He being speechless, signifies, that all such persons that either reject Jesus Christ, and so make no visible profession of him at all, or such who do profess him, yet are unbelievers or hypocrites, they shall be left without any excuse in the great day, they shall have no plea, no pretence whatsoever.

One shall not say, Lord, I was a poor ignorant man, I was not learned, my parents, being low in the world, were not able, to put me to school, to learn me to read thy word, or else they were wicked, and would not do it; pray let me be excused.

Also another shall not say, I was a sober person, I led an honest moral life, I was no notorious sinner, let me be spared, and excused.

A third shall not say, Lord, I was a poor young person, and thought religion did not belong to me, but unto those of riper years; I purposed when I grew older to mind the concerns of my soul, I thought I might do as other young men and women did; let me be excused.

Another shall not say, Lord, I was not elected, as these were, let me be excused. No, this will be no plea or excuse, in the great day? then they will see and know that the cause of their damnation will be just and righteous, it being the only procurement of their own evil doings, and for making light of the gospel and offers of grace.

Moreover, another shall not say, Lord, I was misled by my teachers, they told me I was a Christian, a good churchman, and that I needed not to doubt of my salvation, though I was a swearer, a drunkard, a carnal person, yet by my keeping to the church, and hearing prayers read, and by coming once or twice in the year to receive the sacrament, my condition was good: also I was laid in the grave as a dear brother, or a dear sister in Christ, in a full and certain hope of a blessed resurrection: let me be excused.

Another shall not say, Lord, I was deluded by false teachers, and sucked in (as I now perceive) damnable errors and heresies, even denying thee to be the true Saviour, and justification by thy righteousness and merits, and was led to trust to the light within. I was told by deceivers, that that was the true Christ, and only Saviour, and that if I was led by that, it would convince me of all sin, lead me into all truth, cleanse me from sin, and eternally save me. Nay, Lord, they told me that my body would not be raised again at the last day, and I believed them. They were cunning impostors, and by their outward conversations, which seemed so devout, I was blinded, and cast off that holy profession, which I once made, and ordinances, which I once owned. O let them answer for me, and let me be excused.

I say, these shall be speechless also, and shall have nothing to say or plead, why the sentence of eternal death should not pass upon them: may not Christ say, you had my word to direct you, Moses and the prophets, and writings of my apostles; you had also my faithful ministers, who told you they were enemies to me, and grand deceivers, and if you were led by them, and renounce the true faith, you would certainly perish for ever? but you were proud and conceited, and magnified your own wisdom, above what was written in my word, and above the wisdom of my faithful ministers; therefore your damnation is just upon you.

Again, another shall not, in that day, say, Lord, I was a professor of thy holy name and truth; nay, I had right notions of the great fundamentals of the gospel; I saw that all men were lost in the first Adam, and that they were under wrath and the curse of thy holy law; and I saw no way to be saved, but by thy righteousness, and by the merits of thy blood; and thou didst give a full satisfactor to the justice of God, and that all that believed in thee should not perish, but have eternal life. Lord, I believed these things, I owned thee to be the Son of God, equal with thy Father, and understood wherefore thou didst become man, or assumed our nature. Nay, I believed all the articles of the true Christian faith, and also became a member of a true visible church, and was baptized, and broke bread with them often, and was called a brother, and I also gave to thy poor saints. I say, such a plea of hypocrites will not be heard at that day, but these shall be speechless also.

May not Christ say unto them, were you not told that a man might thus believe, and thus practice, and go further too, and yet be but almost a Christian. Were not you told by my faithful ministers, that “except you were born again, you could not enter into the kingdom of God?” Joh 3:3; and that if you allowed yourselves in any one sin, you would certainly be damned? or, “if you loved this world more than me, or son or daughter more than me, you were not worthy of me?” nay, you were told by your own conscience, that you lived in pride, and were guilty of lying, and of the sin of covetousness, your heart was set upon the world, you did not what you did out of a right principle, nor to a right end, it was not my glory which you aimed at, but your own vain-glory or outward profit, therefore your damnation is just and righteous.

Lastly, another shall not say, Lord, I was a preacher of thy gospel, and my words were blessed by thee, to the conversion of many sinners. These also, if not truly gracious, but were unregenerated persons, (though God might bless

his own word which they preached) shall have no plea, when they come to stand at God's bar; these also shall be speechless.

Obj. But is it not said, "That many will say in that day, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works?" Mt 7:22. How then is it said, all shall be speechless?

Answ. I answer, being speechless, doth not denote that none shall make any answer or not plead to be freed from the dreadful sentence, but these shall soon become speechless also, when Christ shall say, "How camest thou hither, not having on a wedding garment?" That word will silence all, or make them all speechless; this word holds forth, as I said before, that no sinner shall have any plea which shall be heard, or stand them in any stead in the great day; every man's own conscience shall witness against him, and accuse and condemn him in that day, if ungodly: see Ro 2:15-16. "God will be justified when he speakest, and clear when he judgest," Ps 11:4. So much at this time.

SERMON II

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, who made a marriage for his son.
— Mt 22:1-5, &c.

Then said the king to his servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Some think our blessed Lord still alludes to that Jewish custom of putting them out of doors, who came to a wedding, that had not on a wedding garment, though it was never so dark and dismal a night.

But, alas! what a small thing or punishment was that to such, to this here mentioned by our blessed Saviour?

2. By the servants, my brethren, I conceive, are meant the holy angels, not the devils, because the devils shall then, no doubt, be prisoners themselves; they shall at that day be arraigned, and be jointly sentenced, with all hypocrites and unbelievers to eternal flames of divine wrath and vengeance. All condemned sinners must go to hell at that day, with the devil and his angels; therefore it will not be, “take him devils, and bind him hand and foot,” as I think I have, read in some good book: I know no reason any man hath to affirm any such thing, but ye my servants, the holy angels, take him away, &c.

20. “Take him away, and bind him hand and foot.”

By taking him away, may denote that fearful separation of each ungodly soul from Jesus Christ and his saints for ever, according to that passage, “Depart from me, ye cursed,” Mt 23. O how amazing is this word, take him away, he has nothing to say; How have many poor condemned criminals trembled when they heard the Judge say, “Take them away, I will hear no more, let them die!”

By binding him hand and foot, may signify his irrevocable state; he is tied and bound in such chains of darkness, that being once in hell, there will be no getting out.

Their enmity and averseness to God will be eternal; the damned hated God when they lived on earth, and they will hate and blaspheme him for ever, when they are thrown into hell.

But this binding hand and foot, may also signify, that sense they shall have of the eternal decree and purpose of God, touching the endlessness of their torment, together with that sense they will have upon their consciences of their utter impossibility of ever satisfying divine justice; for there they must lie, till they have paid the uttermost farthing.

21. By utter darkness is meant the lake of fire, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

It is called utter darkness, because there will be no light of God's gracious presence; no glimpse of the least comfort, or hope of ever seeing light; or that it will be ever better with them.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This denotes, that intolerable pain and anguish such shall feel, and endure for ever; they lying in flames of wrath, without the least hopes of ease, or redemption out of that place.

22. "For many are called, but few are chosen," v. 14. God, by the gospel, calls many; multitudes have the word of God preached to them, but none find and feel the power and efficaciousness of it upon their own hearts, but such, who from the beginning were chosen to salvation; yet will the judgment of God be just upon all reprobates; for, had not God, out of love and mercy, elected some, and pulled them as brands out of the fire, all, yea, every soul, would wilfully and obstinately have cast away themselves, and have perished for ever. No doubt God had been just and righteous, if he had executed his wrath upon the whole posterity of Adam, as he did upon the fallen angels: man's destruction is wholly of himself, as the punishment and demerit of his own sin and transgression.

Brethren, is a prince unjust, because he saves a few vile and wicked traitors and murderers, out of a multitude of them who were alike guilty? Or, manifesteth his mercy to some; as he also manifesteth his righteous and just wrath and vengeance, and passeth sentence upon the rest?

There is a twofold call; the one is common, the other is special; the one ineffectual, the other effectual; yet the first will leave the creature without the least excuse, because they did not so far adhere to that which they were able to do. No man, my brethren, ever did improve that power, and means of light and grace, who is damned, which he might have done: he that had “the one talent, hid his Lord’s money:” that one talent is, as I conceive, natural light and knowledge, together with the external call, and outward means afforded by the preaching of the gospel. Therefore, did not God graciously vouchsafe another talent to some, viz., the talent of special grace, all the whole race of mankind had been lost.

Obj. But seeing this man that had not the wedding garment, was one of those beggars, or one of the maimed, blind, and halt, how is it that he is condemned for not having a wedding garment? How should such a wretch get a wedding garment?

Answ. This wedding-garment God doth not require men to get by their own money, or spin it out of their own bowels, by their own good works. No, no, it is given freely; but this man never sought by faith in Christ, but appears in his own righteousness, or rather filthiness, not seeing the necessity of the righteousness of Christ, and of the grace of faith.

I shall now proceed.

DOCTRINE

That the great God hath out of his infinite love and mercy, sent his own Son to espouse and marry poor sinners, or to take them into union with himself.

1. I shall open what this marriage feast doth import, or comprehend; there being something more implied than is expressed.

2. I shall prove, that it is the great and true interest of sinners, to escape this invitation, i.e., to espouse Christ.

3. I shall open what the marriage feast is, and show you the nature of those dainties which are provided.

First, This marriage doth hold forth or comprehend the good will of God the Father unto man.

The king made the marriage. God the Father is the King (as you heard) he is the first and chief agent in it; the Son doth not first choose for himself, and ask the Father's consent, as is commonly among men; no, no, but it is the Father that made the first motion to the Son, of this great and so glorious a design, and purpose of love and grace to sinners.

1. The contrivance of our salvation is in the scripture ascribed unto God the Father: he is (as one most excellently shows) the prime Author of man's actual reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself," 2Co 5:18-19. The Father is set forth as the fountain of life, the original of all true good, and first cause of all things; especially of all supreme and glorious acts and works of mercy, and kindness unto man. The Father is the first in all divine operations, as well as the first person in the Trinity; as he is the first in creation, so also in reconciliation and redemption; the Father being offended and injured by man's sin, in his holiness, justice, and bounty, it is necessary that he first approve of, and appoint the way by which he will admit terms of peace, love, and favour, to be offered unto mankind.

Besides, had not the Father been the first and prime Agent and Author in proposing this marriage, it would render the Son more merciful, kind, and loving to lost sinners, than the Father, and so it would have tended to eclipse his glory, and that not only in respect had unto his goodness, but also in respect had unto his sovereignty; for it was at his choice and liberty, whether sinners should be raised to this honour and eternal happiness, by being espoused to his Son, or not. Therefore God the Father's contrivance, and acceptation of this so great and so amazing a design of favour and rich bounty of his Son's espousing of sinners, confers validity upon it, and removes all objections out of the way, which perhaps in some sense, otherwise might have rose.

2. This further appears, because the Son, in his undertaking this work and business, i.e., in coming into the world to espouse sinners to himself, is said to do it in obedience to the Father: "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair," Isa 50:5-6. Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things he suffered."

3. It appears that the Father is the prime Agent and Author of this marriage, and blessed wedding supper, because the persons which the Son was to espouse, were first chosen, or elected by him. This is mentioned in

this parable, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” And they were the Father’s choice, not but that they were the Son’s choice, as well as the Father’s, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,” Joh 15:16. The Son liked and approved of all them that his Father chose for him, yet he never hath, doth, nor will espouse one soul, but such which the Father from eternity loved and elected to eternal life.

Brethren, it is observable, that election is generally in the holy scripture, attributed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world,” Eph 1:3-4. So it is said in another place, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son,” Ro 8:29. The apostle Peter witnesseth to the same truth, “Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” 1Pe 1:2. The Father loved them from everlasting, and therefore elected them.

4. The Father is the first and chief Author of this marriage feast, appears, because he sent the Son into the world, on purpose to espouse sinners, or to bring them into a state of marriage union with himself, it was on this errand the Son came; it was to accomplish this gracious and glorious design and achievement, the Father sent him hither. “Last of all he sent his Son.” “I came not of myself, but my Father sent me.” It cannot quickly be reckoned up how many times our blessed Lord (in the gospel according to John) saith, the Father sent him; “The same works that I do, bear witness that the Father sent me,” Joh 5:39. Again, he saith, “This is the will of him that sent me,” Joh 6:40. Again, it is said, “He that sent me is with me.” And, as the Father sent him, so likewise, I say it was to this end and purpose, i.e., to espouse sinners, to betroth them unto himself for ever.

5. It further appears to be thus, because the Father also prepared him a body, and this not only that he might be a fit sacrifice to redeem those he loved, but also that he might be a suitable person to espouse mankind, and marry them for ever. “A body hast thou prepared me,” Heb 10:5.

6. Moreover, it was the Father which made the first promise of his Son to our first parents; “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” And this promise in due time was made good. “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,” &c., Ga 4:4.

7. God the Father also prepared the marriage supper, it was he that made this feast, it is he that is at the whole charge of it; they are his fatlings that are killed; it is his Lamb, and the best also of all his flock in heaven and in earth; it is his wine that he hath mingled, his milk, and his bread, "Behold I have prepared my dinner, my oxen, and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready."

Possibly (as I hinted) this may allude to those sacrifices which were under the law, which were types of Christ, who is the substance of all the provision of which this feast doth consist.

But more directly, it undoubtedly refers to that provision which God hath made for the marriage of this most noble, and high-born Prince, the Lord Jesus Christ. So that oxen and fatlings, serve chiefly for illustration sake, to set forth that great bounty and noble treatment, or entertainment, all shall find that come to this wedding, and espouse Jesus Christ. It is called, "A feast of fat things, full of marrow; wine on the lees, well refined," Isa 25:6.

8. The Father sent his servants to bid or invite the guests, he therefore must needs be the first and chiefest Author and Agent in promoting this marriage, or the spiritual union of Jesus Christ with sinners; it is said, "Again he sent forth other servants," ver. 4.

9. Moreover, it is the Father that gives all those persons unto his Son, which the Son doth espouse. Our Lord saith, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me," Joh 6:37. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me," Joh 17:6.

1. Giving unto Christ, may denote election, and also, that designation of the persons to this end. Moreover,

2. It may also signify, the infusing of grace, or the giving them a heart to believe and to receive him. And as the Father gives the sinner to his Son, so also he gives his Son to the sinner. He first gave Jesus Christ for us, and then he gives him unto us, as the effects of his sovereign love and grace. "If thou knewest the gift of God," Joh 4:19. What gift is that? Certainly it is Jesus Christ, he is God's gift, and the greatest, and choicest gift that ever was bestowed upon the children of men; for, when God gives Christ, he gives himself, and all things that are truly good; all things are yours, why so? The answer is plain, viz., you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

10. The Father is so much concerned in making of this marriage, that unless he draws the sinner to Jesus Christ, or makes the soul willing to accept and receive Christ, none can come; “No man can come to me except the Father draw him,” Joh 6:44. Naturally the will is rebellious and obstinate; there is an averseness to Christ, and enmity in the mind against him, therefore the Father must by his Spirit remove that averseness, and take away that enmity. It doth not only denote a rational drawing, by arguments used in the ministry of the gospel; for, if this was that which is here meant, then it would follow, that it is not the Father, but his ministers that draw the sinner. Therefore this drawing signifieth that divine power that is put forth by Almighty God upon the soul. Our Lord explains it himself in verse 65. “Therefore said I unto you, no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.” Except he give power to come, a heart to come, or rather faith whereby the soul must receive him; and “faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God,” Eph 2:8.

11. The Father manifests his great love, and is the great Agent, and Author of this grace, and high privileges, i.e., the soul’s union with his Son, appears, in that the servants which he sends on this errand, as spokesmen to persuade sinners, are to offer this favour to them in his name; nay, they are to entreat them, and beseech them in his stead, “We pray you, as if God did beseech you by us,” 2Co 5:20.

So much as to the first thing, which this marriage feast doth denote, or comprehend.

Secondly, this feast, or this marriage doth also denote or hold forth, the wonderful love of Jesus Christ to lost sinners, which I purpose to open more largely under another head.

Thirdly, It also signifies and fully holds forth, the strange and marvellous condescension of Jesus Christ, in that he, who is the eternal Son of God, even “God over all, blessed for evermore,” Ro 9:5, should become man, or take our nature into union with his own Person, and to enter into a near and most intimate union with such vile and base creatures, as all mankind naturally are.

Fourthly, it moreover comprehends, or doth import, what a wonderful opportunity is now in the sinner’s hand, who have this offer made to them,

whereby they may be made happy for ever. What a match, oh, sinners! is here provided for you, and proposed to you? You may be espoused and married unto the Son of God, if you can be brought to leave and forsake all your former lovers, with which you are in a league of too great friendship.

Fifthly, from the subsequent effects of the whole, or from what ensues, it holds forth the horrible evil and ingratitude of mankind. Did ever mortals slight and contemn such a favour, such honour, such happiness, as all those do, who refuse to come unto this marriage.

This shall suffice as to the first thing propounded, and it is all I shall say at this time.

SERMON III

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—Mt 22:14.

Doctrine 1. The great God, hath out of infinite love and mercy, sent his own Son to espouse poor sinners, or to take them into union with himself.

I have showed, what this marriage doth import, or comprehend.

Secondly, I shall now proceed to prove and fully demonstrate, that it is the true and only interest of every sinner, to accept of this most gracious offer and invitation, to come to this marriage feast, and espouse Jesus Christ.

1. It must be their chiefest, and only concernment, and true interest, by considering, how all sinners, or ungodly men and women are blinded, misled, and like to be undone for ever, by means or reason of those lovers which they have already espoused, and are in league withal.

Brethren, those objects, or lovers that they are ensnared by, and are in love with, are principally three:

1. The lusts of the flesh. 2. The lusts of the eyes. 3. The pride of life.

To which I might add, their own righteousness; which although it be comprehended in the pride of life, yet I shall speak unto it as a distinct and different object of man's affections.

1. The lusts of the flesh, denotes the object of all voluptuous persons, and comprehends gluttony, drunkenness, whoredom, or all sensual pleasures.

2. The lusts of the eyes, comprehends the covetous man's darling, or beloved, as riches, gold, silver, &c. This he desires, and is never satisfied with; yet this is the grand idol of the world, that object mortals dote upon, and are mad after.

3. The pride of life; this is the darling of all ambitious persons; their hearts and eye are set upon pomp, and external grandeur, they seek vain applause, and the glory of this world, which made our Lord say to this sort,

“How can ye believe, that seek honour one of another, and not that honour that comes from God only?” Joh 5:44.

Under this darling object (though with some difference) comes in the great idol of all Pharisaical persons, viz., self-righteousness, in which doth consist the pride of life, as much as in any other respect whatsoever. What can more fully show the pride of man, than those cursed conceptions of deserving any thing at God’s hands, by our own obedience? notwithstanding, in our best and chiefest duties, or acts of piety, is much sin, which, as it is a breach of God’s law, it deserves eternal death and wrath.

My brethren, pray consider, that it is from these, or some of these beloved objects, on which the hearts of men are set, that so few come to this marriage supper; they will not break off the league they have made with the “lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life,” to espouse Jesus Christ.

2. Moreover, know assuredly, that no person can have any true love to God, or unto Jesus Christ, whose hearts are set upon any of these things. “Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world,” Joh 15:16.

1. That is, to love things that are sinful in themselves, or sinful in their own nature.

2. Or such who love lawful things and objects to excess, or inordinately, setting their choicest and chiefest affections upon them.

The first comprehends all direct acts of sin, as lying, swearing, whoring, drunkenness, stealing, pride, covetousness, revenge, envy, malice, deceit, superstition, and idolatry, or any other thing that is a breach of the law of God. It is one thing, my brethren, to be overcome by temptation, to commit this or that sin, and another to love, like, and approve of it. Sin, in the affections, is far worse than sin in the conversation; the former shows such are in the gall of bitterness, and not renewed by divine grace. The other only serves to demonstrate a man is not perfect in grace, or not without sin, as in himself. David, Job, Peter, and many others committed many acts of sin; they had sin in their conversations, but they were not in love with sin; they had it

not in their affections, “Ye love the Lord, hate evil,” that is, all evil, sin as it is sin, and the worst of all plagues in the world. To have sin in the affections, is a clear sign of unregeneracy. But then,

2. To love lawful things and objects inordinately. God allows people to love their wives, their husbands, their children, their parents, or any of their relations, and friends; but, if we love any of these to excess, or inordinately, or more than Christ, or God himself, we can be no disciples of his, nor is the love of God in such persons. Also God allows us to love our food, our meat and drink, our clothes, our trades, riches, houses, lands, or any thing we have, or do possess, as it is a blessing given to us of God, and sanctified to our good, we answering God’s gracious end and design in bestowing these things upon us. But if we set our hearts upon any of these things, and love them more than God, and Jesus Christ, “The love of God is not in us.” Men may make an idol of their backs, of their bellies, of their trade, of their lands, of their houses, lawful pleasures, silver and gold; and it is this which renders their condition to be wretched and deplorable.

3. Pray consider, that it is by means of sin, and by an inordinate love to the creature, that all men and women naturally are blinded; these are their gods, their idols, and these things are the objects by which they are in danger eternally to be undone and ruined.

4. Moreover, it is the great end and design of God, by his making this marriage feast, or by proposing to the soul, a union with Jesus Christ, to break, and utterly to dissolve that league, and friendship, sinners have entered into with any of those things, of which we have mentioned.

Sinners great interest to cast of, &c., break the league with sin

And now that is the sinner’s great concern, or true and only interest, to cast off, and break their former league with sin, or what they have placed their hearts, their love, and affection upon, I shall prove and demonstrate by several considerations.

1. Consider, that sin is an enemy to the soul, and this world also, as it is the object of lusts; and not only enemies, but very cruel and bloody enemies.

2. Sin, in its original, was but a brat of Satan; it is the spawn of the devil, and, like father like child. Sin hath made a breach between God and man,

God and man were once in a state of true friendship, until sin set them one against another. Nay, sin hath caused an irreconcilable enmity between God and all mankind; for, all men, by nature, are in this condition, “The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;” and, “God is angry with the wicked every day,” Ro 8:7. Such is his holiness and pure nature, that he cannot but hate him that loves sin, hence it is said, “The face of the Lord is set against them that do evil, to cut their remembrance from off the earth.” Again, it is said. “The Lord trieth the righteous, but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth,” Ps 11:5.

3. Sin hath defaced the image of God in man, and hath brought him under God’s curse, and hath laid him obnoxious to eternal wrath. Now if this be duly considered, is it not the true interest of sinners, or their chiefest concernment, to break that league they have made with such an object?

Is not the loss of God’s love and favour, a fearful thing; is it not dreadful to be filled with enmity against God, and hate him; saith the Lord, “My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me,” Zec 11:8.

Is it not an amazing thing, and a dismal loss, that instead of God’s holy image, man should bear the image and likeness of the devil?

Is it not a lamentable thing, to be under God’s vindictive wrath, and to be laid obnoxious unto eternal burnings? Can any think of this, and not tremble? Would any (unless they are utterly deprived of their understanding) hug such a pretended friend, that is, such an enemy to God, and to the person that is in love with it.

Secondly, furthermore, pray consider, that by this cursed object of sinners, they are become traitors, and rebels unto God, and abide so, as long as they keep this friendship, and refuse to break the league they are in with hell and death.

It was (beloved) hereby, that we cast off our blessed and rightful sovereignty, and set up the devil in the place, and throne of God.

Thirdly, this marriage with Jesus Christ, must needs be the sinner’s true and chiefest interest, considering yet a little further, what traitorous lovers

these cursed objects are unto sinners. Oh! what barbarity have they exercised upon precious souls of mankind.

1. Sin hath put out the eyes of all men, their understanding naturally being utterly darkened, and hence they see not, nor can they discern what a cruel monster sin is, which they hug and embrace in their bosoms; they are in the night of darkness, and think they have got Rachel into their bed, when, alas! it is one far more deformed than blear-eyed Leah; nay, one worse than the devil; for so is sin in many respects, as hath formerly been opened unto you.

Also by this means they cannot see,* nor discern the beauty and loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ. I say, they are blind, and in darkness, their spiritual eyes being put out by sin, which they love, and will not forego, leave, nor forsake.

2. Moreover,* sin hath poisoned and corrupted, not only one faculty of the soul, but also every faculty thereof.

3. These enemies, that are the darlings of sinners, have wounded them from the crown of their head, to the soles of their feet; so that they have nothing “but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores,” Isa 1:5.

4. Sin hath covered the soul all over with a leprosy; no doubt but the plague of the leprosy, is a figure and representation of sin; we read, such was the nature of it, that it spread itself all over the body. So hath sin spread itself all over every part, and faculty of the soul; and every member of the body of sinners, are corrupted by it also. “Their eyes are full of idolatry, their hands wift to shed blood, the throat is a filthy sepulchre, under their lips, is the poison of asps,” Ro 3:13. The leprosy was a most loathsome, filthy, and stinking disease; sin renders the soul hateful and abominable in the sight of God, and in every man’s own sight, whose eyes are enlightened. No disease was more contagious or infections; it infected the house, walls, vessels, and garments, where the leper dwelt. So all things are infected by the sin of an ungodly person, even his very prayers are sin. What mortal would embrace such an object, that hath given him such a foul and filthy disease? certainly it must needs be the wisdom of every soul, to cast off such a lover with the utmost hatred and abhorrence.

5. Sin hath laid all mankind naturally in chains, and cruel fetters; they are bound in bonds of iniquity, yea, in such bonds that bind them unto a filthy dead body, a rotten, stinking body. Natural depravity or original corruption, is so compared by the apostle, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death,” Ro 7:24. Or, this dead body. Moreover, these bonds bind all that guilt that is in sinners, upon their souls and consciences: and not only so, but it also binds them unto the devil, to be his slaves and vassels.

And, in the last place, these bonds bind the soul of every sinner that is in love with it, over to eternal wrath and vengeance, yea, unto everlasting burning.

6. Sin hath also stabbed the souls of all that are in a league of love and friendship with it, it has given the soul its mortal wound. Oh, what is the blindness and folly of such sinners! they sport and play with sin, and embrace it, as a man embraces a lovely object, and think nothing more sweet and pleasant, and yet every kiss they gave sin, I mean every act of sin, is a stab at the heart, as if a spear was thrust into the very bowels of a person.

Sin, and this world, with which wicked men and women are in love, is set forth by an adulterous woman, by wise Solomon, Pr 7:10,17,22-23. Who lies in wait for a foolish young man; “And behold, there met him a woman, with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart,” And thus she said unto him, I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon, come, let us take our fill of love until morning. He goeth after her straitway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not it is for his life.”

Though this is true in the letter, i.e., this is the folly and danger of every one that commits adultery with a woman; yet no doubt, it is as true of every other sin. All that love this world, or are in love with any sin, thus they are wounded; every sin is a dart that pierces the soul.

The way sin leads the soul in, and the dismal end it will bring all sinners unto, may sufficiently serve to convince every one who is in love with it, that it is the greatest concern to break that league they are in with it, and to espouse Jesus Christ. As sin lays every sinner under God’s wrath here, so it will bring them to hell in the end. The wages, reward, or demerit of sin, is

death, eternal death. This will be the end of all those who continue in sin, or that live in the love and liking of it: “her house is the way to hell, leading down to the chambers of death,” Pr 7:27.

Now, the design of God (I told you) in making this marriage feast, is to bring sinners to be willing to break that contract, which they have made with objects, which certainly, all must needs conclude, is their wisdom to do, considering what hath been said.

Neither is there any other way to escape the misery, and fearful danger they are in hereby, but by their accepting this gracious invitation, viz., to espouse Jesus Christ, which is by eating this supper, or by feeding on Christ by faith; for to believe, to receive Christ, or to feed on him, signifies the very same thing.

This, my brethren, is the first demonstration, to prove, that it is the true interest, and highest concernment of sinners thus to do.

USE

1. We infer from hence, that greater love and mercy to sinners, could not be showed unto them, than God hath manifested in making this blessed marriage supper.

God saw what a fearful condition mankind was in, by the love of sin, and by the inordinate love of the creature, they having not ever tasted of any thing which is truly good, he has provided such a feast, which if they come and eat thereof, they will soon perceive how they have been deceived, and blinded by the enemies of their souls.

Exhortation. Let me therefore now exhort you that are yet in your sins, or live in love with them.

1. To consider what your woeful state and condition is. This indeed may be lamented. Though these things are so, and it is day by day opened, and made clearly to appear to be so; yet sinners will not believe it, or at leastwise lay it to heart. They cannot be persuaded, that this is their condition, which is a full confirmation of the truth you have now heard, that all ungodly men and women are blind. If these things do not affect your souls, if you believe

not, this is your condition, certainly you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

2. Let me exhort you to cast off sin, and the love of this world. Had you rather die, than live? Is sin so sweet to you, that you are contented to be damned for your love to it? Do you think it hath more good and sweetness in it, than is to be found in God, and in Jesus Christ? Will you show yourselves to be some of them that make light of this marriage feast, and, one go his farm, and another to his merchandise? O, if it be so, hear what God says, none of these shall taste of my dinner. No, not so much as one taste of God's love. No Christ then, shall you have when you come to die. No pardon of sin; no peace of conscience, but unto everlasting flames you must be cast.

So much at this time.

SERMON IV

The kingdom of heaven, is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, &c. Mt 22:1, &c.

The doctrine I am upon, is this, viz., “that the great God hath sent his own Son, to espouse and marry poor sinners.”

1. You have heard, what this marriage doth import.

2. I am upon the second general head proposed, viz., that it is the true and only interest of sinners, to accept of this gracious offer.

I told you, I should endeavour to make this to appear by divers demonstrations.

1. The first was taken from the consideration of that woful condition all men are in by means of that affinity they have made with, other objects and things.

That I have done with, and I shall now proceed.

Secondly, it is the sinner’s true and only interest to espouse Jesus Christ, considering the great worth and dignity of his person and offices.

2. From the great unworthiness, or indignity of those persons, which he offers to espouse unto himself.

1. From the dignity, worth, and glorious excellency of Christ’s person and offices.

1. He is a King, yea, “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” Jer 10:7. This respecteth his office. But further, he is God, the Son of God, the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person. He only hath the keys of hell and death. He hath all power in heaven and earth. His glory excelleth the highest heavens: nay, in comparison of him, the sun that is so glorious, is but a lump of darkness, or without light. It is he whose power is such, that he measureth the heavens with a span. And all the regions of the earth, are as the small dust of the balance in comparison of him.

Brethren, if we consider him in his personal excellencies, or in the glory of his offices, there is none like unto him in heaven, nor earth; there is not such another; he hath the pre-eminence over all creatures, angels and men, yea, over all the whole creation. All must worship him, do him homage, or give divine adoration to him. The Father when he brought him unto the world, said, “and let all the angels of heaven worship him,” Heb 1:6.

The glory of Christ’s majesty cannot be conceived, much less expressed by any in heaven and earth.

And, is it not (think you) the chief interest, the only concernment of sinners, to espouse him, who is exalted in heaven at the Father’s right hand, having taken the full possession of his kingdom above, and will quickly take unto him the actual possession of his kingdom below? “His dominions shall be from sea to sea, and from the rivers, to the ends of the earth,” Ps 72:8. All nations shall serve him, and kings shall lick the dust of his feet, and how before him. His sceptre is a right sceptre; be doth what he pleaseth, and none can say unto him, what dost thou?

2. He is glorious in his retinue, having “Ten thousand times ten thousand of glorious angels to minister unto him.” What are the attendants of the greatest monarch on earth to those mighty ones’ that attend upon Jesus Christ? The least of them far excel in power and glory, the chiefest king, or potentate on earth.

There are three or four things that further tend to demonstrate his favour, in vouchsafing such a high privilege, and great honour in his espousing poor sinners.

1. Let us consider, his all-sufficiency: he hath all things in the compass of his own being, whereby he is infinitely happy and glorious in himself. Moreover, his glory and happiness had been nothing less than it is, if mankind had never been created, (he being God over all, blessed for ever) nor would his glory be less, (as so considered) if all men should be consumed, and come to nothing.

He stands in no more need of us, (as one observes) to add unto his essential glory, than the heavens stand in need of a moth to move it, or the earth a grasshopper to uphold it; or the sun a glow-worm, to add to its light and lustre.

Brethren, If the Lord Jesus Christ could not have been happy without his espousing and marrying sinners, it would not have been so great a wonder. But since he can gain nothing by us, and stands in no need of us, in his proposing this so great, so sweet, and gracious an offer, this tends to show his admirable and amazing condescension, and that it must needs be the chief interest of sinners to accept him, it being our good only, which he hereby seeks, and labours to effect.

Secondly, Considering his independency. Christ is, brethren, so free, and absolute in his being, and actings, that nothing can necessitate him to regard us; none could lay any engagement upon him, to set his heart against mankind. If any person could oblige him, or if we could deserve any such thing at his hands, or could present any motive which might effectually persuade him, then it might not be so much admired; but, alas! there is no desert, no merit, no motive in any sinner, either from within, or from without, to stir him up to love, and espouse any man or woman of Adam's offspring. Alas! can boils and blotches allure, or loathsome filth and ugliness entice admirable beauty, to love and delight?

3. Consider the nature of Christ's sovereignty, in respect had to his choice.

1. He might, without the least prejudice to himself, have annihilated mankind, as soon as he had created them. Before they had sinned, might he not have done what he would with his own, (as Reverend Charnock notes) much more might he have done this. After man had sinned, and cast him off, might he not have executed the fearful sentence of eternal death and wrath immediately, and so have caused the glory of man to fly away as a bird from the birth, from the womb, or conception, and so have crushed the cockatrice in the egg? And this he might done unto the glory of his justice.

2. Or, might he not have displayed the glory of his absolute, sovereign grace and favour (saith he) to the fallen angels, and not to fallen mankind? Or, have made us devils; or, at least, have put us into the like state they are in?

Brethren, The angels were his creatures, and more glorious too in their first estate, than man; and were, as to their beings and nature, more like unto him, they being spirits, and so of a more pure and sublime matter than man,

and so might seem a more fit and proper match for him than man, who was made of dust, or red clay. What obligation, I say, lay either upon the Father or Son, to spare man, and not the angels that sinned?

3. Or, why might he not have decreed (saith he) from everlasting (foreseeing man's fall, and horrid rebellion) to have cast off all Adam's posterity, and throwed them into hell, and have raised up a new creation of mankind, from a better head, and have caused them to stand, and have made them more desirable objects of his love and affections?

Obj. But some may say, "How then could the attribute of his mercy and goodness been known?"

Answ. Certainly (as he observes) infinite wisdom could some other way have displayed the glory of that, and all other attributes, if he had pleased; and in such a way, that he might have spared his own precious Son from pouring forth his blood. No doubt but the whole contrivance of the mystery of our redemption, results from God's sovereign pleasure.

4. Or why (saith he) might not the plea of divine justice, have rather prevailed, than the plea of mercy? Was it not more reasonable, that justice should be glorified in man's final ruin, than that mercy should be heard for us, considering that nothing could satisfy divine justice, for man's offence, as it seems to us, but the letting out of the precious blood of his own Son; or that he must die, if we are spared? To which I may add,

5. Or why doth our Lord Jesus commend his love to sinners in England, and not to sinners in India? I mean to the Pagan world; they are wholly left under darkness, and never heard of Christ. They know nothing of his death, nor of the gospel; they have not this offer of his love, as yet, made unto them; they are not bid to this marriage feast.

6. Or, why doth he so graciously vouchsafe this infinite favour to us in and about this city, and some other places in this nation, and lets many cities, towns, and corners of England, remain in great darkness, they having not such clear gospel-light afforded to them? Re 3:20. Christ doth not come and stand at their doors, and knock, as he doth at your doors, and hath for a long time.

Or, why doth he open some of our hearts, causing us to attend upon the word, and by the powerful operations of his Spirit, bow and subject our rebellious wills to embrace him?

Whereas, many are let alone in the blindness of their minds, and hardness of their hearts, who sit under the same means of the external preaching of the gospel. Surely, no other reason can be given of this, but his own sovereignty. What greater demonstrations of sovereign love and grace, can Jesus Christ show unto us?

Thirdly, It greatly concerns sinners to accept of this offer, or it must needs be their chief and only interest so to do, considering, that great indignity and unworthiness of the persons to whom he commendeth his love.

Quest. Who are they?

Answ. I answer, They are men and women, children of the lost Adam; not angels, but mankind.

And, oh! what a low, base, and contemptible creature is man! “What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?” Job 7:17-18.

Man, a worm, a base and vile creature, a mere carrion worm, bred out of corruption, not worth the least regard! Do we value a worm? Oh, why should Christ, the Prince of the kings of the earth, set his heart upon, and court such a creature!

And shall not such creatures think it doth not greatly concern them, to accept him? Is it not their chief interest to bid him welcome, and open the door to him, and readily come to this marriage supper?

Sirs! If men were now poor, yet if they were of an high birth, or sons of nobles, there might seem to be some motive why Christ should make this wonderful suit and offer to them. But, alas! alas! all were base born, born children of wrath. Our Father left us beggars. But, this is not all, he left us sinners. Man is a sinner, a rebel, a cursed traitor to this blessed prince. Shall the king, that we have conspired against, and contemned in our hearts, and

consulted with the devil to dethrone, to murder, and tread under foot, come to us to woo us. Hath he fallen in love with us? Or, doth the offended Sovereign stoop to offending criminals? Stand, and wonder, O ye heavens! Doth the Majesty of heaven, in this manner, condescend to espouse a slave of sin, and Satan? Shall such that hate him, be beloved by him? Shall condemned rebels be not only entreated to accept of a pardon, but also to marry the prince himself, and they not think it their only interest to accept it? Oh, what an inequality is here!

1. He a King, yea, the “King of kings,” and they rebels and traitors to him?
2. He the mighty Monarch of heaven and earth, and they beggars!
3. He from heaven, heavenly; they from earth, earthly!
4. He the highest Sovereign, and we the lowest peasants!
5. He the Darling of heaven, and we the vassals of hell!
6. He, in his nature, pure, holy, and undefiled, and we, in our nature, impure, filthy, and polluted!

Fourthly, It must needs be their true interest, considering what strange and amazing achievements he hath undertook, in order to bring about, and obtain his gracious design and purpose.

1. Consider what a glorious place, and a rich palace he left above, and to what a dolesome land of darkness, he came unto, to seek the lost soul he designed to espouse. He came out of his Father’s bosom, to be exposed to the wrath and malice of devils, and wicked men.

2. He laid aside his glorious robes to be clothed (as I may say) with rags, that so he might accomplish his gracious purpose.

3. Consider what a long and vast journey he undertook, to come to us, to offer his love. Is it not a long way from heaven to earth?

4. Consider, that he from eternity decreed to espouse all those persons which his Father gave him; and whatsoever he doth in time, was but in putsuit of his unchangeable purpose from before all time.

5. Consider, that he hath espoused us virtually before he offers his love unto us: he espoused us, when he espoused our nature; he virtually was married to sinners, when he took the nature of man into union with his own

divine person. Calvin understood this chiefly to be meant by this marriage in my text. Indeed, had not the Father first married his Son to the nature of man, he could not have married the person of any man to him. Christ must be flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. God being a Spirit, he could not be a proper spouse for us. Could an angel be a fit, and proper help-meet for Adam? We could not see him, could have no affecting idea of him; we could not come near him: his glory is so great, considered as he is God, it would have overwhelmed us, or have dazzled our eyes; therefore he veiled his glory in our nature, and became like unto us, that we might behold him as an object every way suitable, and agreeing to us, whom he came to betroth to himself for ever.

“We beheld his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” Joh 1:14. How was this! Even as he was made flesh, and dwelt among us. In this the wisdom and goodness of God was manifested. We could not so well conceive him, nor worship him, because we could not tell how to frame any true or right idea of him in our minds, except he brought forth the express image of his person.

Therefore, it is by him we come to God, believe in the Father, espouse the Father, love, honour, and worship the Father.

The Son of God (saith a learned man) was made flesh, that he might be a true, and fit Bridegroom for his church.

6. Consider what he hath suffered and undergone, that he might have his gracious design of love accomplished.

What indignities did he meet withal, in the days of humiliation, from men! His birth was mean, being born of a poor virgin; the Popish church calls her a lady, and paints her in very rich robes; but, alas! as to her outward state in the world, she was no lady, but a mean virgin; which appears,

(1.) By the meanness of that man whom she was espoused unto: Joseph was no lord, no earl, no duke, but a poor carpenter.

(1.) By that poor entertainment she had in the inn. Had she been of some noble, or high descent, no doubt but the innkeeper would have made better provision for her, she being big with child, and near her time. We may conclude, though the inn might be full of guests, yet some might have soon

removed their quarters, to have given place to a person of such quality, as these people imagine: however, they would not have turned her into the stable, to be delivered of the holy child Jesus, among the brute beasts.

2. No sooner was he born, but he was laid in a manger, and when the news of his birth came to the ears of Herod, he sought all manner of ways and means to take away his life.

Moreover, the whole time of his life was attended with sorrow and affliction. He was hated, and persecuted from place to place: he spent his days in grief and sighing. He is said to be “A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” Isa 53:7. How was he reproached and despised of men, called a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners: nay, that he had a devil and was mad; and that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Oh, what mortal can read these things, and his soul not mourn, and his heart pour forth!

Moreover, how basely was he betrayed by one of his own disciples? And, what sorrow did he meet with in his soul in the garden, in his bloody agony, when the weight of our sins, and that wrath that was due to sinners, lay so heavy upon him? and besides all this, what a sore, ignominious, and painful death did he die?

He died in the stead, or room of all those the Father gave unto him. He could not obtain his desire, viz., the espousing and marrying of our souls, unless he died for us: in his holy life he wrought out a wedding garment for us, and for all that espouse him: and, by his death, he bore our sins, and curse of the law, or all that vindictive wrath that was due to us, and so saved us from hell, and eternal vengeance, whose doing and suffering, is our righteousness, to our justification, before God.

And, shall any after this, refuse to come to this wedding, or to accept of his love, and be betrothed to so dear a Saviour.

Oh, ponder these things well in your minds, and lay your hands upon your hearts, and delay no longer, but close with Jesus Christ this day.

Fifthly, but if all these arguments and demonstrations do not it, will not prevail with you, to consider the nature of his precious love.

I. Jesus Christ had an early love to poor sinners. He loved us long before we were born, or had a being: "The Lord appeared unto me of old, saying, yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love," Jer 31:3.

It was, my brethren, a love of choice, he chose us, and set his heart upon us from all eternity. It was a love of purpose, of good will; he designed to redeem us, and visit us, and to espouse us, to come and knock at our doors, and to change our hearts, and to marry us to himself for ever.

Oh! what good-will was here to sinners? What a purpose of love, of kindness, of favour, and grace? Did Christ choose sinners so long ago, even from everlasting, and, shall not sinners now choose him, love him, espouse him? "We love him, because he first loved us," 1Jo 4:19. Our love to Christ, is not the cause of his love to us, but it is the effect of his love. His love is the fountain, our love is a small rivulet, flowing from that fountain.

What is it, my brethren, which draws out the love of a person to an earthly object, or cause such a one to look upon it their concern, and interest to return love for love, more than the thoughts of the length of that time he loved her, perhaps from a child; but, Oh! how much longer did Jesus Christ love us! It was not only from the womb, but from eternity. But pray do not mistake me, I do not say, the cases run parallel; it is not the bare reflection on Christ's early love, that is sufficient to cause us to love him: no, no, but his love to us, hath a physical cause in it; it is like love powder, it operates on us, as the sun by its near approach in the spring, causes the grass to grow, and flowers to put forth. Christ's love to us, hath the same effect upon us, as the sun hath, by shining on the moon, i.e., the sun shines on the moon, and the moon reflects great light on the earth.

II. Christ's love is a free love; it arose from himself. Pray consider the objects he doth so dearly love.

Brethren, the Lord Christ did not let out his redeeming love to us, as we stood in the first Adam, in the state of innocency, but as we were fallen, and lay polluted in our filth and blood. Perfect man stood in no need of redeeming love, mercy, and compassion: God considered as Creator, was our Husband, and we wanted our Saviour to espouse us; I may say, it was in our widowhood that Christ loved us, God having cast us off, and given us a bill of divorce. "Now, when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live, &c. I looked upon

thee, and behold, thy time was the time of love, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine,” Eze 16:6,8.

Oh, what was the motive of Christ’s love! It is beyond our reach to find it out. It is a free love, an undeserved love. There was nothing he could behold in us, to cause him to love us: nay, it is evident, he might see cause to loathe and hate us, but see no cause arising from us, to move him to love us. He loved us when sinners, and enemies, and when we lay under the curse, and condemned criminals. “I will love them freely,” Ho 14:4.

III. Christ’s love is infinite, or unmeasurable; it passeth all understanding. “That you may know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge,” Eph 3:19. It is beyond the knowledge of men or angels. Christ’s love hath all dimensions in it; there is a height, breadth, length, and depth in it. We may as soon find out God to perfection, as find out the love of Christ to perfection: “It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? Longer than the earth, broader than the sea,” Job 11:8-9. So it may be said of the love of Jesus Christ; the inmost recesses, or secrets of his heart cannot be known.

IV. The love of Jesus Christ is wonderful. As his names Wonderful, so is his nature, and the greatness of his love. Doubtless, his love unto sinners, makes the holy angels behold him with admiration. His love is wonderful, if we consider,

1. The rise, original, and the spring of it is wonderful, it being without beginning, from everlasting.

2. If we consider the motive of it, it is wonderful. Who ever loved thus? Love such, with such a love, that hated him, and so odious and ugly in themselves!

3. His love is wonderful, if we consider the effects of it;

1. In respect had to himself, what did his love put him to do, and to undergo for those he loved? What strange effects had it upon his holy person? How did it seem to disrobe him? How poor did it make him, that was so rich? How contemptible and despised, that was so great, high, and honourable? How low did it bring him, that was so exalted? How miserable

to all human sight did he become, that was so blessed and happy? He that was blessedness itself, was, by his love, made a curse, for us. In a word, his love made him who was God, to become man; he that was the glory of heaven, to bear the pangs of hell: that was the light of the world, to come under the greatest darkness: that was the life of all creatures, to come under the power of death.

2. Christ's love is wonderful, in respect had to the effects of his love on sinners.

1. It causeth them that hated him, to love him above father and mother, husband or wife, son or daughter, house, land, or a man's own life.

2. It causeth poor sinners to love him, after this manner, whom they never saw: is not this wonderful? O what amazing effects has it upon the souls of sinners: "Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1Pe 1:8.

3. Christ's love hath a like wonderful effect upon the soul of sinners, that Elijah's garment had, which he cast upon Elisha: "So he departed thence, and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth, and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him: and he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee; and he said unto him, go back, what have I done unto thee?" 1Ki 19:19-20. No sooner doth Christ cast the mantle of his love on poor sinners, but immediately the soul leaves all, and follows him: no man that hath had the least saving sight of Christ, and hath tasted of his love, but runs after him.

4. Such are the wonderful effects of Christ's love, on the souls of sinners, that it makes a strange and marvellous change upon them: it transforms their souls into his own image. Do but behold Christ, though it be but in a glass, and this will be the effects of it; "But we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2Co 3:18.

V. Christ's love is of a sweet, and soul-ravishing nature; it is compared to wine; nay, better than wine; "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine," Song 1:2. There is no believer but finds by experience, that the love of Christ is sweeter than all things in this world,

when he gives them fresh tastes of it; this made the spouse to cry out, “Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love,” Song 2:5. O how sweet is such a sickness; happy they that are love-sick to Jesus Christ!

VI. The love of Christ is a conjugal love; nothing will satisfy him but the nearest relation; it is the espousing the soul unto himself that he designs and aims at, that he may manifest his dearest embracements, the sweetest intimacy; “I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercy: I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord,” Ho 2:19.

Brethren, if Jesus Christ showed such love to his enemies, nay, unto his murderers, as to pray for them, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do; O, then, what is his love unto his spouse! unto all those that he takes into union with himself?

VII. The love of Jesus Christ is of an attracting nature; it is an attracting, a drawing love; it constrains all that taste of it to love, delight in, and follow him; “The love of Christ,” saith the apostle, “constraineth us,” 2Co 6:14; it constrains the soul that feels its effects, to leave all sin; to loathe and hate sin as the greatest evil; it constrains the soul to hate that which once it loved, and to love that which once it hated; “Ye that love the Lord hate evil.” It draws the soul out of darkness, into marvellous light; it draws powerfully; let who will strive to obstruct or hinder the soul from closing with Christ, it will be in vain, if it be but in the cords and bands of his love, the husband, the wife, the parents, the children, may do what they can to persuade them to leave off following, and cleaving to Christ, yet a believer is constrained to cleave to him: his love is stronger than death; it draws the soul to holiness, to new obedience, to suffer shame for Christ’s sake; nay, to die for him, rather than it will forsake him.

VIII. Christ’s love is a love of complacency; he delights in that soul that he has drawn to him, and that believeth in him: “As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee,” Isa 62:5. This further appears, by what he says unto his spouse, “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with the chain of thy neck,” Song 4:9.

Oh, how is Christ delighted with the eye of faith, by which the soul came to behold him, and which caused it to love him, and delight in him, it being that uniting grace, through the operations of the Holy Spirit; faith on our part is the bond of this union, though Christ apprehends us first by his Spirit, before we can apprehend him by faith.

And from hence it is, that a believer takes up such complacency and delight in Christ, such as is the cause, will be the effect, Christ being the joy and delight of the soul.

IX. The love of Jesus Christ is of a commiserating nature. It is a love of sympathy. He hath such precious love to all believers, or to all that espouse him, that he has a fellow feeling of all their sorrows, troubles, and afflictions; "In all their afflictions he was afflicted; and in his love and pity he redeemed them, and carried them all the days of old," Isa 63:9. This notes (saith our late Annotator) the sympathy of Jesus Christ, he having the same Spirit in him that the church hath; it being Christ who appeared to Moses in the bush; he was that angel of God's presence, that led Israel through the wilderness.

Brethren, our Lord Christ hath the same love of sympathy now, as he had in the days of old. "We have not an high-priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," Heb 4:15.

Oh! who would not, but readily espouse such a person, marry such a prince, that will sit up with them all the night of their sickness, and sorrows? He will bear them company, his left hand (of power) shall be under their heads, and his right hand (of love and mercy) shall embrace them; he will bear them in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and give them sweet cordials, to revive, and cheer their drooping and fainting spirits, so that they shall never be without help and support, let their wants be what they will: "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmities," Heb 5:2. Though Christ had no sin of his own, yet he was afflicted, and was compassed with our infirmities; he made our infirmities his own, and bore our sicknesses. O what a kind of love is in our Lord Jesus Christ!

X. Christ's love is an abiding love, it is not hot and cold, as it is among men. O what a heat of love will some men show to those they espouse, and marry at first! as if they were all love, full of burning love and affections; but,

alas! it doth not abide, it continues but a short time, they soon cool in their affections; and indeed, so doth our love to Jesus Christ, which may be for ever lamented. We are too subject with the church of Ephesus, to leave our first love, Re 2:4. Christ may say unto us, as as he speaks unto his people of old; "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown," Jer 2:2.

We too often decay in our love to Christ, as to the degree of it. Our love to him, and to his people, doth not always abide alike strong and fervent, but Christ's love to us, doth never decay; "Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end," Joh 13:1.

He loves us not with a mutable, with a changeable, but with an abiding love; "Much water cannot quench [his] love, nor can the floods drown it," Song 8:7.

XI. Christ's love is an inseparable love. No enemy, no infirmity, no miscarriage in his people, can separate his love from them: ill persons sometimes cause some men to withdraw their love from their wives; a small thing may separate their love from their dearest friends, but nothing can separate Christ's love from believers. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature can separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ, our Lord," Ro 8:38-39.

If such is the effect of Christ's love to us, what is the nature of his love in itself? the cause is more noble than the effects. The height of honour, and worldly advancement; nor the depth of disgrace, or worldly abasement, shall separate our love from him, nor his love from us, such is his love to all those that are united to him.

Obj. Some perhaps may say; but sin may separate us from his love.

Answ. I answer, no; that cannot be, because he hath promised to blot out all the sins of his people, and will remember them no more.

By angels, no doubt, are meant the fallen angels; and if the devils can by none of their subtle temptations, entice the saints to sin, so as to separate them from Christ's love, or the love of God in him, then be sure sin can

never do it. That which sin may do, the devil may do. But the devil cannot separate us from the love of Christ: therefore sin cannot do it.

Besides, “nor any other creature,” or thing: this includes all things; and leaves nothing out; no, not sin itself.

XII. Christ’s love is an eternal love, it is like himself, as he is eternal, so is his love; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and so is his love to his chosen ones: “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee,” Isa 54:10

If Christ doth espouse or betroth them, then he doth betroth for ever; if he be an eternal Husband, then his love will be eternal; but those be doth espouse or betroth unto himself, he doth betroth for ever, to be an eternal Husband. *Ergo*, his love will be for ever.

APPLICATION

What do you say? Is not the consideration of Christ’s love, a motive sufficient to woo your souls, or to prevail with you to come to this marriage supper, to be the bride of such a Bridegroom as Christ is? Ask believers, and they will tell you what the nature of his love is; one taste of it fills the soul with joy; and it sometimes causes the soul to say, as Christ does to his spouse, “Turn away thine eyes, they have overcome me.”

Christ’s love makes every bitter thing sweet, and all hard things easy, it turns the valley of tears into a mount of joy, nay, it brings heaven into the soul. Will you not love this lovely Object, this precious Person? Will you pour contempt upon the Lord of life and glory, and value him not so much as the trash of this world, no, not above your sensual pleasures, and brutish lusts?

Oh, then how just will your damnation be? Sirs, I am here this day, to tell you, there is one in love with you, what think you, young men and women? Is not this matter worthy your most serious consideration? Is there no way that can be used to court your souls into Christ’s embraces?

Shall not the Father’s Beloved, the Darling of heaven, be your Beloved?

Shall not the object of the glorified saints affections, be the object of your affections?

Oh! do not cast away your souls, you will repent your refusal of this offer one day.

But so much at this time.

SERMON V

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—Mt 22:1-5.

Doct. That the great God hath sent his own Son, to espouse poor sinners.

The third demonstration to prove it, was taken from the great and wonderful love of Jesus Christ. To proceed.

Fourthly, consider the great riches of Jesus Christ. Sirs! if there be a proposal made to a person of a match, presently the question is, what has he? or has she? what portion pray, or what is he worth? Is he rich? Now, brethren, though it be a base and sordid thing, for any person to many chiefly for riches, or to prefer the portion above the person, which many, alas I now-a-days do; yet (here especially) it may be a motive worthy enough; considering though the first and chief motive should be, the excellency of Christ's glorious person, and the nature and greatness of his love and affections. But, however, know, O sinner, that Jesus Christ is very rich; thou needst not fear thou shalt ever know want, or know poverty, if thou dost espouse him; hear what he says, riches and honours are with me, yea "durable riches and righteousness," Pr 8:18. I purpose to do three things.

1. Shew, wherein Christ is rich, or in what his riches lie.
2. Prove, that he is very rich.
3. Shew you the nature, or excellent quality of his riches.

1. Christ is rich in goodness, or "despisest thou the riches of his goodness?" the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Brethren, greatness and goodness meet in Jesus Christ; it is rare to find them to meet in men; but what is the goodness that is in men, to that goodness which is in the Lord Christ: the sea is not fuller of water, than he is of goodness. It is not long since you heard several sermons upon the goodness of the Lord. O how great is thy goodness. There is no goodness in any creature or person, but originally it proceeded from Jesus Christ; (considered as he is God) all external, internal, and eternal goodness comes from him, as water from a fountain; also divine goodness is part of his riches.

The goodness in men is soon gone, it often proves like the early cloud, and morning dew; “But the goodness of the Lord endures for ever,” Ps 52:1.

Whatsoever is good, or may be called goodness, which transcends, it is in Jesus Christ in great abundance: all the excellent qualities of goodness is in him; no man is full of goodness, of all sorts of divine and spiritual goodness, but the Lord Christ is.

He is of a sympathizing, a gentle, a loving, a forbearing, a commiserating, and long-suffering nature; and also ever so, he is never otherwise; he is never out of this sweet frame and temper: he is not good by fits, like some men, who often fail in goodness; all their goodness seems soon darkened and eclipsed, by a disordered frame of heart, through the power of corruption; but the goodness of Christ remains.

2. Jesus Christ is rich in wisdom: he is not only wise, but hath great abundance of wisdom in him: “In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Col 2:3. He communicates of his wisdom, to make others wise; no person that receives him, but he imparts his wisdom unto.

3. Jesus Christ is rich in grace. “My God shall supply all your need, according to the riches of his grace, Php 4:19, in glory, by Jesus Christ.” All grace is in him, “we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” Joh 1:14,16. His grace, love, and favour is infinite; “and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

Take grace for divine favour, or for gracious habits or acts, Jesus Christ is full of both; and he must needs be so, who is the Fountain and Original of all grace, and gracious habits.

4. The Lord Christ is rich in mercy; all kind of mercy is in him; goodness may be showed to all sorts of persons, but mercy refers to, or is let out to the miserable; had in man never fallen, God’s goodness had been manifested to him, but his mercy only respects man in his fallen state, which is alone seen and made known in Jesus Christ, to undone sinners, in mercy he pitied us, in mercy he redeemed us, and in his abundant mercy he renewed us, sanctified and pardoned us; he is rich in mercy, full of mercy, infinite in mercy, pity, and compassion, to all that receive him.

5. Jesus Christ is rich in glory, “that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance,” Eph 1:18. There are riches of glory attending his grace, let out to the church militant; but what the riches of his glory is, which is let out and manifested unto the church triumphant, we cannot conceive of.

Secondly, I shall prove and demonstrate, that Jesus Christ is rich, very rich, admirably rich.

1. The Lord Jesus must needs be very rich, because he is the Father’s heir, nay, heir of all things: all that the Father hath the Son hath, all is his, originally, essentially his, considered as he is God. Moreover, all things are given unto him as he is Mediator, whether things in heaven, or things on earth; he is the Father’s first-born, and he also whom the Father hath appointed heir of all things; Heb 1:2; therefore the inheritance must needs be his. “Jesus knowing that the Father hath given all things into his hands,” Job 13:3.

We that preach the gospel, are sent on such a message to sinners (though far more weighty and great) which Abraham’s servant was sent about to Laban’s house, viz., to recommend Isaac’s love to Rebecca. And he said, “I am Abram’s servant, and the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great, and hath given him flocks and herds, and silver, and gold, men-servants, maid-servants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah, my master’s wife, bare a son to my master when she was old, and unto him he hath given all that he hath,” Ge 24:24,34,37.

Even so say we unto you; the great God who sent us, is a mighty King, the world is his, and the fulness thereof; all things in heaven and earth; the cattle upon a thousand hills are his, and he has but one eternal Son, and to him hath given all he hath; and this Son of his is fallen in love with you: oh, is it thus, and do you think to espouse him or not? what answer shall I return to him that sent me?

2. But to evince, and further prove Christ is very rich, pray consider, that he hath all kingdoms of the earth given unto him, to dispose of as he sees good. The Father hath given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Ps 2:8.

Quest. Hath Jesus Christ taken into his actual possession, his kingdom, or not?

Answ. He hath the possession of his more spiritual kingdom already, when he ascended on high, he took possession of that, and he rules now, and has long over all in heaven, earth, and hell: angels, men and devils, are put into subjection to him; they are all his servants, and at his command. Moreover,

2. He will now, very quickly, take possession of all the kingdoms of this world; and will in a very short time make the haughty and proud monarchs of the earth know, that he is the only rightful King of nations, as well as of saints, and the only potentate; and before whom they shall bow, “And confess that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” Christ, beloved, is not only the King of saints, but King of nations.

True, for a long time he has suffered such that are his enemies to reign, and he sets up sometimes the vilest of men, for reasons best known to himself, but their time is now but very short, “God will overturn, overturn, overturn, until he comes, whose right it is, and he will give it unto him.”

Brethren! The seventh trumpet will be suddenly sounded, and the voice heard, saying, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ,” Re 11:15. It shall be known in due time, that our Lord Jesus is the true and rightful heir of all the nations and kingdoms of the earth. “The kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all nations shall serve and obey him,” Da 7:27.

3. Jesus Christ must needs be very rich,* considering the greatness of his family, which he provides for, both to feed and clothe. It is, my brethren, our Lord Jesus, who feedeth every living creature; the whole world is his family, and oh! how well doth he provide for them all! This be sure he could not do, was he not very rich; “The silver and the gold is his, as well as the wool and the flax,” Ho 2:5. Could we but take a view of all the men, women, and children, that are but in and about this city, no doubt but we should stand and wonder at the multitude of them, and also how they all should be fed and clothed as they are; but what are the people of this one city, to all in this small isle? And what a small handful of people are in this isle, unto all the

people throughout the whole world? O what a household, what a vast family hath our blessed Lord? You would think that man was wonderful rich, who at his own proper charge, did maintain every day, (and so continually) ten thousand persons, and to many of them too, doth give vast incomes, it may be a thousand pounds a week. But, alas! what would that be, to the riches of Christ, who hath millions, to provide for at his own charge every day, and that too perpetually; and to some of them he gives crowns and whole kingdoms, clothing multitudes in cloth of gold and silver; doth not this tend to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is very rich?

Moreover, our Lord Jesus is rich, doth appear, not only because all the riches of the whole earth is his; but also because all the riches of heaven are his. O what a rich crown hath he above, and what a rich throne doth he sit upon there! This is above our apprehension; we cannot conceive what the nature of heavenly riches are; all earthly riches are but shadows of the riches of heaven. What is earthly gold to the gold that paves the streets of New Jerusalem. "The streets of the city is pure gold; also the foundations of the city is laid with all manner of precious stones," Re 22:2. He is so rich, that if he please, he can build many such cities.

It is Jesus Christ that communicates all the riches of grace unto his saints; "We beheld his glory as the glory of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," Joh 1:14,16.

What a multitude of souls hath the Lord Jesus made spiritually and eternally rich? Nay, he has enriched, not only particular persons, but also many churches.

Moreover, the riches of Christ are so great, that he will in a short time, fill the whole earth with the riches of his grace and glory; "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the water covers the sea," Isa 11:9.

Certainly, every sinner may have encouragement from hence, to come to this wedding, and espouse this rich Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. All that Christ espouseth, he enriches, and what a multitude hath he married? There is not one of them, but he doth most nobly provide for.

Sirs! Christ puts upon every particular soul be espouseth, a most rich and glorious robe, far excelling the gold of Ophir; and decks them with pearl, and rich diamonds, and jewels. Nay, he sets a crown, excelling gold, upon the heads of every one of them, and puts a chain of gold about their necks.

Grace is a crown, and thus all believers are crowned here in this world. But this is not all the crown they shall have: for he hath provided a crown of glory for every one of them also: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,” Re 2:10. This was that Paul knew he should have, when he had finished his course; “Henceforth there is laid up for me, a crown of life, which God, the righteous Judge, will give unto me at that day. And not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearance,” 2Ti 4:8-9.

My brethren, what encouragement is here for sinners to espouse the Lord Jesus! O what riches has he! No doubt, but that there shall be many millions of men and women saved: for, although comparatively, there will be but a few, to the vast multitude that shall he damned, yet heaven is a mighty kingdom; we see the any sky, or outside of heaven (if I may so say) but we cannot look into it, unless it be by faith. We may perceive that the earth is but a small spot to heaven, and no doubt but heaven, like a great house, shall be well tilled with inhabitants. Do you think any part or corner shall be empty, or want inhabitants. It is not to be conceived what a numberless number shall be saved.

And now, pray observe and mind it well, every particular saint shall have a crown of glory set upon his head: Christ will, I say, “crown every soul that does espouse him,” though they are so vast a multitude. Therefore certainly this doth fully tend to demonstrate, that he is very rich. So much as to the second thing.

Thirdly, I shall show you, the nature, or excellent quality of the riches of Jesus Christ.

1. The chiefest of Christ’s riches are spiritual, not only such that enrich the body, but they enrich the soul also. His riches are soul riches, spiritual riches. The men of this world have part of Christ’s external riches; he gives these to such that hate him, to such that have their portion in this life; but their souls are clothed with rags; they, in respect of their inward man, or their better part, are “miserable, naked, poor, wretched, and blind,” Re 3:16. It is to be feared most of those, who have the most of worldly riches, (who are

richly clothed, and adorned in the outward man) are, as to their souls, most wretchedly poor and miserable. Certainly, those who are most beautiful, and pride it in themselves, and are so haughty and proud, that they know not well how to set their feet upon the ground, have most loathsome and filthy souls. Did they but see their inward parts, or, how it is with them, in a spiritual sense, they would be ashamed, and abhor themselves.

2. The riches of Christ are incorruptible riches. Earthly riches are of a low, base, and corruptible nature: "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal," Mt 6:19. The apostle James bids those wicked rich men he wrote to, to "weep and howl, for the misery that will come upon them: your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of it shall be a witness against you; you have heaped up treasure against the last day," Jas 5:3.

But Christ's spiritual riches are of a better nature; they will never canker, nor corrupt. What is that treasure worth, that rusteth and is corrupted in a short time, or may be cankered or eat up, and spoiled by moths?

3. The riches of Jesus Christ are incomparable; there is no earthly treasure can be compared with it. It may be said of Christ's riches which Solomon speaks of; wisdom, (which doubtless refers to Christ himself, the wisdom of God,) "The merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto it," Pr 3:14.

Certainly that must be of an excellent nature, that nothing can compare with it. Christ's riches as far excel all earthly riches, as the heavens excel the earth, or light darkness.

4. The' riches of Christ are inexhaustible, they cannot be spent; his treasury can never be drawn dry. It is like a well, that hath a mighty spring in the bottom of it. Thus it is not with any earthly treasure. Let a man have the greatest heap, or mine of gold or silver, that ever any had, yet it may be wasted, and at the last, by continual drawing out, be all spent. Suppose you could get a vessel which might hold ten thousand hogsheads of wine, yet draw out of it every day, it would soon be all gone.

But it is otherwise here. Some wells are always full, though thousands draw water plentifully, every day, because a spring feeds it. So is this, a

multitude have been enriched with the riches of Christ, since the first opening of his storehouse, upon the fall of our first parents, in that gracious promise of the seed of the woman; but yet he hath still the same measure, or quantity of riches he ever had. He is not one farthing poorer than he was, the first day he gave forth of his riches, or divine treasures unto sinners.

5. Christ's riches are soul-satisfying riches. "He that coveteth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver," &c. Ec 5:10. If a man get ten thousand pounds, he may be no more satisfied, than when he had not more than a thousand shillings. Earthly riches and honours are unsatisfying. As Alexander the Great, who conquered all the eastern world, was as much unsatisfied after all his victories, as he was before; so it is in respect of the riches of this world, they satisfy not, this is that curse and plague, which attends the rich men of the earth, the more they have the more they covet: but the riches of Christ are of a satisfying nature; "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall thirst no more. But the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life," Joh 4:14. Thirsting not again, denotes that full satisfaction, and soul content, such find in the riches of grace; they never found any solid peace and satisfaction before, but still their souls were in a craving, and unsatisfied condition, by reason they sought for satisfaction in those things, were it was not to be had. Solomon saith, that a good man shall be satisfied from, himself: not from any self-sufficiency he finds in him, but from that true peace, riches, and content he has received from Jesus Christ. One penny of Christ's heavenly treasure, doth afford far more satisfaction, than millions of gold can administer to a carnal heart: in the fulness of his sufficiency, his soul is in straits.

6. The riches of Jesus Christ, are unsearchable riches. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph 3:8.

There is, my brethren, no bottom of Christ's treasure. As no man can by searching find Christ out to perfection, so no man, nor angel, can find out the riches of Christ to perfection; neither as to the quality or quantity of them. You may as soon find the bottom of the deepest sea, as find out the bottom of Christ's rich treasure of grace, wisdom, knowledge, glory, &c. No man knows, or can know, how rich Jesus Christ is; nor how rich that soul is, who hath an interest in him, or is united to him.

Christ's riches, or his money, passes for current coin in heaven, and is of such a nature, that it will satisfy divine justice. They do not only satisfy the soul of man, but the justice of God also. Brethren, no money, no silver, nor gold can pay our debts, nor save us out of the eternal prison of hell. No, no; it must be Christ's gold, his treasure, his riches, his righteousness, alone. If a man had a thousand millions of gold, he could not pay the smallest debt he oweth to the law, and justice of God. O how excellent are the riches of Christ! For, he hath paid such a sum, that has made a full satisfaction for all the debts of God's elect; and yet one of them owed not less than "Ten thousand talents," Matt, 18:24. Oh, what a vast sum hath Christ paid! Every sin is more (comparatively) than ten thousand pounds; for ten thousand millions could not satisfy for the smallest sin; and yet none of us, but may say with David, "Our sins are more than the hairs of our heads," Ps 40:12. Now, doth not this tend to demonstrate, that Jesus Christ is mighty rich, and that his riches are of a most excellent nature; that his riches are unsearchable; they save the soul from hell; "Other riches avail not in the day of wrath," Ps 49:7-8. But Christ's riches will; his righteousness delivers from death, i.e., from eternal death, he that obtains but the least drachm of Christ's riches, of Christ's gold, tried in the fire, his soul is saved from hell. What are the riches of Christ, but his righteousness, and the grace of his Spirit.

7. The riches of Jesus Christ are harmless riches. They will not ensnare nor hurt any soul that obtains them: earthly riches poison, and destroy oftentimes the possessor of them. Many one day will lament that they had such store of worldly riches, so much gold and silver, because it captivated and ensnared their souls.

Sirs! Riches in the hand doth no man hurt, but it too often gets into the heart; they set their hearts upon it, and love it more than Jesus Christ, and all his divine riches. What was it which made the young man reject Jesus Christ, and go away sorrowful? Was it not his inordinate love to his external riches? the text saith, "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions," Mt 19:22. It was not his great possessions, but that undue love he had to them, that undid him. Therefore our Saviour said, that "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven nay, that a camel may as easily go through the eye of a needle, as a rich man enter into the kingdom of God.

Was it not love to the riches of this world, that caused Demas to turn away from Christ, or apostatize from the truth.

This also made Paul to give that counsel to Timothy; “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God,” 1Ti 6:17. And in the same chapter, he saith, “but they that will be rich, fall into temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition,” 1Ti 6:9.

If men have riches, and no heart to do good with them, they are certainly hurtful to them; nay, they are of a damning nature to such.

But no man was ever hurt by having Christ’s spiritual riches. You need not fear any snare here, for the more you have of Christ’s riches, of grace, the more secure you are, from snares and temptations.

If any are hurt or ensnared, it is for want of those divine riches, because they have no grace, no faith, or but a small measure thereof.

8. The riches of Christ are certain riches: other riches are uncertain, they take themselves wings, and fly away. A man may with Job be rich to-day, and poor tomorrow; but what says our Saviour? “Durable riches, and righteousness are with me,” Pr 8:18. No man can carry any of the’ riches of this world out of it with him, “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out,” 1Ti 6:7. But if we have the riches of Christ, or are enriched with his spiritual riches, we shall carry them out of the world with us. We shall carry a Christ, pardon of sin, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, out of the world with us; and although we shall then come to the end of our faith; faith will be turned into vision, and hope into fruition, yet love, that blessed grace, will abide with us for ever; we shall carry that into another world: no, sirs, at death we shall partake of greater riches, than we had whilst we were here. We shall then be possessed with the riches of glory, which far exceeds the riches of grace.

Men, nor devils, can rob us of those riches; fire cannot consume them, nor moths nor rust corrupt them: they lie in a safe hand, Christ is our trustee, in him all our spiritual riches are laid up he is Lord treasurer. Could the devil pluck Christ out of heaven, we might lose our riches; but alas! that you will all say, is impossible, and as impossible it is, for the devil to deprive us of our soul-riches; for, as “our life is hid with Christ in God, so also are our riches,” Col 3:2. God intrusted the first Adam with all his riches in his own hand, and he soon run out all; therefore he hath made a better covenant with the second Adam, and in him, with all his elect, Christ is our Surety; he hath

engaged to the Father, for all that are given to him, and he therefore keeps all our riches in his own hand, and gives us out of his fulness, according to our present wants, and this secures all our riches. Can the wife want anything, whilst all fulness, all inconceivable riches are in her Husband's possession for ever?

9. Lastly, the riches of Christ are eternal; they are everlasting riches. Once spiritually rich, for ever rich. The crown of glory is an everlasting crown, it is a crown that fadeth not away. Also, it is called, an incorruptible crown, and a crown of life, eternal life. The saints riches shall continue to the days of eternity; they shall last as long as God and Christ lasteth. God is their portion, Christ is their riches, and therefore their riches are eternal.

USE

From hence I infer, that it must needs be the true, and only interest of poor sinners, to espouse Jesus Christ: What mortal but would accept of such an offer, considering how rich he is? Poverty hinders many a match, the person is liked, but the portion is not sufficient; but here is no room upon this respect, for any to object against the espousing of Jesus Christ.

Sinners, if you marry him, all is yours, all his riches are yours, and yours for ever. Christ requires nothing with you, no, though you are far in debt, though you owe ten thousand talents, he hath enough to pay all. Nay, that very moment you believe in him, close with him, you shall have a discharge of all your debts, and be enriched with vast and inconceivable riches.

What say you now, will you come to this wedding, and eat of the King's Supper? Will you accept of Christ? He only does but ask, and desire your free assent and consent, will you embrace him, accept him for your all? Shall he become the object of your affections? What do you say? What answer must I return to the great King, which sent me to you?

SERMON VI

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—Mt 22

Doctrine. That the great God hath sent his own Son, to espouse poor sinners. The head of discourse I am upon, is this, viz., That it is the greatest concernment, wisdom, and true interest of sinners, to accept of, receive, and espouse Jesus Christ.

This I have laboured to prove by several demonstrations. The last time I was upon this subject, I spoke of the riches of Christ. We will proceed to another argument to win your affections to Jesus Christ, if it may be done, and it shall be taken from the consideration of Christ's admirable and astonishing beauty. First, though beauty, nor the portion should be the chief motives for any to marry, but the consideration of the virtue, and excellent qualities of the person, yet admirable beauty doth wonderfully take with some, though among men it is great vanity and folly; for as Solomon says, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain," Pr 31:30. It often proves a great snare and temptation to mortals, and ruins many a man and woman. Besides, how soon may the fairest face, or the greatest earthly beauty be marred? a disease incident to mortals, quickly turns human beauty into deformity; but so it is not here, Christ's beauty ensnares no person.

How fond youths, whose foolish breasts do beat
With pleasing raptures, and love's generous heat;
And virgins kind, from whose unguarded eyes,
Passion oft steals their hearts by fond surprise,
Feed their strange wand'ring fancies by the eye,
'Till treacherous beauty spoils them utterly?
Covered with wit, black venom in they take,
And midst gay flowers, hug a vip'rous snake.
Here's no such danger, but all pure and chaste,
And love by angels fit to be embrac'd!
A love, above that of woman, beauty such,
That none can be enamored on to much.
Reader, then read, and learn to love by this,
Until thy soul causing raptured in bliss,
My well-beloved's mine, and I am his.

But that I may proceed, consider, that never any ever saw the beauty of Jesus Christ, but presently fell in love with him. I do not mean, any that saw his person in the days of his humiliation, but all those that ever had a true sight of him by faith, (though I am not of his opinion, who very lately affirmed) that the Lord Jesus was not in his person beautiful, but rather deformed, thereby sadly abusing that text, “He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him,” Isa 53:2. This no doubt refers to that low, mean, and sorrowful state he was in, in the days of his flesh, under his sufferings and humiliation; not that he was a deformed person, I am persuaded, by what I have read, and for some other reasons, that our blessed Saviour was a most lovely and amiable person; yet many that so saw him, fell not in love with him, but contrariwise, “Hated both him and the Father.” But I speak of a true, spiritual sight of Christ, and of his personal excellencies by an eye of faith.

Secondly, Jesus Christ, my brethren, is the original and Fountain of all beauty.

I. He is the original and fountain of all natural beauty.

1. Of that wonderful and amazing beauty that is in the sun, moon, and stars. How glorious is the created sun in the firmament of heaven? What eyes can behold him, and not be dazzled? Why, sirs, Jesus Christ is the original and fountain of his glorious beauty; for, considered as he is God, he made the sun, moon, and stars, they proceed from him.

2. Christ Jesus is the Original and Fountain of that glorious beauty that is in the blessed angels of light. No doubt but their beauty is too great for us mortals to behold; I mean, as they are in their own native glory. True, we read that some of the saints saw angels, but they certainly did appear in some other form, and not in their own angelical form; they commonly appeared in the likeness of men, and so they veiled their glory, and native spiritual beauty; can fleshly eyes see spirits?

3. Jesus Christ is the Original and Fountain of that beauty that is in men and women. We read in sacred history of persons that were exceeding fair and beautiful; as Moses, and David, who was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance; and of Absalom, of whom it is written, “In all Israel there was

none to be so praised as Absalom, for his beauty, from the sole of the foot, even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him,” 2Sa 14:25.

Moreover, Josephus reports of one, that all that saw him, were amazed and enamoured with his beauty. Also, in other histories we read of some women, that were so beautiful, that they seemed more like angels, than mortal creatures.

Of all the parts of human creatures, the face hath the greatest glory and beauty in it. Now, whatsoever beauty was, or is in any man or woman, Jesus Christ was, and is the fountain of it, all human beauty is from him; he made the most beautiful face, that ever eyes beheld: and, if such be the work, what is the beauty of the workman? we judge of the glory of the Creator, by the beauty and glory of the creatures which he hath made.

4. That beauty which is in the rarest flower, is also from Christ. Though man, by art, may approve nature, yet certainly there are such natural flowers, that far exceed the art of man. Our Lord saith of some lilies, “that Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of them.”

5. Is there any beauty and glory in heaven? Oh, who can imagine what beauty shines forth there! we see the firmament of heaven, that is but the outside of heaven: we cannot look within, heaven is the throne of God, Oh, what beauty and glory is in the celestial paradise! Sirs, this all proceeded from Jesus Christ.

6. All created beauty is, my brethren, but a dark shadow of the beauty of Jesus Christ, or an emblem of his glory, for, as the riches of this world, are but a shadow of his riches; and, as the pleasures of this world, are but a shadow of those pleasures that are at God’s right-hand, so all created beauty is but a shadow of Christ’s beauty.

II. All internal, or spiritual beauty, is from Jesus Christ, he is the Original and Fountain of it, beloved, as heaven excels earth, so grace excels nature. Sirs, the new creature excels for beauty; what is the new creature, but the image of Christ stamped upon the soul of man? We are said to be “Changed into the same image, from glory to glory,” 2Co 3:18.

Could virtue be painted to the life, (as one observes) or be drawn out by the pencil of a cunning artist, all that saw it would fall in love with it, and be

enamoured, nay, ravished to behold it; as on the other hand, could vice or ungodliness be painted to the life, it would appear the most odious and fulsome sight, that ever mortals beheld; it would be loathed, despised, and contemned by all that saw it; they would turn their eyes away, as from such filth and rottenness they never beheld before: and yet this is the deceived sinners most beloved darling. But to return, little do men think what the internal beauty of a soul is, in whom the image of Jesus Christ is formed, but as the image of a person, though drawn exactly to the life, is not to be compared to the person, whose image it is; so the beauty and glory of the new creature, is but a dark representation of the glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. All eternal beauty, likewise, is from Jesus Christ; he is the Original and Fountain of it; who is able to conceive of the glory of the spirits of just men made perfect? Or, what the beauty and glory of the saints' bodies will be, at the resurrection-day; when these vile bodies of ours, "shall be changed, and made like unto Christ's glorious body!" Php 3:21.

We read of the beauty and glory of new Jerusalem, which I take to be an emblem of the saints future glory; it is said, "To have the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal. And the foundations of the city, were garnished with all manner of precious stones," Re 21:11,18-19. Moreover, it is said, the city was pure gold, built and paved with pure gold; now, all that eternal beauty, either of the saints, or of that place where they shall be, proceeds from Jesus Christ. O, my brethren, what then think you is Christ's most glorious beauty!

Thirdly, the beauty of the Lord Jesus is inconceivable, nay, infinite, far beyond and above the comprehension of men or angels: as his love is inconceivable, so his glory and admirable beauty: no heart can conceive it, nor tongue express it, how do the holy angels; stand amazed to see such glory, such beauty in a man! he was seen by angels. How? seen by them? Why, he was seen with their highest wonderment; that a man, possessed with our nature, who was made a little lower than they, should shine forth in such beauty and glory, above them.

Fourthly, the beauty and glory of the whole Godhead, shines forth in our Lord Jesus Christ, as far as the beauty of the glorious Creator excels the beauty of the creature, so far the beauty of Christ excels the beauty of any created thing; "We beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the

Father, full of grace and truth,” Joh 1:14. Is the Father glorious, is there infinite beauty in him? brethren, Jesus Christ is alike glorious; “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,” &c., Heb 1:3. He is exactly like the Father, or his express image; and the beauty or brightness of the Father, shines forth in him, that is, in the man Christ Jesus; “For it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell,” Col 1:19.

O fair sun, (saith one) fair moon, fair stars, fair flowers, fair lilies, but, O! ten thousand times ten thousand, fair Lord Jesus! I have wronged him (saith he) in making this comparison; black sun, black moon, black stars, but, O! fair Lord Jesus! O! black flowers, black lilies, but, O! fair Lord Jesus Christ!

Fifthly, Christ’s beauty never decayeth, it never fadeth; the beauty of the face is soon gone, old age quickly causeth that to pass away; nay, diseases and inordinate grief, soon spoil that beauty; also, the beauty of flowers are gone in a moment; yea, and the glory and beauty of the sun, moon, and stars, shall pass away, but Christ’s beauty shall continue to all eternity.

Sixthly. The beauty of Jesus Christ is communicative. He can, and doth transmit his beauty to all that love him, or rather, to all that he loves, and doth espouse; no mortal creature can do thus, they cannot communicate, or transmit their beauty to others; but there is no beauty, no glory, no comeliness in a believer, but what they derive from the Lord Jesus Christ. “And thy renown went forth among the Heathen; for it was perfect through my comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord,” Eze 16:14.

Jesus Christ, beloved, doth communicate a two-fold beauty to believers.

1. The one be puts upon the soul, the other he puts, or works in the soul, so that Christ makes believers all beautiful both without and within; he puts upon the soul his own glorious robe; that very garment which he wrought out for us in our nature, in the days of his flesh, which is all bespangled with precious stones and pearls, and glitters far beyond the richest cloth of gold; this is the wedding-garment that is put upon all that come to this marriage-feast, and espouse Jesus Christ. This is a glorious robe, and in this righteousness every believer stands perfectly justified before the righteous and holy God; so that, in this respect they are all fair, and there is not one spot in them. And, my brethren, that very eye which apprehends the Lord Jesus, to the putting on of this garment, is said to ravish the Lord Jesus Christ. “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast

ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with the chain of thy neck,” Song 4:9.

2. He also infuseth into the soul, glorious beauty, which is the beauty of sanctification. “The king’s daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is wrought gold,” Ps 45:11,13. This makes the King to desire her beauty; but none of this beauty is of, and from herself; it is no natural, nor artificial beauty, but all conveyed, transmitted, or communicated to her from Jesus Christ, in an extraordinary manner, by the operations of the Spirit. All the saints of God that ever lived, were as deformed, filthy, and odious, as any other sinner, until Jesus Christ made them beautiful and comely, with his own comeliness. He is made of God unto us, not only righteousness, but sanctification, &c.

Seventhly. The beauty of the Lord Jesus is not only a soul-transforming beauty, but also a soul-ravishing, a soul-delighting, and a soul-satisfying beauty. “He is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand,” Song 5:10. Making all that behold him, sick of love to him. “He is fairer than the children of men,” Ps 45:2, or the sons of Adam. Christ is not only beautiful in one part, but he is altogether lovely. Some roses excel for redness, and some lilies for whiteness. The moon is fair, and the sun clear and bright; but the rose, the lily, the sun and the moon, and the glorious heavens, are all black when compared to the Lord Jesus. “I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness,” Ps 17:15. When I arrive to that perfect and complete beauty and glory, that is in thee, and I shall never be satisfied (as if David should say) until then. The spiritual beauty of Jesus Christ is of a satisfying nature. Natural, or created beauty cannot satisfy the soul of man; that cannot fill its desires, but the beauty of Christ doth this.

Brethren, in a perfect conformity to Christ’s beauty and glory, lies all the happiness of true believers, to which let me add,

Eighthly. The glorious God and Father of heaven and earth, takes delight in the beauty of Jesus Christ, considered as God-man in one person. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth,” Isa 42:1. Certainly that person, whose beauty is the delight of the ever-blessed God, must needs be a glorious beauty. God takes no delight in the legs nor face of a man; but he takes delight in the beauty of his Son. The personal beauty and perfections of Jesus Christ, is also the delight of the holy angels, they love to behold him, and to look upon him.

My brethren, if heaven and earth can make a glorious and complete beauty, then it is in Jesus Christ; for the perfections both of the divine and human nature meet in him. There can be no addition to his beauty, because it is perfect to the highest degree.

And now, you sinners, what do you think? Is it not your wisdom, your highest concernment, to come to this marriage-feast, to espouse the Lord Jesus, to feed by faith upon him, to believe in him, and to be united to him, in bonds of love for ever; to have Christ to be your Husband, and to lie in his arms, and to be filled and ravished with his beauty to all eternity? But if the consideration of his beauty will not move you, or prevail with you to fall in love with him, I will try what another argument will do.

Eighthly. Christ is long-lived. Would you espouse and marry a person that is long-lived, so that you may be sure you shall not quickly be a widow, then Christ is the person. Oh! see that you choose him, espouse him, marry him. Methinks I hear one say, that is deeply in love with one that she values as her own life, nay, above her own life. Oh! I would not marry him, if I was sure he was short-lived, or would die soon after we come together, for his death would be as a thousand deaths to me. Love whosoever you will, and that too with never so strong and great affections, none can ensure his life for one day; the wedding-week may be his burying-week, so far as you, or any body else knows, so uncertain is the life of man. But if you do espouse and marry the Lord Jesus, he is long-lived, you shall never know widowhood. Long-lived did I say? Oh! know he lives for ever, and cannot die. Jesus Christ is an immortal Husband. "I am he that was dead, (that was well for us, we had perished else,) and am alive, and behold I live for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death," Re 1:18.

Obj. 1. But perhaps some may say, though Jesus Christ lives for ever, and he cannot die, yet such that espouse him may quickly die; we see believers die as well as others.

Answ. I answer, if you will espouse the Lord Jesus, you shall also live for ever. If you come and eat of this wedding-supper, you shall never die. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat, and not die," Joh 6:50. Our Lord doth not mean a temporal death; no, God forbid. Who would live always in this miserable world? Death is one of the greatest blessings to believers, as some of you lately heard. You that are believers,

cannot go to your Husband, you cannot go to Jesus Christ, until death open the door, and let you in unto him. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,” 2Co 5:6. This Job well knew, and therefore he said, “I would not live always.” But know assuredly, that your souls shall never die the second death; you shall not die eternally. “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, shall have eternal life,” Joh 6:54.

Nay, Sirs, temporal death shall not, cannot, separate these lovers. Death cannot separate Jesus Christ, and that soul which espouseth and marieth him. Death cannot dissolve this blessed marriage union, both the body and soul of a believer is united to Jesus Christ; they, when they die, die in the Lord, that is, in union with Jesus Christ.

Believers, cheer up, your Husband hath the keys of hell and death; he hath power over death and hell. “Because I live, ye shall live also,” Joh 14:19.

Christ is a living Husband, a Husband that never dies. What comfort is here for you poor widows, that have espoused and married Jesus Christ? What though your earthly husbands are dead, and left you to the wide world, exposed to a thousand sorrows, yet it matters not, your heavenly Husband lives for ever, he dies not.

And now to return to you sinners. Will you not accept of this happy match? Will you not espouse such a King, he that is “the only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords?” A prince of such honour, of such riches, of such love, of such beauty, and one that is immortal, who lives for ever, and that will make you immortal, even save you from death. Also, those that he betrotheth unto himself, he doth betroth for ever. Certainly, this must be your chiefest concernment, your highest wisdom, and only interest. Therefore do not delay, but come to this marriage-feast, and accept of Jesus Christ.

Ninthly. Consider, besides all that I have said unto you hitherto, what a sweet temper, and excellent disposition Christ is of.

This is a thing, which all that marry should well mind. Some who are wise, prefer the good temper of the person they are about to marry, above all things. Nay, one said in my hearing lately, that a good and sweet natural temper, was to be esteemed in the case of marriage, above a small measure of grace in a crooked and peevish nature and disposition. The truth is, a little

grace is not sufficient in some persons, to render them lovely and acceptable, in the relation of husband and wife. Some women perhaps, who meet with yokefellows, that are naturally of a sweet, mild, and gentle disposition, though not truly gracious, live better, and more comfortable lives with them, than some others do, that are in the main, gracious persons; though to their shame it may be spoken, that they strive no more to mortify their unruly and unsanctified passions and affections.

But what is any man's natural, sweet, and good temper, to the spirit and temper of the Lord Jesus Christ? I shall only hint of his excellent temper in four or five respects.

I. Jesus Christ is of a compassionate temper, of a sympathizing disposition. If thy husband be never so rich, or great in the world, and though never so comely, yet if he be not of a compassionate and sympathizing disposition, thou mayest have no great content, nor happiness in that relation. Certainly, those men that cannot sympathize, or have a fellow-feeling of their wives' afflictions and sorrows, have but little love to them. Now, the blessed Jesus is full of compassion towards all his people. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old," Isa 43:9. Oh, this shows great sympathy that is in Jesus Christ; what a compassionate disposition is he of? "For, we have not an High-priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin," Heb 4:15.

The Greek word denotes (as one well observes) such a sympathy, or fellow-feeling, as makes him like affected, as if he were in the same case with them.

It is said, "His soul was grieved for Israel." Ah, what a sympathizing disposition is Christ of; he mourns, and grieves over his poor afflicted ones; he pities them, nay, he is afflicted with them.

II. He is of a forgiving temper. He is ready to forgive his enemies, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," Lu 23:34. But much more is he ready to pardon and forgive the sins of his beloved ones, who are married to him; he covers all the infirmities of his spouse; he will not see any sin in her, "Behold thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee," Song

4:7. He casteth his own mantle over all our weaknesses, and infirmities, he is not like some who pretend to be his disciples, yet reproach and vilify their faithful friends and brethren unjustly; they never learned of the Lord Jesus to cover all those weaknesses which may be in such they backbite and reproach. But this is because they see not the beam that is their own eye. These sort are like cursed Ham, and they would do well to read the 15th Psalm. But, O what a tender, charitable, and forgiving temper is the blessed Jesus, even like unto his blessed Father, who passed by all the great enormities of David and said, he was a man after his own heart, save only in the case of Uria, he took no notice of his other infirmities, which were great. "Woman, be of good cheer, said our Lord, thy sins are forgiven thee." And thus he speaks unto all his people.

III. Christ is of a generous, noble, and bountiful temper, or disposition. He is kind, charitable, and liberal to all, but much more unto his spouse. He gives liberally and upbraideth not; "Eat, O friends, drink, abundantly, O beloved," Song 5:1.

1. His bounty and generosity would appear, should we consider what it is he hath given, and doth give to all those he loveth.

2. If we consider the manner of his giving.

What Christ gives to his people

1. As to what he gives, or parteth with to them, he gives them all he is, or hath. He gave himself for them, to be a sacrifice, to die, and bear the wrath of God in their stead. "Husbands love you wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word," Eph 5:25-26.

Did ever any give thus? give himself to die, from that love and rich bounty he bare to such a one that he loved. "Christ hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Re 1:5.

2. He gives them his flesh to eat, and his own blood to drink. Indeed, this is the principle matter of which this feast doth consist.

3. He gives them his word, his Spirit, his grace.

4. He gives them his own blessed robe to clothe them; his eye-salve to open their eyes, his gold tried in the fire, to enrich them.

5. He gives them his own retinue, the holy angels, to guard, preserve, and protect them, and to minister unto them, even to all them that he espouseth, who are heirs of salvation. Moreover, he hath promised to them a kingdom, and a crown of glory, and that they shall sit with him on his throne, and judge the world with him.

2ndly, as to the manner of his giving.

1. He gives freely, all out of his own rich bounty, and that to such that deserved nothing at his hands, and who are not able to make him the least recompence, for the smallest favour.

If he gives anything upon exchange, see the manner of it. "To appoint to them that mourn in Sion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning; the garment of praise, for the spirit of heaviness," Isa 61:3.

2. His rich bounty is such, that he gives seasonably, in the very time of need; he will not miss that very season when we stand in the greatest want of mercy and grace, and also whatsoever we do need, to the full supplying of all our wants. "God shall help thee, and that right early," Ps 46:5. He knows the best time, the very nick of time, when to give unto us those things we need. He will not give it to us before, nor will he stay a moment after that time; for, "The Lord shall judge his people, and repent. him for his servants, when he seeth their power is gone, and there is none shut up, nor left," De 32:36. He is such a noble and beautiful Spirit, that "he gives grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Ps 84:11.

IV. Jesus Christ is of a humble, meek, and lowly temper; or of a wonderful condescending disposition. He sticks at nothing too hard for him to do, which is for our good, that he may bring us to God, and into union with himself; "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Php 2:6-7.

Some will not bow nor yield to their dearest friend, to do that which may expose them to the least pain, shame, and sorrow, but Christ was contented

to do anything, though it was never so much to his humiliation and abasement, distress and sorrow, that he might obtain his desire, and work about the intended marriage between himself, and his own elect. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Mt 11:28-29.

V. He is of a considerate temper of heart. He considereth and "remembereth that we are but dust," Ps 103:14. And that our strength is not the strength of brass; he will not therefore "suffer us to be tempted, above what we are able," 1Co 10:13. He doth not expect more from his people, then he knows they are able to do, nor lay upon them such burdens, which he knows they are not able to bear.

Tenthly, Jesus Christ is wise. Some choose wisdom, or a man that is wise and of great understanding, before riches, honour, or beauty. I heard some time since, of a rich man that had a daughter to dispose of in marriage, who, when asked, whether he would marry her to a wise man, that was poor and low in the world, or to a very rich man that was a fool. He replied, he would sooner marry her to a wise man, though he was poor, &c. And certainly he showed much wisdom in so answering.

Now,* my brethren, Jesus Christ is the very wisdom of God; he is wisdom itself, all true wisdom is from him. He is infinite in wisdom, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col 2:3. He maketh others wise, he doth and can communicate of his wisdom, to all such that he espouses; nay, he maketh such that are foolish, and without understanding, wonderful wise. Christ knoweth all things, he knows all the Father's counsels and decrees, which have been of old, even from everlasting; he shows us the Father, and openeth the deep things of God unto us. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Mt 11:27.

No man knoweth the essence of the Father, the decrees, counsels, and designs of the Father, or hath a perfect knowledge of the Father, but the Son only. All saving knowledge of God is in and through Jesus Christ; and he that hath a perfect knowledge of God, (as he is in himself) must needs have a perfect knowledge of all men and devils. He knows our state, our spirits, our frames, our thoughts, our ends, our aims, our ways, our wants, our temptations, our fears, our dangers, and "all our desires are before him," Ps 38:9.

1. Christ knoweth the matter of our desires, or what it is we desire, chiefly desire.

2. He knows the design and end of our desires.

3. He knows the spring of our desires, or from whence they flow; whether from a principle of grace, or from self-love, pride, and ambition.

4. He knows the degrees or extent of our desires; whether weak or strong, faint or vigorous.

5. He also knows the cause of our desires; whether they are caused through a true sight of sin, in its own evil nature, and from a spiritual and gracious sight of Christ's personal excellencies, that we desire him, or only are occasioned from the sight of the damning nature of sin, and a simple desire of happiness.

6. He knows the constancy of our desires; whether they abide or no, or are only temporary, flitting, and continue no longer than we abide under God's hand, or under the rod of afflictions.

7. He knows our desires so as to observe them, judge of them, weigh them, or ponder them.

Also, so as to answer all our good and holy desires, and to punish us for all our unjust and inordinate desires.

9. He knows whether our desires after himself are accompanied with suitable endeavours,* or not.

If none of these things will move you to love him and accept of that gracious offer you have of him, and to look upon it to be your chiefest interest to espouse him. Then,

Eleventhly, consider, that he is always the same, he never changeth. He is ever, or at all times of the same temper, always alike kind, loving, compassionate, forgiving and forgetting wrongs and injuries; he is not in and out, like changeable men, that are in a good temper one day, and in an ill one, and out of frame at another. Oh, saith a man, was my wife always but in this good, gentle, and sweet temper, as she is now in, how happy would my life

he! And so on the other hand, saith the wife, was my husband always alike kind, alike meek, gentle, loving, filled with bowels, and pity to me, being never angry, morose, froward, or peevish, no woman would live a better life. But alas! thus it is but a few, such is the corruptions of the heart, the passions, temptations, provocations, mankind are exposed unto, that they are often disordered in their spirits, and out of frame; they are not always of an even and sweet disposition. But now Jesus Christ, if once you do espouse him, you shall find him always one and the same, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," He changeth not. He is always the same in power, in love, in mercy, and goodness, in faithfulness, in sympathy, in beauty and riches. Some men may be rich when they marry, but soon may wax poor, by losses, or badness of the times, or by carelessness and ill husbandry, may waste their treasure, and become poor; but the Lord Christ is ever in all things, as touching what he is in himself, and what he hath, the same; he is never sick, no disease, no temptation is he liable unto.

USE

Oh, what are your thoughts poor sinners, now? will you come to this marriage? will you let all your old lovers go, and get a bill of divorcement, and become dead to sin, to this world, and to the law, and to all your own righteousness, that you may be married to Jesus Christ? say, sinners, you have a good match offered to you this day.

What do you say, young men and women, cannot you find in your hearts to love Jesus Christ? He is willing, if you are willing: oh, cry to him to make you willing! he can draw you to love him, you will never love him, till "he sheds abroad his love in your hearts," Ro 5:5, by the Holy Ghost. Say, oh Lord, circumcise my heart, that I may love thee.

This is the time, now, in the days of your youth, this age he has chose. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me," Pr 8:17. Sure you may seek him, is not this in your power? But, if you seek the world, seek your pleasures, your earthly profits, and delights above him, how can you he said to seek him?

What do you say, that are aged? Is it not time, more than time for you, to seek Jesus Christ? He doth espouse some old sinners; he calls some at the eleventh hour. I am come to call you this day to this marriage feast; will none of you accept of this high-born Prince, the blessed Lord of life and glory?

Can you be so foolish, and void of understanding, to tell him, you cannot love him, or do not like him? If so, then take what will follow.

Consolation.

But, oh, happy, happy believers, what joy and comfort may this administer unto you? O see what a blessed choice you have made, and what a Friend, what a Husband you have got.

But so much at this time.

SERMON VII

Doct. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.*—Mt 22:2. &c.

That the great God hath sent his own Sun, to espouse poor sinners.

1. What this marriage doth import, we have showed.

2. That it is the great concernment, wisdom, and true interest of sinners, to accept of Jesus Christ; or, to come to this marriage, and eat of this feast, i.e., believe, or feed by faith on Christ. This we have endeavoured to make appear, and to demonstrate by many arguments.

The last was taken from the consideration, that he is always the same, and changeth not; neither in respect of his glory, power, wisdom, love, beauty, or excellent temper.

I shall now proceed to the next demonstration proposed.

Twelfthly, it is the greatest concernment of sinners to come and eat at this marriage dinner, or espouse Jesus Christ, from the consideration of those many glorious and blessed effects, that attend or accompany the soul's marriage union with Christ.

I. Hereby he gives himself unto the sinner. They through this union have an absolute interest in Jesus Christ; he is the soul's, and the soul is his; he is that sinners' Friend, his Beloved, his Saviour, Portion, Husband, &c. "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Such an one may say, with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." I do not say, that every one that hath obtained this union with Christ, hath the faith of assurance, or fully know, and are confident, Christ is theirs; no, a true believer, through the weakness of his faith, or by reason of Satan's temptations, may have some doubts and fears about it, yet, nevertheless, that soul hath Christ, or a true and saving interest in him, whether he knows it, or not.

II. This union is a full union. As it is the nearest and sweetest union, so it is a most full and complete union. A whole Christ is united to the sinner, and the whole of a sinner, both body and soul is united to him; so that they

become both one, in the nearest relation, in a most wonderful and mystical manner.

1. The whole Person of Christ is united to a believer; not only united to his human nature, but also to his divine nature. This word (Christ) doth not refer to his human nature, only, nor to his divine nature only, but to both natures in his person; neither of those natures, distinct from each other, is Christ, though sometimes the human is called Christ; as when it is said, “Christ died for our sins,” 1Co 15:3. Yet, in another place, it is explained, [he] i.e., “Christ was put to death in the flesh,” 1Pe 3:11. His Godhead could not die.

Moreover, sometimes by Christ is meant his divine nature. But now, I say, a believer is united unto a whole Christ, even unto the divine, as well as to the human nature. And hence it is, by virtue of his union, the dead sinner is quickened: the flesh of Christ can quicken no person without his Spirit. “The flesh profiteth not,” Joh 6:63. That is, the human nature, without the divine; “It is the Spirit which quickeneth.” The human nature profits not of itself alone, without being united to the divine; yet the human nature, being hypostatically united to the divine nature, so it doth profit us; for, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,” Joh 6:53. That is, except we feed upon the virtue of his body broken, and his blood poured forth, by believing, we can have no life in us.

Yet, it was impossible, that the blood of Christ could avail or profit us, had it not been united to the divine nature, because it was from the worth, dignity, and virtue of his Godhead, that the sacrifices he offered, became satisfactory to God’s justice. Yet, on the other hand, I may say, that without the flesh of Christ, his Spirit, or Godhead could not profit us, because the justice of God required, that the same nature of man should perfectly keep the law of God for us, and suffer and die, or sustain that penalty, or punishment, which our breach of it had exposed us unto. And since a whole Christ is united to a believer, it follows from hence, that all that good, that is in the Godhead, is, and shall be conveyed to us, so far as it is communicable; and, as the humanity could not communicate grace and spiritual blessings to us, so without that blessed union of the Godhead with the manhood, the divinity is incommunicable to us.

Therefore, saith a worthy writer, although all life, all salvation floweth from the fulness of the Deity, yet it is not communicated to us, but by the

flesh of Christ. For, as the Deity is as a fountain, whence all good things flow, (as) life and salvation, yet the flesh, or humanity, is as the channel, by which all these good things, all gifts, and grace are derived unto us. Therefore, unless a man apprehended this channel, and be united to it, he cannot possibly be a partaker of these waters, which do flow from this fountain.

2. Moreover, the whole of the person of a sinner, a believing sinner, both soul and body, is united to the Lord Jesus Christ; the body, as well as the soul is in union with him. That which the second Person in the Trinity, took into union with himself, was not only our human flesh, but our human soul also, to assure us, that both our bodies and souls he would take into union with himself.

Again, That which Christ died for, bought, and redeemed by his blood, that he doth take into union with himself. But Christ died both for the bodies and souls of his elect; therefore he taketh both body and soul into union with himself. "Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God, and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," 1Co 6:19-20.

3dly, This union is a strong union intensively, so that Christ and a believer become one spirit, "but he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit," 1Co 6:17.

Not essentially, but mystically one spirit. One Spirit (saith a reverend writer) as if they were but one soul in two bodies. What the Spirit doth in Christ, it doth also in a believer, according to the capacity of his soul, the same Spirit, which was the immediate conveyer of grace, to the human nature of Christ, is so to us. Christ had an essential holiness, in respect of his Godhead, but a derivated holiness, as man. And this derivative holiness proceeded from the Spirit in him, without measure, which we have in our measure. And by virtue of this union, by the same Spirit, whereby we become one Spirit with Christ; not only that grace which is in us, and in our great Mediator, Christ Jesus, are of the same nature and original, as the light of the sun, and the light of the stars, are the same, though they differ in degrees, not essentially:—It is the same Spirit, in respect of person, which makes Christ near of kin to us. Thus a believer is said to dwell in Christ, and Christ in him.

4. Moreover, it is an union that is indissolvable; sin, hell, devils, nor death, can break it; believers sleep in Jesus, they die in the Lord; that is, in union with him.

III. Another effect of this union, is communion with Christ; union cannot be without communion; “For (saith one) while the members are united to a living sound head, there will be an influx of animal spirits, whereby they shall partake of life and motion; the Spirit from our mystical Head, will be working in us, providing for us, and standing by us.” Yet it is not always to the same degree; our communion with Christ, though it be constant, yet it is not always so full and sweet. Now part of this communion appears in these things following:

1. Christ and a believer walk together; “Enoch walked with God three hundred years,” Gen. v., so long he had communion with God on earth; O, what a high privilege is this! to walk hand in hand with Jesus Christ! to take sweet turns with him in his garden; “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates bud, and there will I give thee my loves,” Song 7:11-12.

2. They lodge together; “Let us lodge in the villages:” my beloved shall “lie all night between my breasts,” or in my heart, Song 7:11; 1:13; there Christ lies, there he rests all night, or so long as the night of mortality doth last; he doth not abide with the soul for a short season, like a traveller, but he is a constant dweller; and does also manifest to the soul, his choicest love and favour.

3. They sit together; the King sits at the table with his beloved consort, and dearest spouse; “Whilst the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof,” Song 1:12.

4. They lie in each others arms; “His left-hand is under my head, and his right-hand doth embrace me.”

5. They often visit each other; believers visit Christ in ways of duty, and Christ visits them in ways of mercy.

6. They sup together; “If any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me,” Re 3:20.

7. They have one and the same interest and design, to carry on and manage in the world; they have one and the same name; we are called by his name, as a woman bears her husband's name; I say, Christ and Christians are of the same name: he is called the fairest amongst men, and she, that is his spouse, the fairest among women; nay,* the church is called Christ, so is Christ; that is Christ mystical, i.e., the church.

There is a communication of all Christ hath to the soul, through this union. *Tanquam heres ex affei*, saith one; there is a sweet communication of all Christ's beauty, goods, and goodness, to the wife of his bosom: is it not a most sweet and blessed thing to dwell in the same house, in the same place with Jesus Christ, to be possessed with the same spirit, partake of his joys, and made wealthy with his riches? All is yours.

IV. Another effect of this union, or which doth accompany it, is mutual delight and complacency, in each other: never did any husband take so much delight in the wife of his youth, as Christ takes in that soul he espouses: "Let thy fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth: let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished with her love," Pr 5:18-19. It is to be feared, it is not thus with all husbands; but thus, and more abundantly, it is with Christ: "As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," Isa 62:5. Christ's most dear and intimate love and affections, are placed upon, and run out to all true believers, to such a degree, that he breaks forth to this purpose; "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with the chain of thy neck," Song 4:9. Saints are called the spouse of Christ; *propter amoris magnitudinem* : because of that great and unparalleled love that is between them.

The joy of the bridegroom is the highest and sweetest that is found among the sons of men; hence Christ is pleased to express his love by that of a bridegroom: thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in thee: they are the joy and delight of his soul: "How fair and pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!" Isa 62:4. How may such expressions revive our spirits? But read again, "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me," Gant. 7:6. But if this is not enough to affect your souls, in the thoughts of the gracious nature and effects of this union, see what he says further: "The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, he is mighty, he will rejoice over

thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing,” Zep 3:17.

V. Another effect of this union is a full discharge of all the sinner’s debts: let a woman be never so much in debt, no sooner is she married, but all her debts become her husband’s; none of them can be recovered of her, demanded in law of her, he must pay, and satisfy for all she owes: she is in no danger of an arrest, nor need she fear a prison.

Brethren! until a sinner believes, and hath actual union with Christ, he stands charged with a vast debt; no sinner owes less than ten thousand talents.

Though we deny not,* but that all God’s elect are decretively justified and pardoned from all eternity; that is, God did decree to pronounce every elect person in every age, when they personally did exist, and had (or should obtain through the Spirit, a vital union with Jesus Christ) actually and personally acquitted, pardoned, and pronounced righteous ones, and for ever freed from all vindictive wrath and condemnation; but until such a vital union be obtained, they, as well as the rest of mankind, lie dead in sin, and are children of wrath by nature as well as others. And this appears,

None of the elect are actually pardoned, justified, before a vital union with Christ proved. Rom. 8:1. Eph. 2:2, 3

(1.) Because all the elect fell in the first Adam, and by virtue of the fall, were brought under the same condemnation that their public head fell under.

(2.) Because all are born in sin, all come into the world with the same stain, and guilt of sin: “Behold I was shapened in iniquity,” &c., Ps 51:5.

(3.) Because it is positively said, “That the whole world became guilty before God,” Ro 3:19; not only in their consciences, but *fore Dei*, before God, and in his sight; and in this respect’ Paul shows there was no difference, the sentence of the law being charged upon the elect by God himself, until they are in Jesus Christ.

(4.) And this further appears, because it is said, that “he that believeth not is condemned already,” Joh 3:18: let him be who he will. “He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son of God hath not life,” 1Jo 5:12.

Hath the Son, that is, union with the Son, or is married to the Son, hath life; that is, both the life of justification and the life of sanctification, and also eternal life in the seed of it, and also hath a vital principle in him that hath the Son, and that he that hath not the Son hath not life, in either of these respects.

(5.) Because the Holy Ghost frequently ascribes our actual justification only to believers, or to faith, though not to faith either as a habit or an act, or that faith is any of the matter, or the material cause of our justification; but only objectively, or in respect to Christ, whom faith apprehends; “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” &c., Ro 5:1. “Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith,” &c., Ro 3:28. “Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ,” &c., Ga 2:16. Again, “In him all that believe are justified,” Ac 13:39. And where is said (in any place of scripture) he is justified that believes not, (though not in his own conscience) yet he is in the sight of God; (say they) and must not such then, who affirm that elect unbelievers are actually justified, be looked upon as fomentors of an error, and such which cannot tend any ways to the glory of God.

(6.) None of the elect are actually pardoned nor justified, before they obtain this union with Christ; because justification of our persons make a relative change, though not a real change: it makes a change of the state of the person, though not a change of his heart; no, that is done by regeneration, which always accompanies justification; no man is actually justified that is not renewed; he that was a child of wrath, is made a child of God; “This thy brother was dead, and is alive again;” he was dead in sin, and dead in a law of sense also; a condemned man is a dead man, and every one in that sense is dead, until justified and acquitted of the law sentence.

I would know whether they own the elect were ever in this sense dead, or condemned: if not, 1. I see not then how they can properly be said to be justified at all, because justification of sinners is a discharging them from the wrath, guilt, and condemnation they lay under, before they were so justified. 2. Let such who deny what I say, show when, and at what time the law sentence was taken off of the elect, if it was before they obtained a vital union with Jesus Christ.

(7.) The sins of the elect are not actually pardoned, or they pronounced, acquitted, before this union with Christ appears yet further; because ministers

are commanded to preach the gospel to sinners, undone sinners, and tell every unbelieving sinner he is in a miserable state, even naked and without Christ, until he has union with Christ, being both children of wrath, and under condemnation: but if some men do not thus believe, how, with a good conscience, can they preach after this manner? No, they must say, "Sinners, if you are elected, you are actually justified, whether you believe or not; and all your sins are actually pardoned, though you do not know it, or have not the evidence of it in your own consciences." But would not this be strange doctrine, and such that would expose religion to shame and reproach, or leastwise such preachers? Or can that be a truth that is not fit to be preached? or if it be thought fit to be preached, can it tend to the conversion of sinners?

Lastly, The Holy Ghost convinceth all persons, whom he convinceth effectually of sin, that before they are united to Christ, they were in a sad and deplorable state and condition, ask any convinced sinner this question.

Quest. Pray, what was your state and condition, before you were helped to believe, or to receive Jesus Christ, by nature?

Answ. O (says he) Sir, a sad and miserable state and condition, for I was condemned and under God's wrath, &c.

Now, doth not the Holy Ghost convince them, that this was their state; and that they were naked, &c., without Christ's righteousness: sure, he that has Christ's righteousness imputed to him, cannot be said to be naked. And be sure, the Holy Spirit is a true and faithful "Witness, and being God cannot lie. Not that I deny a federal union of the elect; from eternity, the Son of God was our Surety: he then received a grant for us, and we received it in him, according to 2Ti 1:7, and Tit 1:2.

But no sooner is the soul espoused, and married to Jesus Christ, or hath union with him by faith, through the infusion of the Holy Spirit, but it is actually discharged. Christ says to the justice of God, concerning such a person, as Paul, concerning Onesimus, to Philemon, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee anything, put that upon my account," Phil. 18. If justice should demand payment, (which is impossible) of such, saith Jesus Christ, I have paid it; I am responsible for all this soul oweth; I died for this person. I (saith the soul) plead my interest in Christ, my union with Christ; for that satisfaction which he made to thee, O Justice, for all my debts, and horrid

crimes, is my legal discharge at God's bar, in the court of heaven. Is not this, my brethren, a blessed effect of the soul's marriage-union with Christ? "What perplexity are some in, that are far in debt, and have nothing to pay? They cannot sleep, nor take their natural rest, for fear of an arrest, and of going to prison. Oh! (saith the poor creature) what shall I do? I am fallen into the hands of a just man, one that will not forgive me a farthing of what I owe him; I am run out of all I had to trade with, by my own extravagant and profuse living, and he is incensed against me, and, alas! I have not one penny to pay, nor no friend, nor brother to help me, oh, I must go to prison, and there lie as long as I live!

Just thus it is, with a poor sinner, one that is an unbeliever; he is run out of all that God lent him, by his horrid wickedness; and owes to God a vast sum, and there is none can help him; no friend hath he to satisfy the justice of God; yet, without there be a full satisfaction, to prison he must go, even to the worst of prisons, to hell itself. Ah, what is it to go to an earthly prison, to this, viz., to be cast into utter darkness, to lie in a furnace of fire to all eternity!

But now, if this poor guilty wretch will but espouse and marry Jesus Christ, he is immediately discharged of all the danger he was in before. Such is the happy estate of all that have actual union with Jesus Christ.

VII. From it follows another blessed effect of this happy union, namely, free justification. The soul of a believing sinner is accepted in Christ, as perfectly righteous.

Brethren, I know some do not distinguish between pardon of sin, and free justification, but make it all one act of God; but, as I conceive, there is a great difference, though it is granted, no person that is pardoned, but he is also justified. Yet, evident it is, a man that is a criminal, and brought to the bar to plead, and is found guilty, may, as an act of the king's grace, be pardoned, as to that obligation he lies under to punishment; but he may not, cannot be said to be acquitted, justified, or declared righteous, and an innocent person. But every believing sinner, or every person that espouseth the Lord Jesus, through the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness, is justified, acquitted, and declared innocent, and without spot, at the bar of God's justice. Christ's righteousness is put upon that soul, and accounted his, as if it was his very own, and wrought out by himself; so that in this respect, he "is all fair, and hath no spot in him," (as Christ speaks of his spouse).

When God pardons a sinner, he deals with him in a way of mercy, but when he justifies him, he deals with him in a way of righteousness; “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me in garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels,” Isa 61:10. So that a believer may not only say, in the Lord’l have pardon, and remission of sins, but also, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength,” Isa 45:24. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Ro 8:33-34. That is, to their charge that are actually in Christ, or united to him. For before an elect sinner believes, the law hath power, and doth charge him, and divine justice chargeth him, but when he believes none can charge him; “for it is God that justifieth” “Who shall condemn, it is Christ that died.” It is Christ the Son of God, he that is equal with God, that is, God as well as man.

Hence he hath made a sufficient satisfaction, and an atonement to divine justice, or rather, that is risen again; which shows our full discharge from sin in him; we were all virtually justified, when he was raised from the dead, and we are actually justified, when we apply, or receive the atonement; “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” Ro 5:11; 1Jo 1:9. Not only merciful and gracious, but faithful and just; he will not exact from us satisfaction, who plead that atonement his Son hath made for our sins. Christ having paid our debts, God cannot be unjust as not to forgive us, through his blood.

Oh, what a blessing is this! How happy are they that obtain union with Christ! They are justified, and always justified completely, and for ever justified, and justified from all things, Ac 13:39.

VIII. Another effect of this union is regeneration. No sooner doth Christ apprehend us by his Spirit and enable us to believe in him, so that we are spiritually united unto him, but immediately we are renewed, or changed into his image; “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” 2Co 5:17. Jesus Christ can take no delight in a black and filthy creature, no more than a man can delight in a filthy swine. “A contrary nature,” (saith a worthy writer) “cannot unite. Can fire and water be united? a good angel, and an impure devil?” Now this union is made by the infusion of the Holy Spirit, which immediately works new habits in the soul. By nature we are in the first Adam, and bear his vile image, but by grace we are in the second Adam, and so partake of his holy and heavenly image; “He that is joined to the Lord, is one

Spirit,” 1Co 6:17. It is not an union simply in love and affections, (as some would have it) without a change of disposition; the Holy Spirit dwells and operates in that soul, “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, the same is not his,” Ro 8:9. The head and the members are all of one and the same nature. Can a loathsome carcase be united to the holy Jesus? Or a sinner be joined to him, and remain still filthy? No, no, regeneration immediately follows, as the effect of this union. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness,” Ro 8:10.

IX. It follows from hence, that as the effect of this union with Jesus Christ, the soul is also set free from bondage. Now, “the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” 2Co 3:17. The Lord Christ, though he be a man yet not a mere man; he is called, “A quickening Spirit.” The first man, “Adam, was made a living soul;” the last man, “Adam, was made a quickening Spirit,” 1Co 15:45. And, where he is, or dwells in any soul, there is liberty. Such that are united to him, are discharged from the spirit of bondage; they are set at liberty from the bondage of the law, and the curse thereof. “If the Son therefore make you free, then are you free indeed,” Joh 8:36. Wade free, or set at liberty from the servitude and slavery of sin, of the law, of death and hell. They that are of the law, or not dead to the law, and so not married to Christ, but are in bondage, under the killing power of it, being possessed with a base, servile, slavish spirit, being servants of lusts and corruption; but believers, through this divine union, are delivered from this woful state; “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father,” Ro 8:15.

That soul that is in the first Adam, may be said to be married to the law, is evident, which is a cruel husband, the letter killeth; as many as are under the law, are under the curse. Mount Sinai covenant gendereth to bondage; for this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is in bondage with her children,” Ga 4:24-25.

He therefore that seeks for justification by the law, or by his own righteousness, or according to the terms of the first covenant, is in a woful condition; the law being not dead to him, nor he dead to that; “Know ye not, brethren, for I speak to them that know the law, how the law hath dominion over a man, as long as he liveth,” Ro 7:1-3. By the law, he means the law of wedlock, and all that are under the first covenant, are married to the law, as to an husband. See the fourth verse; “Wherefore brethren, ye also are

become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead," &c.

Therefore, believers are freed from the malediction, and from the rigid exaction, and the irritation of the law; but "now we are delivered from the law, that being dead, wherein we were held," Ro 7:6. The law as a covenant of works is the strength of sin, and the effects of both is dead, so long as a man is under the power or dominion of them; but believers, through their union with Christ, are freed from both.

X. Another glorious effect of this marriage-union with Christ, is an undoubted right to, and interest in, all that Christ hath. He endows the soul with all his spiritual goods, as the husband endows the wife he marries, with all his worldly goods. This all know is the effect of a marriage union. Though a prince should espouse and marry a poor virgin, even take her off the dunghill, (as it were) yet no sooner is she married to him, but she is a queen, and is also interested in all he hath. She hath a rich dowry according to his dignity and grandeur. So it is here, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours," 1Co 3:22. They have a right and title to all things that are Christ's. But how comes this to pass? See the next words, "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The word is theirs, the ministers of Christ are theirs; the ordinances and the promises are theirs, even all the promises are theirs; all that grace that is in Christ, that wisdom that is in Christ, is theirs, that have a real union with him, "My peace I give unto you." That grace that is in Christ, and that peace that flows from Christ, is theirs, that have union with him.

All a believer's wants shall therefore be supplied, and that richly too. Jesus Christ is not an unkind husband, (as you have heard,) but of a loving, generous, and bountiful spirit.

He is an unkind husband, that denies his dear wife anything which she needs, or hath the want of, to make her life comfortable unto her. "Woman (saith Christ,) be it to thee as thou wilt," Mt 15:28. Take what thou wilt. If David could say, "because the Lord was his Shepherd, he should not want," Ps 23:1, how much more may a saint say, the Lord is my husband, therefore I shall not want, because this relation is stronger, and more intimate, nearer and obliging. "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph 5:29-30.

He that communicates to us his own flesh to eat, and his blood to drink, he sure will withhold no good thing from us, which he knows will do us good. “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus,” Php 4:19, or by virtue of that union you have with him. Believers have manifold wants; they may say with David, the best of them, “I am poor and needy,” Ps 40:17.

A sincere Christian knows he is poor; he sees his wants. “I (saith Christ,) know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty,” Re 2:9. But contrariwise, a formal Christian, like the church of Laodicea, thinks himself rich, and increased in goods, and has need of nothing. But let the wants of believers be what they will, the Lord Jesus will see them all supplied. “They that fear the Lord, shall want no good thing,” Ps 34:10.

1. Do they want counsel? “Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory,” Ps 73:24.

2. Do they want wisdom? “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him,” Jas 1:5.

3. Do they want comfort? “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you,” Joh 14:18.

4. Do they want grace, more grace? “He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. He giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble,” Ps 84:11.

5. Do they want strength? “They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength.” “I will strengthen thee, I will uphold thee, by the right hand of my righteousness,” Isa 40:31.

6. Do they want healing? Christ is their Physician, as well as their Bridegroom, he hath the balm of Gilead. “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases,” Ps 103:3.

Sinner, sinner, thou hast many running sores, and dangerous wounds in thy soul; thy wounds stink, and are corrupt. “From the crown of thy head, to

the sole of thy foot, there is nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores,” Isa 1:5-6. But no sooner dost thou espouse Jesus Christ, but he will heal them all, and make thee whole; the lost soul he came to seek and to save, and the sick and wounded he came to heal; but if thou dost not believe in him, espouse him, thou wilt certainly perish eternally of thy wounds, and soul sickness; for nothing but an application of Christ’s blood by faith, can heal thee.

7. Dost thou want rest?* Art thou weary and heavy laden? Oh, then believe in Christ, come to Christ; though thy sins are never so heavy upon thee, though never so great a burden to thee, yet he will ease thee. “Come to me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he shall sustain thee,” Mt 11:28.

Nay, brethren, believers themselves have their burdens. “We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened,” 2Co 5:4. But Jesus hath already “borne all our grief, and carried our sorrows,” Isa 53:4.

1. Christ hath borne the burden of our sins; the guilt of all our sins were laid upon him. “The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.”

2. He hath borne the burden of our duties and obedience. That obedience God required of us, was a perfect conformity to the requirements of the holy law, which we were not able to do, that yoke we were not able to bear, but the Lord Jesus in our nature, and in our stead, hath borne it for us.

3. He hath also borne that sore and amazing burden of God’s wrath, which was due to us for our breach of the law, and that on purpose to free us, to deliver us, and all that do truly believe in him, from it for ever.

4. Nay, my brethren, Christ bears part of another burden of ours; I mean the burden of our afflictions and sorrows.

1. By way of sympathy, “He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” Heb 4:15.

2. He bears now our sorrows and burden of afflictions and infirmities, by succouring and supporting us. “Underneath are the everlasting arms,” De 33:27.

3. “By sweetening all our afflictions with his own gracious presence. “When thou passest through the water, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee,” Isa 43:3.

4. By teaching us by all our afflictions. We have not the rod of correction, without his gracious instruction.

5. By sanctifying all our afflictions to us, making them of great use and profit to our souls. “All things shall work together for good, to them that love God.”

6. By purging us thereby from all our filth and pollutions. Affliction is the furnace of Christ, in and by which, he refines his gold, and makes it more pure.

USE

Now, is it not (think you) a blessed thing to be in a state of union with Christ! Oh, that these things might move some of you, that are yet in your sins, to come to this wedding, and receive Jesus Christ! But I can go no further at this time.

SERMON VIII

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—Mt 22:2.

DOCT. That the great God hath sent his own Son to espouse poor sinners.

The argument I am upon to persuade sinners to espouse Jesus Christ, was taken from the happy and blessed effects that attend, or accompany the soul's marriage union with Christ. To proceed.

XI. Another effect of this union, is the blessing, and great privilege of adoption.

Marry the King's Son, and his Father will become your Father.

Brethren, that spirit which unites the soul to the Lord Jesus, is the spirit of adoption.

There are three ways, by which, (as J. conceive,) adoption comes in.

1. By a marriage with Christ.
2. By a grant, or free-gift.
3. By the Holy Spirit, which is the bond of this union.

The Holy Ghost, that unites us to Christ, (as I said,) is a Spirit of adoption. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," Ro 8:15. Compare this with that in Ga 4:6, "Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

"Because you are sons." They were sons by virtue of their union with Christ, and thereby partook of his holy nature, by regenerating grace. But yet this privilege of adoption is further confirmed and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, by the indwelling of the Spirit. The habits of grace gives us this privilege; yet it is the act, and exercise of grace, influencing the soul, that makes us cry, Abba, Father, or to plead this privilege.

Brethren, every believer hath the Spirit of adoption in him; but every believer cannot to the same degree of boldness, cry, Abba, Father. The reasons may be,

1. Because grace in some may be weak. A child new born, cannot cry, father, father, though e'er a short time; when grown up, it can do it: so it may be here.

2. In some others also, the Spirit may be grieved, and so may withdraw its testimony for a time, from such Christians, and they thereby may be left under many fears and doubts. Oh, how dangerous is it to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit of God, Eph 4:30.

3. Or it may be, because a child of God may be under great and grievous temptations; Satan may *get* much advantage against him, and weaken his hope and confidence in God, touching his union with Christ, and his adoption. Nay, many have not only been tempted and too far overcome, by Satan, but also been deserted by the Lord, as Herman, Job, and others. Job cried out, his hope was perished; and if you read the 88th Psalm, you may see the distresses upon this account of Heman.

4. The Holy Ghost is a free Agent, and therefore he may testify unto the soul its adoption, when he pleaseth, and sees occasion. And,

(1.) The Holy Spirit may suspend its testimony, to humble the soul; sometimes a saint may be lifted up, and then to bring him to the foot of Christ, the Holy Ghost may suspend its witnessing influences for a time. (2.) Or, the Holy Spirit may do it, to put a believer the more upon the use and exercise of grace. (3.) Or to cause the soul, the more to prize his testimony, as touching this high and sacred privilege.

5. A believer may have the Spirit of adoption, and cry Abba, Father, and yet want comfort; though the testimony may be strong, yet the troubles of the soul may be great. David calls upon his soul, and says, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him: who is the health of my countenance, and my God," Ps 42:11. He pleads his relation to God, though his comfort was gone. So in Isa 1:10.

2. The privilege of adoption, is by way of grant, or free gift; “to them gave he power or privilege, to become the sons of God,” Joh 1:12. But it is not given to any but to them only, that do receive and espouse Jesus Christ. “But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

One sign, or evidence of our adoption, is our regeneration, as the very next words show, “Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,” ver. 13.

Adoption and regeneration always go together; no soul is adopted, but he is also regenerated. Oh! this is a great and glorious privilege of ours: For,

1. To be children, is to lie near the Father’s heart, God loves his own children, which he hath adopted to himself, and hath begotten by his own word and Spirit. No father bath such a great love to his children, as the Lord bath unto his, “And hast loved them, as he hath loved me,” Joh 17:23. Considered as he is Mediator, with an inconceivable, unchangeable, tender, and an everlasting love.

2. To be cared for, and pitied as a father cares for, and pities his children, when they are afflicted, and in misery, “As a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him,” Ps 103:13.

3. To be fed at his own table; this privilege belongs to children, and to dwell in their Father’s house, they are allowed to dwell with God, and God dwelleth with them, “As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people,” 2Co 6:16.

4. To be taught and instructed by the Lord, as a father teacheth and instructeth his children. How careful was Abraham in doing this, with David and many others.

5. To be clothed by the Father.* A father clothes all his children at his own cost. So the holy God puts a glorious robe upon all his children, even the perfect righteousness of his own Son Jesus Christ. Our Elder Brother hath a garment wrought out for them all, that are his Father’s children, which the Holy Ghost puts upon them, and in which the Father always beholds them.

6. To be preserved and protected as children.* What father will suffer his children to be devoured, and torn to pieces, if he can defend them?

7. Heirship. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Ro 8:17. (It is not thus with all the children of an earthly prince, viz., they are not all co-heirs with the elder brother, (see Ga 4:7). Hence they serve God with filial fear and love.

XIV. Another effect of this union with Jesus Christ, is sanctification. "He that sanctifieth; and they that are sanctified, are all of one," Heb 2:11.

Brethren, there is a necessity of union of nature between the sanctifying Saviour, and the sanctified sinner. Our union with Christ and sanctification, is the effects of the hypostatical union of the two natures in the person of Christ. Every believer is justified by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. These are attributed to his taking our nature into union with his divine Person.

All the elect were then virtually taken into union with himself, in him, as their common Head and Representative. And, as the union of the divine nature, sanctified the human nature, in the Person of Christ, in the womb of the virgin, even so, when sinners (though unclean in themselves) are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, they are actually sanctified, and made holy. The Spirit, which is the bond of our union, on Christ's part, is a spirit of holiness, or of sanctification. And, like as it is impossible for the branch to bear like fruit with the vine, until it is grafted into the vine, so it is impossible for sinners to be holy, or to bring forth the fruits of holiness and sanctification, until they are grafted into him, by the Spirit, and faith.

By this also, we may know, whether we have attained to the blessing of union. "Such were some of you, but ye are washed and sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1Co 16:11.

Though a person may be never so filthy, and unclean before his union with Christ, yet this union doth not leave him filthy, and polluted; for as he hath the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, to his justification, and remission of sin, so he hath also received the Holy Spirit, creating in his soul new habits, and gracious dispositions, by which he is enabled, and influenced, to die unto sin, and so to live unto God.

XII. Another blessed effect of union with Christ, is free access unto the throne of grace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Ro 5:1. Not justified before, or without faith; nor being justified, and by faith have peace in our conscience (as some would have the text be read, (falsely placing the point at justified) but, being justified by faith, &c., respecting the object, faith apprehendeth, or applies; we have peace with God, through the obedience, or righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The effect of this is here opened by the apostle. (1.) Peace with God. (2.) Access unto God, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. (3.) And, rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

A person may be reconciled to his prince, and yet not be admitted into his presence: he may not at any time have free access to him.

Or, if he should have such access, yet he may not have his petition heard, and all his wants and necessities answered, but believers have this free access to God, through Jesus Christ. They may "come with boldness to the throne of grace," Heb 4:16; and also, always speed when they come, "In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by faith and love," Eph 3:12, in whom, or being united to him.

1. May boldly, or freely come; come to God, as unto a Father.

2. May have free liberty of speech, even such words, as becomes a child that approaches the presence of such a dread majesty.

3. With an assurance of having his ear opened, to our just and righteous requests and petitions.

4. Have also a ready answer, if they ask in Christ's name, such things that are according to the will of God, provided they ask in faith, believingly, and in love to the honour of God.

And this not only for themselves, but for others also. God would hear his servant Job, for his three friends, when he would not hear them for themselves, "My servant Job shall pray for you, and him will I accept," &c., Job 42:8.

Some are greater favourites in the court of heaven than others, or are more accepted, or better beloved, than other saints may be, or in a better frame than others are; or they may have more faith.

How ready was king Ahasuerus to hear Esther; “What wilt thou, queen Esther? what is thy request? It shall be given thee, to the half of the kingdom,” Es 5:3. Believers being the spouse of Christ, have a wonderful interest and acceptation in the court of heaven.

(1.) Because the way, by which they come by it, is that new and living way, God hath consecrated through the vail, that is to say, Christ’s flesh; he procured this free access for us, by his own blood. (2.) Because Jesus Christ hath also purchased all things they want for them, at such a dear rate. (3.) Because they are so near and dear to Christ, and to the Father, through him. (4.) Because the Holy Spirit frames all their desires and helps, and influenceth them in all the good and just petitions. “We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered,” Ro 8:26. (5.) Because God hath laid himself under gracious promises to hear them, and to give them all things they need.

(6.) Because they are invited to come with boldness; they are required to come, and draw near to God. (7.) Because Jesus Christ himself, is always at the Father’s right-hand, to take their requests, and offer them up to God, with the most sweet odours of his own intercession, Re 5:8.

XIV. Another effect of the soul’s union with Christ, is a victory over all our enemies, whether within or without. Jesus Christ hath overcome them all, not only for himself, but for all that are his; “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,” Joh 16:33.

1. Christ’s victory was ours;* he overcame as the Captain of our salvation. He overcame sin and we in him. He overcame temptations, yea, all its allurements, when Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world; and we then overcame the world in him. He overcame death as our Head and Husband, and we also overcame death in him.

2. Moreover, we actually are made conquerors, through our union with him. Faith is, my brethren, a victorious grace, “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith,” 1Jo 5:4.

By partaking of his Spirit, we are partakers of his strength. Hence we are said to be “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power,” Col 1:11. Faith makes us victorious, as it did the worthies of old, over all worldly desires, fears, hopes, and joys, which are the great hindrance of our obedience to God, i.e., the instrument, the weapon, by which we overcome, and virtually includes in it this victory, as the effect includes the cause, is our faith, which in our union is planted in our hearts; and thus we “are in Christ, more than conquerors,” Rom, 8:11.

His victory gave all the elect a full assurance of overcoming, and hence a believer may triumph over death and the grave, “Oh, death! where is thy sting? Oh, grave! where is thy victory?” 1Co 15:56-57.

XV. Another effect of our union with Christ is, a clear and full manifestation, or a saving knowledge of the Lord, “I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.” This is the great promise of the new covenant, by which we become the Lord’s. “They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord,” Jer 31:34.

In this covenant we are married to Jesus Christ, and this is the effect of our conjugal union. Christ will hide nothing from his spouse, that is for her good, and his own glory. All things “that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you,” Joh 15:15.

Some have only the light of nature afforded them; they know no more of God, than the visible things of the creation teacheth them, by the help of their natural reason.

Others have the light of common gifts and grace; they have the written word, and great light by those gifts of knowledge Christ hath endowed them with.

But believers have the saving light and knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, which is life eternal.

XVI. Another effect of this blessed union, is fruitfulness in grace, and in all the fruits of righteousness. No man can bring forth fruits or product of grace, before the habits of grace are implanted in their souls; nor are those habits implanted in any soul, but in those only that are united to Christ:

“Wherefore brethren, we also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him that was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God,” Ro 7:4.

It appears evident,* that one special end, as well as an effect of this marriage union, is fruitfulness, as it is among men: first marriage, and then fruit, as the effect of it, in a natural way: as grafting into the stock must precede the partaking of the sap, so as to bring forth fruit, so we must be united to Christ in a spiritual way, before we can bear spiritual fruit. Nature may bring forth the fruits of morality, (as it did in some of the old heathens) but the fruits of the Spirit is the product of supernatural grace. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, faith, temperance Ga 5:22. A little to open each of these.

Love. That is, the effects of union, love to God, and Jesus Christ; love to the church of God, to the interest of God, and to the truth of God. Moreover, love to all men.

Joy. This denotes that full and sweet satisfaction the soul of a believer hath, in this his happy union, or marriage with Christ, he or she, being unspeakably delighted in it, esteeming it their chiefest and greatest good and happiness: “Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,” 1Pe 1:8.

Peace. Or, quietude of mind and conscience; they had, and all believers have peace with God. Moreover, peace here, denotes a peaceable temper to all the saints, or in peace they possess their souls.

Long-suffering. This is opposed to seeking revenge, or retaining prejudice in our hearts to any brother; bearing and forbearing with each other; suffering wrong, rather than seeking to right ourselves in an undue way or manner.

Gentleness and goodness, viz., Sweetness, and kindness of temper, by which we avoid all hard-heartedness, and uncharitableness to each other; mutually endeavouring to accommodate ourselves so one to another, that we may be helpful to each other on all occasions.

Faith. I take this to refer to faithfulness, in keeping our covenant with God, and his church; and our word and promise in all our commerce and dealings one with another, and with all men.

Meekness. This denotes humbleness of mind; “learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart,” Mt 11:29. This grace is opposed to pride, haughtiness of mind, and selfconceitedness; as also to wrath and undue anger and passion.

Temperance, viz., A sober use of the creature, and all creature enjoyments; not having our hearts set upon them in an inordinate manner. “But I say unto you, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as if they had none, ver. 29, And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy, as though they possessed not. And they that use this world, as not abusing it, because the fashion of this world passeth away,” 1Co 7:29.

Oh I Christians, see to it; these blessed fruits of grace are the effects which all those who have a real union with Christ, experience.

XVII. Final perseverance is also an effect of union with Christ.

1. This happy union tends to make Christ,* and all believers, but one mystical body, or one mystical Christ; and should he lose one member, he would have an imperfect body; “we are all members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” Eph 5:30. Will a man suffer the members of his body to be torn to pieces, and lost for ever, if he hath power or wisdom to preserve them? Or, hath Christ less love to the members of his mystical body, than a man hath of the members of his natural body?

2. This union must preserve every believer from final apostasy, or else the prayer of our blessed Lord was not heard and answered. “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”

3. If the union betwixt the Father and Jesus Christ, be indissolvable, then the union betwixt Christ, and all true believers, is indissolvable; but the former is true, therefore the latter is true also: “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one,” Joh 17:23.

4. If the seed remains in all that are in a state of union with Christ, then not one of them can fall finally away, but the seed remains; therefore they cannot finally fall; “the seed remains, they cannot sin because they are born of God,” 1Jo 3:9.

5. Christ’s love to, and care of his spouse, is such, that they cannot finally perish. His love is unchangeable, and abiding; besides, he betroths all which he betroths for ever.

XVIII. The resurrection to eternal life, at the last day, is likewise an effect of this glorious union. “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you,” Ro 8:11. Both body and soul of a believer is in union with Christ, and as all the elect by virtue of Christ’s resurrection, are, and shall be raised in their spirits, to a taste of spiritual life, so also all their bodies shall be raised at the last day, or else a whole Christ shall not be raised; “for as in Adam all die; so even in Christ shall all be made alive,” 1Co 15:22.

Brethren, as all the first Adam’s seed, or all that stood in union with him die, so all the second Adam’s seed, or all that stand in a state of union with him, shall be raised to eternal life, at the last day, by virtue of that union. True, all the ungodly shall also be raised, but not by virtue of union with Christ, because they never were in him; but they shall be raised by virtue of the mighty power of Christ, not in mercy, but in wrath.

XIX. Glorification also is an effect of our union with Christ. He, as our Fore-runner, is already glorified in heaven, and we in him, as our head; and we shall actually be glorified with him also, at the resurrection day, both body and soul: “And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one,” Joh 17:22. That glory the Father hath given unto Christ, he gives by promise to all his, and will actually bestow upon them: for whom he “justified, them also he glorified.”

XX. As an effect of union with Jesus Christ, believers shall be in the same place with Christ. This is that which they long for, and it shall be granted unto them. Shall not the husband, and his dear wife, and beloved spouse dwell together? “Father. I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory,” Joh 17:24. And again he saith, “where I am, there shall my servant be.”

APPLICATION

1. From hence we may infer, that by virtue of this union with Christ, believers are delivered from all things that are evil, whether here or hereafter; and are, and shall be possessed with all things that are truly and eternally good; i.e., grace here and glory hereafter.

2. And then, is it not, oh ye sinners, your true and only interest, and highest concernment, to espouse the Lord Jesus?

3. Moreover, it tends further to aggravate the sin and folly of all those who make light of this marriage supper.

4. Also from hence, may all believers receive no small comfort and consolation. What tongue can express their happiness? nay, what heart can conceive of it? lift up your heads ye saints that are dejected; why do you mourn, ye princely ones? what glory are you heirs of! oh, be not troubled, though your state, at present, is mean and low, Christ hath espoused you, “and when he appeareth, ye shall also appear with him in glory,” Col 3:3.

But so much at this time.

SERMON IX

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.—Mt 22:2.

DOCTRINE

That the great God hath sent his own Son, to espouse poor sinners.

That it is (you have heard) the sinner's highest concernment to accept of Christ, and believe in Christ, or to espouse the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, I shall show you how, or by what ways and means, the soul's marriage union with Jesus Christ, is accomplished, or brought about.

1st. Note this by the way, that it is effected, or brought about by all the three persons of the blessed Trinity.

First, the spring, or original cause of it, is the love of God the Father; the Father from everlasting loved all those that are espoused by Christ.

This marriage union doth not depend on the will, and good pleasure of man, not on the creature. No, for shall the corrupt will of man, be the rule of God's will? Some tell you, if the creature will receive Christ, then God will move in a way of grace and favour towards him. After this notion Jesus Christ might have no spouse at all, nay, his death might prove to be in vain.

2. This union is wrought by the free gift, or donation of God the Father. The Father gives all those to the Son, which he espouseth. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me," Joh 6:37.

Secondly, this marriage relation is wrought out, or effected, by the Son of God, who doth espouse poor sinners.

1. By Christ's recommending his infinite, and inconceivable love to the sons and daughters of men; his early love, even from everlasting.

Brethren, Jesus Christ readily accepted of his Father's choice; nay, his love was as early set upon lost sinners, as the Father's. "His delight was with the sons of men," Pr 8:31. The sinner doth not first fall in love with Jesus

Christ, and so their love draws forth his love to them. No, that cannot be, for when Christ loved us, we hated him; our hearts naturally were filled full of enmity against God, and Jesus. “Now, when I passed by I looked upon thee, and thy time was the time of love. And I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine,” Eze 16:8.

This was the time of Christ’s love, he first looked upon us, and had pity on us, and cast his skirt over us, which was his own robe of righteousness. His look on us begets faith in our souls, by which we apprehend, and take hold of him. “Then I washed thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and anointed thee with oil,” ver. 9.

Union with Christ by means of his death, or by which the law becomes dead to us and we to that

2. Christ brings it about by his death. All were under the curse of the law, to which every soul of man was married, in a covenant of works; which covenant could not be dissolved, and the sinner be delivered from this their first husband, but by the death of Jesus Christ. “But now being delivered from the law, that being dead, wherein we were held,” Ro 7:6. And to to this end (as he showeth) “That we might be married to another, even to him that God raised from the dead,” &c., ver. 4. Nay, my brethren, the law is not only dead by the death of Christ, (as it was a covenant of works) but by his death, i.e., by the effects thereof, we are become dead to the law also, “Ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ.”

We now see, that there is no relief, no help, no justification, nor eternal life, by the works of the law, “Sin revived,” Ro 7:9. And thus is this glorious union wrought and accomplished by Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus Christ worketh about this union, by his own free offer, or tender of himself, and his infinite love to sinners in the gospel. He makes a free offer of himself, with all his benefits, to every one that will, or hath a heart to receive and embrace him. “If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink,” Joh 7:37. “Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” Mt 11:28. “He that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out,” Joh 6:36. The Lord Jesus stands with his arms spread open, to receive all that come to him. He says, “Behold me, behold me, look to me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth.”

Thirdly, this union with Christ, is more immediately effected by the Spirit, or by the Third Person of the Trinity. It is, my brethren, the more immediate work and office of the Holy Ghost, to unite sinners to the blessed Jesus; as the Father gave the Son for us, and as the Son died and shed his blood for us, so the Holy Spirit makes his blood to become effectual and efficacious to us.

1. It is the work and office of the Spirit, to enlighten the eyes of poor blind sinners, to behold their woful condition by nature, and to convince them of the evil of sin. As also to behold a transcendent beauty and excellency in Jesus Christ.

2. The Holy Spirit doth it, by infusing new and gracious habits in their souls.

3. By breaking them off from that obligation to their former husband, the law, under which they lay; destroying all hope and expectation of justification by the law, or any righteousness of their own.

4. By causing the poor convinced sinner to die to sin, and so to divorce them from all their old lovers, i.e., “The lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life.”

5. The Holy Spirit doth not only enlighten their understandings, and convince their consciences, but also he bows and bends their stubborn and rebellious wills, which would not yield to accept of Christ, nor subject unto him, but by the working of his Almighty power.

6. The Holy Spirit doth it by working faith in their souls. No man can believe in Christ, receive Christ, or espouse him; But as the Spirit helps them so to do. “By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,” Eph 2:8.

Brethren, it is given to us to believe; nay, the Holy Spirit works faith in us, after the same manner that God wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead; “It is according to the working of his mighty power,” Eph 1:18-19.

7. By his shedding abroad the love of Christ “in our hearts,” Eph 5:5. Love to Christ is not the product of nature; believers do not love him with a mere human love, but with a divine love. Love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, or it is a supernatural grace, (we have heard of love-powder, and I know not what) you may be sure the seed of the Spirit in the heart of a sinner, is like unto spiritual love-powder; I mean, this grace works in us physically, causing the soul as soon as it sees Jesus Christ by an eye of faith, to fall in love with him; they cannot but love him, it is a happy effect of a blessed cause.

8. By causing the sinner to choose Christ as the best good, in heaven and earth; and not to take him only as his Saviour, but also as his Head, Husband, and only Sovereign, and blessed Prophet, to be taught and led by him in all things.

9. By discovering to the soul the necessity of Christ, and that there is no salvation but in Christ, and so to build on him alone; and not only to close with him in the first act of faith, but helps the soul to commit itself to Jesus Christ, and wholly to trust and depend upon him for all supplies, continually in all things, as the wife depends upon her husband. To believe in Christ, is to live upon him, to rest on him, and to cleave to him, as the only Beloved of our affections.

1. Faith is set forth by the actings of our senses, viz., seeing him, hearing him, tasting him. “Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good.” By feeling him in his powerful influences, and love-drawing operations; by smelling the sweet odour of his divine grace; his very name by the Spirit, is as an ointment poured out.

2. Faith is also set forth by the actings of our mind, or by the actings of the internal powers of the soul, viz., by desiring Christ, by longing for, by resolving not to cease until we find and enjoy him, by knowing him; to believe in him, and knowing him, the very same thing is meant; and also by putting our trust in him.

10. The Holy Spirit is so great an Agent, in bringing about this union, that he helps the soul wholly to make a resignation of itself to Christ, so as no longer to be its own, but the Lord’s.

APPLICATION

1. Exhort. To love Christ, and cleave to him, and there are mighty motives to persuade sinners to do this.

1. Consider what pangs of divine wrath his precious soul endured! Christ comes to woo sinners in his Moody garments. Behold his hands, his feet, and his bleeding side, he comes to woo you, to entreat you, to open to him, to receive him, and to espouse him, through a sea of blood, yea, of his own blood.

2. Consider his long-suffering, his coming, standing, knocking, and calling upon you at your doors. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," Re 3:20. Wonder, O ye heavens! See the King at the poor beggar's door! The Creator is come to court and woo the sorry creature, and yet is not regarded! There the Lord stands, cries, calls, knocks, and yet the sinner will not open the door, nor cry out, "Oh! who is at my door?" Song 5:6.

3. Ponder how importunate Christ is. His long standing, even till his head is wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. His love in calling, intreating, beseeching sinners to embrace him, surely should move you. No lover, certainly, useth more sweet solicitations and persuasions, to obtain the love of a virgin, than Jesus Christ doth use to obtain your affections: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters," Isa 55:1-2.

4. Consider and ponder, his complaining and weeping, when he sees sinners refuse him; "He was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts," Mr 3:5. Again, how doth he complain? "My people will not hearken unto me; Israel will have none of me," Ps 81:11. "I have stretched out my hand all the day long, to a stiff-necked and rebellious people, which walked in a way that was not good," Isa 65:2.

1. Consider these his mournful expostulations, when he is ready to be gone, show's how importunate he is, to embrace sinners in the arms of his love and mercy. "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned in me, and my repentings are kindled together."

2. His most earnest and most importunate desire to be received by sinners, appears also by these promises of grace, and pardon, he hath made to all that believe in him. "Behold thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest, only acknowledge thine iniquity," Jer 3:5. "Let the wicked

forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon,” Isa 55:7-8. “All manner of sins and blasphemy against the Father and the Son, shall be forgiven unto men,” Mr 3:28-29.

3. Consider those threatenings he denounces against such that do condemn him, and proceed on in their wicked ways.

Brethren, it is cursed rebellion not to receive and embrace this your sovereign, or to refuse to come to his feast: “They shall not taste of my supper.” That is, such shall have no pardon, no peace, no Saviour, no mercy. “He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,” 1Jo 5:12. And again he saith, “But those mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them forth, and slay them before me,” Lu 19:27.

4. Consider that Christ’s love is a matchless love. Oh, see his infinite goodness and condescension, how is he set upon the espousing of lost and undone sinners! Know, O soul, though thou art never so low, base and vile, yet Jesus Christ will accept of thee; they are the halt, the lame, the blind, and the maimed, that are received into his embraces. Though thou art one of the poor of this world, and art clothed with rags, or attended with never so great outward poverty, or art inwardly deformed and filthy, even as black as sin and hell can make thee, yet if thou come to him, he will receive thee as freely and as readily as if thou wast the highest monarch in the world.

It is not the greatness of thine iniquity, nor the multitude of them, nor thy former refusals of him, that can obstruct this thy happy union with him, if thou comest now to this wedding-supper. It is not thy former revolting, or backsliding from him, that can hinder it; may be thou art one that hast some time since strong convictions, and thou hast lost them, or hast made a profession of the gospel, but art backslidden, yet fear not, see what he says; go, and proclaim these words, “And say, return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquities,” Jer 3:12-13.

II. From hence I also infer, that it is no easy thing for a poor sinner to fall in love with Jesus Christ. It is not in the power of man’s will, to tie this conjugal knot, or unite his heart to the Lord Jesus, but it must be by the

agency of the mighty God, or by the power of the Holy Spirit; all moral persuasions, though never so strong and powerful, cannot do it any good, no, we must be drawn to Christ by the Father, and by the effectual influences of the Holy Ghost, if ever we are united to Jesus Christ, the Spirit is the bond of this union.

2. Exhort.] Sinners, labour to come to this marriage feast. Attend upon the means, cry to God to send the Spirit to incline your hearts, bow your wills, change your affections.

1. Consider thy refusal of Christ, is a great sin, yea the greatest sin.

1. It is a sin against the highest and most sublime, and amazing wisdom of God the Father, who found out this way to make fallen men happy for ever.

2. It is a sin against the highest goodness of God, that was ever manifested: in this was the love of God manifest, “that he sent his own Son into the world, that we might live through him,” 1Jo 4:9.

3. It is a sin against the only remedy God hath provided.

5. It is the highest act of disobedience against God, who commands thee to believe on his Son.

6. This refusal of Christ, doth east the highest contempt upon the Lord Jesus, and tends to stain his glory. What, wilt thou prefer thy lusts, above the Lord Jesus Christ?

7. It is the soul-damning sin; “He that believeth not is condemned already,” Joh 3:18.

DIRECTIONS

It may not be amiss, if I give you a few directions, about your closing with Christ, or espousing of him.

1. See it is the person of Christ you fall in love with, it must be for what Christ is, not for what he hath; many eye more the portion, than the person, but how shameful a thing is that, in the sight of all men!

2. You must espouse a whole Christ, not Jesus only, a Saviour, but Christ the Lord; not simply accept of him, or receive him, as a priest to die for you, but as a king to rule in you, and to reign over you; and as he is a Prophet to teach, guide and lead you. It is thus he is offered in the gospel.

3. Join nothing with Christ. You must espouse a single Christ, Christ alone; not Christ and Moses, not Christ and your own righteousness; no, you must not trust in Christ, and in inherent grace; not join, in point of justification, the graces of the Spirit, with the righteousness of Christ. Faith itself is no part of the matter of our justification before God, if your faith be trusted in, and relied upon as any part or procuring cause of your acceptance, and justification at God's bar, you will appear no better than an adulteress; Christ will not endure any to be a co-rival, or competitor with him. As he takes us in our rags, without any previous qualifications, or as bare, and simple sinners, so we must take him as a bare and simple Saviour, joining nothing of our own, or anything that is ours, with him.

4. You must receive a whole Christ with a whole heart, as a whole Christ comprehend all his offices, so a whole heart comprehended all our faculties: "My son, give me thy heart," not a part of it, but all of it; "thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy strength their heart is divided, now they shall be found faulty.

5. You must espouse the Lord Jesus immediately, not delay, but forsake your other lovers, before they leave you; some would have Christ when they can sin no longer; the present time is the season Christ hath chosen, and he loves young people, your youthful days; "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me," Pr 8:17. The fat is the Lord's, that is, the best of the sacrifice, the best of your days, of your love, and of your strength.

6. You must come up to Christ's terms, though they may seem never so hard to the flesh, thou must pull out a right eye, and cut off a right-hand; thou must deny thyself; and take up thy cross and follow him, not one Delilah must be spared, no sin indulged, or connived at, or lived in.

Terror. What will you do that condemn, despise, and reject the Lord Jesus, or make light of this marriage-feast? You that love the world, love your sins, or anything else above Jesus Christ; what will you do when death comes, and in the day of judgment? O know, ye sinners, that such are cursed, who

love not the Lord Jesus! "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Let him be a curse till the Lord comes; such are cursed both living and dying, and for ever.

Consol. To you that are espoused to Jesus Christ, what comfort and consolation may this afford and administer: O what a choice have you made! Or rather Christ hath made of you! What princess is thus honoured! What is all the preferment that an earthly king can raise any unto this honour! You are espoused to the son of this sublime, this noble and mighty King!

Your Husband is coming, and the marriage day is now very near: how sweet will that meeting be in the air, when you shall lie in the bosom of the blessed Jesus for ever: "We shall be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall ever be with the Lord," 1Th 4:17.

"Behold the Bridegroom comes," Mt 25:6, prepare to meet him (get ready) this turns all our water into wine; never rest O believer, until thou canst say, my "Beloved is mine, and I am his." Thus I close with this point of doctrine.

SERMON X

And all things are ready, come to the marriage. Come, for all things are now ready.—
Mt 22:4; Lu 14:17.

MATTHEW calls it a dinner, and St. Luke, a supper. The one may allude to the dispensation of gospel grace by the prophets, they being the first servants that were sent to invite sinners to this wedding. And the other may refer to the dispensation of the gospel, in the last age of the world; which may, perhaps, from thence, be called a supper: or, the one to the beginning of the gospel-feast, and the other to the latter end of it.

In these words are four parts.

1. Plentiful provisions prepared: “All things are ready.”

2. An invitation: “Come.”

3. The nature and design of the feast explained. “Come to the marriage.” Not to a common, or ordinary feast, but to a marriage, viz., To feed by faith on Christ, or to espouse Jesus Christ.

4. A strong motive, denoting speed, to come presently: “For all things are [now] ready.”

Doct. The blessings of the covenant of grace, or union with Christ, contains in it, all sorts of spiritual dainties, as a sumptuous feast, ready prepared, to which sinners are invited.

Here I shall do (God assisting) five things.

1. Show, why the blessings of the gospel, or union with Christ, is compared to such a feast.

2. Show you, what those things are, that this marriage feast doth consist of, which are said to be all ready; or, what that denotes.

3. Show you, the nature of those things, of which this feast doth consist.

4. Show, what is meant by coming, and what is required of them that come.

5. Show you, who they are, that may be said to come, and eat of this feast.

1. The blessings of the gospel, or of union with Christ, may be compared to a great feast, a marriage feast.

I. From the glorious design or end of it. A feast, a noble marriage feast is prepared upon a high design, even the marriage of the king's son: therefore the provision of such a feast, such a banquet, is prepared upon a high and great design.

Consider, was there ever a higher, a more glorious design than this! What, the marriage of the Son of God to poor sinners! No dinner, or supper can be provided on any occasion, equal to this. Every king and nobleman, prepares a marriage feast for his son, according to his greatness and high grandeur, and the magnificence of his son. Now, brethren, God is no petty prince, but the great King of heaven and earth, to whom all earthly kings owe subjection, and homage. Sirs! All the mighty and chief monarchs of this world, are but subjects of this King; and his Son is heir of all things, as well as "He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," Heb 1:3; and all things are given into his hand. Therefore, in respect of the design of this supper, it may be compared to a marriage feast, yea, and the noblest and most glorious that ever was, viz.,

To join heaven and earth together, the great Creator, and the undone sinner; or, to bring mankind into a lasting union, and near relation unto God.

II. A feast, such a marriage feast, where multitudes of poor subjects, or rather traitors and rebels are invited, denotes the highest bounty, generosity, mercy, and goodness, that a king can show, as to offer to marry his own Son, to such a person so unworthy of such favour and honour.

So, my brethren, this marriage of Christ the Son of God to sinners holds forth infinite grace, mercy, and rich bounty, even to the admiration of men and angels. What king did ever offer to marry his own son, to an enemy, to a cursed rebel and traitor, that had conspired to dethrone him?

III. A king that makes a marriage feast for his own son, thereby clearly shows, his hearty consent, it being made at his own charge. So God the Father shows his hearty consent and approbation, as to his Son's espousing and marrying of sinners, since he (as you have heard) doth not only provide all things for this feast, at his own charge, but also sends his servants to invite the guests. The love of the Son doth not exceed the love of the Father.

IV. A princely marriage feast consisteth not only of all choice meats, or rich dainties to be eat, but also of the choicest wines to be drunk. We read that at the marriage feast in Cana in Galilee, they had wine, though the best was reserved unto the last. So, brethren, at this spiritual banquet God hath provided in the gospel, at the marriage of his Son, are all things that are desirable to eat, and that too in a plentiful manner; "There is bread enough, and to spare, in my Father's house," Lu 15:17. But much more for the marriage day, and also the finest and best he hath. Jesus Christ, under the name of wisdom, saith, "Eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled," Pr 9:5. Alas, sirs, you that are unbelievers, never eat of such bread, nor drank of such wine in all your lives; "Why do you labour for that which is not bread," Isa 55:2. That which cannot feed and satisfy your soul. Here is bread indeed, meat indeed, drink indeed; all sorts of meat, such that suits with all ranks, degrees, ages, and appetites of men; as babes, young men, and fathers; "If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink," Joh 7:37; Song 1:2.

V. At the marriage of an earthly prince, there is no want of any thing that can be desired, to feed, to delight, and to satisfy all that come. So in this marriage supper, there is no want of any thing that the soul needs: all things are here ready, the best of the whole kingdom may be expected to be had at the marriage feast of the king's son. So, here is the best of heaven, even all the choicest rarities and dainties, which are no where else to be had. A table is here richly spread, to the astonishment of the holy angels. Take a short view of those rarities on which you are to feed.

1. Here we feed by faith on the mystery of God's amazing wisdom; his wisdom in a mystery, that was hid from ages and generations: "That hidden wisdom that God ordained before the world, unto our glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew," 1Co 2:7-8. In another place it is called, "The knowledge of Christ in a mystery; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs of the same body, and partakers of his promise, in Christ by the gospel," Eph 3:4.

This is a choice dish, here we feed on that infinite wisdom of God, in the contrivance of the way of our salvation by Jesus Christ, and of our redemption through his blood.

Here we see how God hath defeated the devil in his hellish contrivances, in his overthrowing and ruining mankind. And how God hath not only displayed in our redemption, the attribute of his wisdom, but also the glory of all his other blessed attributes, and caused them to meet together in sweet harmony.

2. Here we also feed on the sweet dish of God's eternal council, purpose, and decree, before the world began. His cabinet councils, (if I may so say, with reverence) are here opened at this marriage feast, before our eyes; "Which from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ," Eph 3:9-10. In which are so great and sublime rarities, that the principalities and powers in heavenly places, greatly desire to feed with you herein, as they are made known by the church, even the manifold wisdom of God. Though they are not concerned in marrying of Jesus Christ, (he not taking hold of the nature of angels) yet they are greatly affected with the secret wisdom and counsel of God, as it is here revealed.

3. Here also poor sinners by faith, may feed on the infinite love of God the Father, and on the love of Jesus Christ, which passeth knowledge.

4. Moreover, here they may feed on the Antitype of all those Jewish feasts, and legal sacrifices, which were under the law. They had many feasts which were types of this marriage feast; they had the shell, but we have the kernel; they the shadow, we the substance.

5. Here sinners may feed on the true manna that came down from heaven, which far exceeds that which the fathers eat of in the wilderness, and are dead, "but he that eats of this manna, shall live for ever." Here also at this marriage supper you may drink of the antitypical water that came out of the rock, which is of admirable virtue, and sweet to the taste.

6. Here sinners may feed on those precious dainties, which kings and good men of old longed for, but it was denied them in that manner as we in gospel-days have it. They saw Christ's day but darkly. They beheld this marriage supper afar off, as it is solemnized in these days, it prophesied as a

thing to come, “In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make a feast,” &c., Isa 25:6.

7. The King hath now, as it were opened his princely closet of his choicest rarities, and brings forth all his delicate sweet-meats, and bids us eat. Jesus Christ takes now his spouse into his banqueting-house; “This is the day of the gladness of his heart.” Here we sit with the King, and behold him in his arms, whilst we are ravished with his love.

Union and communion tasted of at this marriage feast. Wine of consolation at this supper

8. Here we feed on the blessings of union and communion, with the Father, and the Son, and have the fellowship of the Spirit, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

9. Here we drink of the wine of consolation, which those who taste of, soon forget their sorrows. Here we eat the bread of reconciliation, and drink the wine of free justification, and adoption. Here we fed on the sweet-meat of pardon of sin, all past, present, and to come; and on peace of conscience, which is a continual feast.

10. Here sinners may taste of those heavenly dainties, which the glorified saints partake of in abundance, in the celestial paradise; though our vessels can take in but a little of it, though theirs are enlarged, yet believers here, partake of the same joys, the same in quality, though not as to degree, or quantity. This, my brethren, is that “Feast of fat things, a feast of wine upon the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined,” Isa 25:6.

This feast, saith our late Annotator, is made up with the most exquisite delicate provisions, which are manifestly meant of the ordinances, graces, and comforts, given by the Lord to his saints.

11. As this marriage feast consists of the choicest rarities, and varieties of heaven, so it is also all free. It is free to sinners, free to the receivers, but costly to the Provider and Founder of it. It cost the Father dear, and the Son dear; but all that are bid and invited, are not to pay one farthing for any thing. Sometimes people that come to a feast, are sumptuously entertained, but yet may not know what bill may be brought them; but when the master

of the feast says, "Gentlemen, you are all heartily welcome, but here is not a farthing to pay." This makes them cheerful. Even so it is here, God bids all that come to this feast, Welcome; but it is all of his own free grace; "Wine and milk without money," &c., Isa 55:1-2. A poor sinner may say with Peter and John, "Silver and I gold have I none." Yet he may come to this wedding, and eat freely. Oh! what a dishonour indeed would it be to a king, that bids you to the marriage feast of his Son, should any of you bring something of your own, and set it upon his table, in the midst of his dainties! How would he frown upon you, should you do this, and say, Who brought this hither? Am I not able to entertain you with my own, but you must bring your paltry stuff? Let those who are tainted with the errors of Arminianism, or Baxterianism, think of this, who strive to mix the King's wine with their muddy water, or mix their polluted works with God's free grace. How doth he loathe their notions of free will, and their own righteousness! Do they think to be the more welcome at this wedding, because, forsooth they would, through the pride of their base hearts, help God, and bear some part of the charge of this feast? As if the Almighty Jehovah, was not rich or able enough, to do all Himself alone! Oh! how fain would sorry man have somewhat to boast of, and glory in, of their own, and God not have the whole honour of our salvation?

VI. A wedding dinner of a prince is prepared in the king's own house, in his palace; so this feast is prepared and made in God's holy mountain, in his church; "Sion is God's habitation," it is the King's palace, "In Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Sion," Ps 76:2. "This is my dwelling-place for ever, here will I dwell," Ps 132:14. Thither, sinners, you must go, thither you are invited, if you would eat of this supper; "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people, a feast of fat things," Isa 25:6.

The church, beloved, is Christ's banqueting house, or his house of wine; "He hath made us sit down together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." Do you, sinners, think to feed with the saints, and eat of this supper, whilst you remain without? This marriage is not kept abroad in the market-place, in the open air of this world. You must not expect any choice entertainment by the king, if you come not to court. True, some that come to the door only, may, perhaps have a small morsel from the king's table; so some sinners that never come up to God's terms to espouse Christ, have the ministry of the word; they may taste of that, though they feed not freely on it, nor of Christ in it. I do not say, none can feed on this feast, but such that are of this, or that particular church; but, however, they must be members of the mystical

church, of the universal church. But they that are convinced, it is their indispensable duty, to join with the visible church, and have an opportunity so to do, it may be feared, if they sin against conscience, whether they shall ever taste of the King's supper.

VII. A marriage feast is prepared for such that are invited; and a king is at liberty to bid or invite whom he pleaseth; all is at his own sovereign pleasure. Is he bound to bid all that dwell in his dominions? No, surely, if any of you make a marriage feast for son or daughter, you are at liberty to invite whom you will; nor can any justly censure you, because you do not invite all that dwell in your parish. So it is here, in this respect, no man treats himself, invites himself, but it is God's prerogative to bid whomsoever he pleaseth, though many that are invited, do not, will not come; yet none can come but such that are called by the Gospel. True, "many are called, but few are chosen." But God doth not call all nations, all the world have not the gospel preached to them; no, many dark regions of the earth never heard the joyful sound. Though we hear it in England, few ever heard it in India; the antichristian world, the Mahometan world, and the Pagan world have it not, and, is God therefore unjust? God forbid. Is he deprived of that liberty of his own will, which, in such a case, none can deny unto man? May not God act from his own sovereignty, and do what he pleaseth? "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Mt 20:15. And, though God is pleased to afford the gospel to England, yet all in this nation are not invited, no, not all of this city, of this and that town, or parish, nor all of this or that family. See what God says, "I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and bring you to Sion," Jer 3:14. He called and invited Abraham of old, but left the rest of his kindred and father's house in gross idolatry. Was he unjust, to choose the nation of the Jews, and leave all the Gentile nations in blindness? Oh, that these things were well considered! Brethren, God might have refused to send his Son to espouse one of Adam's race; he might justly have suffered all to perish in their sins. "I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," Ro 9:15.

VIII. A marriage feast denotes a time of joy and mirth. If music and merriment be ever lawful to be used, it is at a wedding.

So this marriage feast doth hold forth a time of greatest joy to sinners. Should a prince court a poor virgin, and set the marriage day, and invite her to court, to be taken into his embraces, would not this fill her full of joy? So nothing can more cheer and rejoice the hearts of lost sinners, than the news

that Jesus Christ is fallen in love with them, and has appointed the marriage day, and has also provided a marriage feast, and invited them to come and accept of his love, and most gracious purpose to espouse them unto himself; “Thou shalt rejoice in thy feasts, thou, and thy sons and thy daughters,” &c., De 16:14. What was the feast of the tabernacle a type of, but this marriage feast? It is said, when Philip came down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them, and they believed, “there was great joy in that city,” Ac 8:8, and great cause for it! What, be espoused to Christ! Be freely justified by God’s grace! Have all their sins pardoned, and not see cause of joy, and of singing God’s praises!

IX. At a marriage feast of a prince,* there are waiters who are persons of honour, called, maids of honour. So here wisdom “has killed her beasts, mingled her wine, and sent forth her maidens,” Pr 9:2-3; which are the ministers of the gospel, who are waiters, or such that attend at this marriage feast, “Who are to give to every one his portion of meat in due season,” Lu 12:42. The queen of Sheba was wonderfully taken with the sitting and attendance of Solomon’s servants; noble persons, especially kings, have noble attendance. Solomon was a type of Christ, and the order of his house, and attendance of his servants amazed the queen of Sheba. But besides the ministers of the gospel, the holy angels attend on the bride and bridegroom. “They administer unto them that are heirs of eternal salvation,” Heb 1:14. This shows the great honour Christ doth vouchsafe unto his Saints. What are the ministers of Christ on earth, to those blessed angels of heaven, who he commands to wait upon, and minister to his people here.

X. Some times, perhaps, at a marriage feast, all that are invited, will not come, and, for their neglect, others are sent to, who were not at first invited.

So it is here, the Jews were first invited to this marriage supper, but they refused to come; and we poor Gentiles were then sent to, and are graciously invited; we, who lay in the highways, and under hedges, that we may partake of their leavings, and sup with Christ.

APPLICATION

1. I infer, That God is exceeding good and gracious to sinners, it is beyond all the conceptions of our hearts, and expressions of our lips. Let all in heaven and earth stand and wonder that such a banquet should be prepared, and such invitations vouchsafed, to vile and ungodly ones.

EXHORTATION

2. O bless God for this supper, and for such large provision prepared! What encouragement is here for all to come! Here is enough, "Come who will." But to proceed, I shall show you what a feast is. This is my next great work.

1. Brethren, this is a great and large feast; here is provision for multitudes, the quantity is great, consisting of many costly dishes; here is all; "Who can understand the loving kindness of the Lord?" "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? who can number the clouds in wisdom?" Job 38:22,37, stand and wonder!

2. It is a costly banquet; the life of the bridegroom went to purchase the food and provision of this feast; sirs, gold and silver cannot purchase the least morsel of this banquet, it may be said of it, as Job speaks of wisdom, "It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof; it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire; the gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold," Job 28:15-17.

3. It is a noble feast, a most honourable banquet, a most magnificent stately supper, on the marriage of the mighty King, the royal heir of both worlds, here earth is married to the noble line and offspring of heaven, it is therefore a most glorious feast, the design of it is a most glorious design, (as you have heard) proceeding from a most glorious cause, and is attended with the like glorious effects.

4. It is an heavenly feast, the food of which it consisteth is heavenly; the bread eaten here came from heaven, the subject it feeds is heavenly, viz., the soul of man; and the nourishment such receive that feed upon it, is heavenly nourishment; the company that here sit and eat together, are all heavenly, being born from above; the music that is at this banquet, is heavenly music, heavenly songs, sung with heavenly and gracious hearts.

5. It is a love feast, or a feast made wholly up of love, eternal love was the spring of it; the rise and cause of it was love, the design and purport of it is, to manifest love, infinite love, sweet and eternal love, soul-enriching, soul-delighting, soul satisfying, and soul exalting love; here the rich feed the poor,

the rich Creator feeds the poor lost, undone creature; the rich Saviour feeds the miserable, and wretched sinner.

6. It is a mysterious feast; such a feast as to what is meant, and held forth by it, very few understand; for all that come to eat and feed at other marriage feasts, do not marry the bridegroom, nor doth eating of those dainties produce such an effect as union in bonds of nearest affinity, with the lord and master of the feast, but all that come to this marriage feast, and eat of this food, are thereby united, or espoused to Jesus Christ; for what is it to eat of this provision, but to believe, or receive Jesus Christ by faith? by which means, through the Spirit, they all are immediately espoused to the Lord Jesus.

7. It is a wonderful, a full, an incomparable feast: Solomon's provision for his table, was nothing unto this; no feast that ever was made by any king, was any thing to this; yet Solomon's provision for one day amounted to a large bill, viz., "Thirty measures of five flower, and threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, besides harts, and roe-bucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl," 1Ki 4:22-23. But alas! the supper of this King, i.e., the great God, is far richer, and more abundant store, more in quantity, and richer far in quality: the lamb that is ready slain, and prepared to be eaten at this feast, is more in worth and value, than ten thousand feasts, and every thing that can be contained in them, that ever was, or can be made by mortals; nay, worth more than ten thousand worlds: the water that is here drank at this wedding, one drop of it is better than ten thousand tuns of the rarest wine than ever was provided at any other feasts: it is the water of life, all such that drink of it shall never die. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him as a well of water, springing up into eternal life," Joh 4:14.

The bread at this feast came down from heaven; "the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world," Joh 6:33. Bread of life, spiritual bread, heavenly bread, or true bread from heaven, "He that eateth thereof shall never hunger," Joh 6:35.

At this feast we eat of the hidden manna of election, and of the sweetmeats of spiritual knowledge, and divine and saving illuminations, and feed on the marrow of justification, and pardon of sin, and on the honey-comb of free grace, and drink of those consolations that are in Christ, and the

fellowship of the Spirit, and bowels of mercy, on the comforts of love, on the choice rarity of a lively hope, and taste of the on of joy, peace of conscience, and the fat of ordinances, and the sweetness of the promises, and blessings of the word, that is sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb; better than gold, yea than much fine gold. Here we are stayed with flagons, and comforted with apples, being sick of love.

Here we eat of the rarities of the covenant of grace, and are delighted with the effects and fruits of saving faith, and may taste of the blessings of assurance.

Now put all these together, and then say, this is a marriage feast indeed; Oh, who would not come unto it, that are invited! Oh know ye poor sinners (that hear me this day) you are some of them, you are again bid to this marriage; what are your resolutions? Will you come? Do you think these things are but stories? or are you persuaded of the truth and reality of them? How then can you refuse to embrace Jesus Christ.

CONSOLATION

Oh! and what is the happiness of all those that are come and do partake of this supper! Let such be thankful, and live answerable to such privileges. But no more at this time.

SERMON XI

Come, for all things are now ready.—Mt 22:4; Lu 14:17.

THE last day I closed with the second general head.

I have shewed, what a kind of feast this marriage feast is, I shall proceed to the next thing.

Thirdly, I shall shew you, what is meant by all things being now ready. And,

1. What these words do imply, “all things are now ready.”
2. Shew you, what these things are, that are now ready.

I. These words, now ready, do imply, that the sinner that is invited, is not to bring anything with him to this wedding, to entertain himself; no morsel of his own, nothing is required of him, unless it be an hungry stomach, or a thirsty soul; “If any man thirst let him come to me and drink,” Joh 7:36-37.

Object. Some perhaps may say, is he not to bring a wedding garment with him?

Answ. No person will be entertained without a wedding garment; but that is not of the sinner’s own providing, nor can he prepare it, he hath nothing to make it of; the wedding garment is a very rich robe, (as you will hear hereafter) but all a man’s own righteousness is not worth one farthing in God’s account, being compared to filthy rags: the wedding garment is, my brethren, given to those that come and eat of this marriage supper; and it is among those things that are ready, and it is one of the first things that the sinner that conies ought to look after, and if he hath it not, there will be no room for him at this wedding.

II. These words, all things are now ready, do imply, that all the provision of this marriage feast, is of God’s providing; and that all is of his own free grace, through Jesus Christ; all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, etc. “By grace ye are saved.” 2Co 5:18. Eph 2:8.

III. These words do imply, that all things that concern our salvation and justification, are all ready purchased, provided, and prepared for us: the Lamb

of God is not now to be slain, but he is already slain; satisfaction is not to be made to God's justice by anything Jesus Christ is to do in, or for the sinner that is invited; no, but justice is already satisfied, and sin is expiated already by Jesus Christ. Heb 9:26,28, cap. 10:10.

A robe of righteousness is not to be prepared, or wrought by the Spirit of God, (much less not by the sinner himself) but that this robe of righteousness is by Jesus Christ wrought out for us, by his active and passive obedience, and it is ready to be put upon every sinner that comes to this wedding.

If brethren, [faith] was this wedding garment, either as a sacred habit or grace of the Spirit in the soul, or as the act of the soul, then it could not be said, that all things are now ready; because the words denote, that all the provision is made for us, without us, not within us; that righteousness by which sinners are justified at God's bar, is not a righteousness wrought in them, but without them, in the person of Christ, and it is put upon all that do believe in Christ, whose obedience is the meritorious, and the material cause of our justification, he has done all, in respect of our justification, the robe is made, although the Holy Spirit has not done all his work as to the application of Christ's righteousness, blood, and merits, to poor sinners, yet the Holy Spirit is ready to enlighten, to quicken, to regenerate.

IV. These words, now ready, may respect the clearness and fullness of the gospel provision, and revelation of it above the law, "The law made nothing perfect," Heb 7:19, but the gospel doth: now we need no higher, no other, or clearer revelation or discovery of God, Christ, and salvation. The law shadowed forth (in its types and ceremonies) the gospel, but all things then were not fully ready, to be presented to our open view, as in the gospel they are.

V. Now ready, may denote, they were not so ready until now; and they are so ready now, that God seems to wait for his guests; and Christ hath now no more to do, but to receive and embrace, and bid all welcome, that come to this marriage; and they therefore carry a sharp reproof to all that make not haste to come to this wedding: shall God's costly supper be quite ready, and Christ the Bridegroom stay for us, and we not hasten away?

Lastly, it is a strong motive to sinners to come away, it is supper-time, and all things are quite ready, Lu 14:17.

Secondly, I shall show you, (how) what those things are which are now ready.

1. Here is the mighty God, who was greatly offended, and full of wrath, ready pacified and reconciled in Christ, to all that come to this wedding; “Fury is not in me:” fury was in him, but in Christ it is put away; “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son,” &c., Mt 3:17; Ro 5:10.

The reconciling sacrifice is offered, that atoned for Our offences, yet none but they that believe receive the atonement.

The price is paid, but the captive may not presently be discharged, his fetters may not be knocked off, Christ’s blood may not yet be applied, but it shall be to all them for whom he died.

2. The blessed God and Father is ready to receive all that come to this marriage supper; he stands ready with his arms spread open to embrace them, and hid them welcome, let them be never such sinners, profuse prodigals, that have wasted all their substance on harlots; Sirs, were not sinners besides themselves, sure they would haste away to this supper, or arise and go with the prodigal to their Father; it is said, “And when he came to himself he said, how many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger: I will arise and go to my father,” Lu 15:17. Well, and will his father receive him, shall he be entertained that hath thus sinned, thus offended? Yea, his father no sooner saw him, though he was “afar off,” but he had compassion, and ran to meet him.

By the Father of this prodigal,* the great God is meant, and by the prodigal an ungodly sinner, one that has been most profane, and abominably wicked. God doth not stand ready only to receive a returning sinner, until he come home, but he runs to meet him; indeed, he knows that there are such obstructions, or obstacles in the way, that they cannot come to Jesus Christ, unless he draws them, unless he helps them, or brings them, by the power and influences of his Spirit. But, O see how ready God is to embrace returning sinners! The father “fell on the neck of his prodigal son, and kissed him,” Lu 15:20. Though your sins be as red as scarlet, as red as crimson;

though you have done as many evil things as you could, yet if you come to Christ, the Father stands ready to bid you welcome, Jer 3:5.

3. Jesus Christ is also ready to espouse all poor sinners that come to him, or that come to this marriage supper: he stands waiting, looking out, (as it were) to see who comes unto him, that he may manifest himself, in all his perfections, and personal excellencies, to them, in the ministration of the gospel; saying unto them, "Behold me, behold me; look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Isa 65:1; 45:22.

Jesus Christ stands ready waiting, having all his glorious wedding robes on, being every way decked as a bridegroom for the bride; and says, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest," Mt 11:28. They, and they only that believe in Christ, that come to Christ, do enter into rest. Christ is the only rest for the soul; there is rest from the labour and sore bondage of the law; in him is rest, also, from the guilt of sin, and from the fear of wrath, and divine vengeance, the punishment of sin; and Jesus Christ is ready to give this rest to all that believe in him, or that come to this wedding supper; "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and he that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out," Joh 6:37.

4. And, as I have hinted,* here is also a wedding garment ready, it is wrought by Jesus Christ, he made it; it is not to be made or spun out of our bowels; the sinner hath no stuff, no materials to make this garment of; it is, brethren, a robe that is compared to cloth of gold, "Upon the right hand did stand the queen, in gold of Ophir," Ps 45:9; it is made of the choicest gold; it is said, "her clothing is wrought gold this is not that glory that is within her, but it is a robe put upon her. True, "The king's daughter is all glorious within," ver. 13. This, no doubt, refers to the graces of the Spirit, and to her inward holiness, or the righteousness of sanctification that is within, or inherent; but her clothing, that is prepared for her without, and put upon her, is wrought gold: the matter of this garment (saith a divine) was prepared by the Father, the first Person of the Trinity: the Son he wrought it, he made the garment, by his perfect obedience to the law of God, and suffering the penalty thereof in our room; and the Holy Ghost puts it upon the soul, he applies Christ's merits; he unites us to Christ, and works faith in us, and so puts this glorious robe on our souls.

But, pray brethren, see, I beseech you, to take care rightly to distinguish between the garment of justification, and that of sanctification; many

confound these two together, and strive to mix our inherent righteousness in our justification, with the righteousness of Christ: this was that error that Mr. Baxter led the people into (though I hope he was a good man, God might open his eyes before he died.) It is, sirs, a dangerous thing to adhere to such a notion; this is to make our justification to be partly by works, and partly by grace. I tell you once again, all works of righteousness, either done by us, or wrought in us, are utterly excluded in our free justification. O! how do I long to see you all well established in this great fundamental truth of the gospel! “If it be by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work,” Ro 11:6. Our justification in the sight of God, is as much of free-grace, as is our election and effectual calling. “He that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,” Ro 4:5. In the Lord, shall one say, have I righteousness and strength, not in ourselves, but in the Lord; “Who of God is made unto us, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption,” 1Co 1:30. This is the wedding garment that is ready. Do not think you must bring this robe along with you, that come to this marriage supper: no, no, all our righteousness is but as dung, compared to this righteousness: “He made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,” 2Co 5:21.

VI. Here is Christ as a skilful and able Physician, ready to heal all your wounds, and sickness of your souls; he that is our Bridegroom to espouse us, is our Physician (I told you) to heal us. Sirs, you must not think to get rid of your sins, or cured of your sores, before you come to Christ; you must come to him as sinners; “The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,” Mt 9:12. Nothing can heal our wounds, but the blood of our Physician, applied by faith to our souls.

Sinners when they first come to Christ, are wounded in every part and faculty of their souls; “From the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet, there is nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores,” Isa 1:6. But he stands ready to heal all that come to this marriage feast.

1. He heals the plague of a hard heart; he breaks this, and none but he can break the heart of stone, and take it away; “I will take the stone out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh.”

2. He it is that heads our stubborn and obstinate wills; “Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life,” Joh 5:40. It is Christ that bows and subjects the rebellious will; “My people shall be willing in the day of my power,” Ps 110:3.

3. He cures us of that great blindness of our understanding; it is he that hath the eye- salve, to open their eyes that were born blind, and none but he; “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye- salve, that thou mayest see,” Re 3:18. He is appointed of God to open blind eyes; all men are born blind, spiritually blind, and no man can see till Christ opens their eyes.

4. It is he that must cure the soul of that tympany of pride: man naturally is conceited, and very proud and rich in his own fancy; but Jesus Christ shows him his poverty and wretchedness, and brings him to his feet, even to clothe himself.

5. Christ cures our souls of that carnality that is in our affections; mankind naturally have their hearts set upon earthly things and objects.

6. Here is a fountain ready to wash the poor polluted sinner from all its filthiness: you must not think you are to wash yourselves from your pollution, and then come to Christ, then come to this marriage supper, then espouse Christ; as if you thought he would not accept you, receive you, espouse you, in your blood and filth. O take heed, for the Lord’s sake, of this. You are not first washed, and then believe, then come to Christ, or espouse him: pray see what he says by the prophet Ezekiel, “And when I passed by, and saw thee polluted in thy own blood, I said to thee, live. Yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness,” Eze 16:6,8. That is, I cast upon thee my robe of righteousness; “Yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine.” Christ first saw us polluted in our blood, and died for us. Again he looked upon us, to call us to this marriage feast; this was also the time of his love, when we lay in our sins, and were originally and actually defiled and polluted, and when we were in this condition, he sware to us, and entered into a conjugal covenant with us, or was pleased them to espouse us, and make us his own; and now see what follows, “then I washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with fresh oil,” Eze 16:9. This refers to the

sanctifying virtue of the Holy Spirit; the sinner is not to wash himself first, and then come to Christ; but come Christ that he may be washed. Sanctification doth not precede our union with Christ, but follows, (it is an effect thereof) at least in order of nature, though not in order of time.

The Holy Ghost is ready to quicken dead sinners, &c.

VII. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the blessed Trinity, is ready to discharge his office, to all sinners, who are made willing to come to this marriage, or are chosen ones. His work is to quicken, or to infuse a vital principle into the soul; no sinner can come until this is done, where there is no life, there can be no motion.

The work of the Spirit is, to enlighten, to renew, or regenerate the soul; and all this the Holy Spirit is ready to do, for all those that God hath chosen and called to this wedding.

VIII. Free grace in God, is ready to adopt all for sons and daughters who come; "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying

Abba Father," Ga 4:6. This ariseth from the favour of God; "to as many as received him, to them gave he power (or privileges) to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe on his name," Joh 1:12. Such are no more servants, but sons.

IX. Here is a Lamb ready slain, and prepared, as choice food for the soul to feed upon, with bread and water of life, and all other spiritual varieties, suitable for such a marriage supper.

X. Here is the great master of spiritual music ready, to rejoice and cheer all the guests that come to this wedding.

The Holy Ghost fills the heart with grace and peace, peace with God, and peace of conscience, and joy in believing; "and they began to be merry: now the elder son was in the field, and as he came, and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing," Lu 15:24-25.

XI. Here is an ornament of grace ready, like a crown unto thy head, and chains beyond gold, to put "about thy neck," Pr 1:9; and a ring ready to put

upon thy finger, with this motto, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Every soul that espouseth Jesus Christ, is very richly adorned in the inward man, with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

XII. Here is pardon ready, under the broad seal of heaven. Pardon! perhaps some may say, how large and extensive is it? Is it a pardon of all my sins, that ever I have committed against God? and not only a pardon of all past, but is it of all to come also?

I answer. It is a pardon of all sins past, present, and to come, as to that vindictive wrath that is due to them; although perhaps the soul may not see it quickly, or have the feeling comfort of it in his own conscience. Nay, God may, for present and future sins, be displeased and offended, and as a tender Father may correct the child he loves, yet he will not disown, nor turn his child out of his house,* nor remove his loving-kindness from it. I mean, there cannot be a breach made on our justification, God’s covenant of peace he will not break, union with Christ cannot be lost. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” Ro 8:1. If all sins present and to come, of believers, as to vindictive wrath, were not forgiven, then there might be condemnation due to them that are in Christ Jesus; for that sin that is not forgiven; as touching that just wrath and divine vengeance that is the demerit of it, binds the soul under eternal condemnation, but such “That believe in Christ, shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death to life,” Joh 5:24. That is, they are passed out of a state of spiritual death and condemnation, and are always in a state of eternal life, and shall at last pass into it actually. “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” Heb 10:14.

XIII. Here is a cup of strong consolation ready, enough to ravish the souls of all that espouse the Son of God, or rather that are espoused by him; God having passed both his word and oath to confirm his covenant, even salvation to all his seed; “Wherein, God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us,” Heb 6:17-18.

This is enough to cheer our drooping spirits to the full, and to vanquish all doubts and fears for ever. God can as soon lie, or be guilty of perjury, (which is the highest blasphemy to say) as that one believer shall eternally be

lost, or perish for ever. Sure such who refuse to come to Christ, esteem the consolations of God to be but small, and the reason of it is, because the consolations and comforts of this world, are great with them, they value earth above heaven, and the pleasures of sin more than joy in the Holy Ghost.

XIV. Here are the servants of Christ ready. I mean, his ministers, to give them that come the right-hand of fellowship, and to break the bread of life unto them; yea, "To give every one his portion of meat in due season." They will withhold nothing from them, that their Great Master hath appointed for them; "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house," Ac 20:20. Again he saith, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you, all the counsel of God," ver. 27. Ministers are ready to watch for their souls.

XV. Nay, my brethren, here are the angels of God ready also, to conduct them, to guard them, to defend them, and to minister to all that shall be, or are heirs of eternal life. "They are, saith Reverend Bifield, appointed as special attendants about Christ, as the Messiah; and they serve also as ministering spirits, to keep and attend upon the elect; in life they defend and keep them, as a strong guard about them, and plague their enemies, Heb 1:14. And in death, they are about them, and carry their souls to heaven, as they did the soul of Lazarus. Ps 91:3-4." The Bridegroom doth readily vouchsafe his own guard, his own retinue, his glorious courtiers, to be a guard and retinue to his bride, and to every soul he doth espouse.

XVI. Here are ordinances also ready, i.e., holy baptism ready, that so you may have communion with the Lord Jesus, (in a lively symbol) of his death, burial, and resurrection which you ought to receive, as a pledge of the remission of all your sins, and to show, that all your iniquities are washed away in his blood, and buried in his grave; and hereby also you come to be let into his church, and in a regular way admitted to his holy table. "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls," Ac 2:41. Baptism is ready always to him that comes to Christ, that believes in Christ, and it is a great sin then, for such to neglect it; "And now arise, why tarriest thou? and be baptized," said Ananias to Paul, Ac 9:17.

XVII. Here is also imposition of hands ready,* that so you may receive a further measure of the promised Spirit, which is made to all them that love

Christ, and keep his commandments, to the end you may be confirmed and established in the truth, and receive the earnest of the Spirit, and the seal and comforts thereof, to your own souls.

XVIII. Here is a place ready for you that come to the house of God; I say, a place in the church is ready for you; holy David greatly valued this privilege, it is that one thing which he desired; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life," Ps 27:4.

Certainly this is a glorious privilege, is it not esteemed a high honour to dwell always in the king's palace, in his courts, nay, to dwell with the king in his own house; and dwelling-place? "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north is the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces for a refuge," Ps 48:2-3. Again saith the Psalmist, "The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation; this is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it," Ps 132:13-14. Again he saith, "blessed are they that dwell in thy house," none have any right to dwell in the gospel church, but believers only, none but the true spiritual seed of Abraham. The bond-woman, and her seed, i.e., the fleshly seed, (as such) are cast out in this, there is a difference between the legal, and the gospel church; "cast out the bondwoman and her son," Ga 4:30.

XIX. There are mansions in heaven also ready for your souls, when you die, every one that comes to this wedding, ought to be told of this, Christ hath prepared, and made ready dwelling places for them above; "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you," Joh 14:2. The poorest saint here, that lives in the meanest cottage on earth, hath a glorious house prepared for him in heaven; "for we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2Co 5:1.

XX. There is a glorious kingdom ready, every believer is born an heir to a kingdom, and when they come to age, they shall possess it: the poorest saint is an heir of a kingdom; "hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him," Jam. 2:5. Oh! how rich is Christ, the Bridegroom of our souls! he hath a kingdom to give, or to bestow upon all he espouseth, a rich kingdom, an immovable kingdom, yea, an eternal

kingdom: “Fear not, little flock, it is your father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” Lu 12:32.

XXI. There is not only a kingdom ready, but a throne is ready also, for every believer; all that Christ espouseth, shall sit down with him on his throne, and judge the world with him; “He that overcometh shall sit down with me in my throne, even as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne,” Re 3:21.

XXII. And lastly, there is likewise a crown of glory ready: surely, all may see here is encouragement enough to come to this marriage supper; every believer shall have a crown of glory, far better than a crown of gold; earthly crowns are troublesome things, as I am persuaded they that wear them at this time find, by woeful experience. One of the French kings found it so formerly, which made him say, as I have read, “That if a crown lay at his feet, he would not put forth his hand to lift it up to put it upon his head.” But this crown will be an easy crown; no trouble, no sharp thorn will attend the crown of life: see what Paul says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,” 1Ti 4:7-8. Aye, perhaps you may say, a crown was laid up for Paul, that may be, but we are not Pauls, we are not such captains for Christ as he was. Well, but see further what he says, “Which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearance.” Every true believer shall have a crown of glory; “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,” Re 2:10. Earthly men strive for an earthly crown, a corruptible crown; but we, saith the apostle, for an incorruptible, 1Co 9:25.

APPLICATION

Reproof. Is it so? Are all things now ready? Then I infer, it is an unreasonable thing for any to neglect to come to this wedding; how severely doth it reprove such who delay? Should any noble man make a great supper, and bid many, and send one servant after another, to bid those that are invited to come away, for all things are now ready, and they should defer coming to another time, would it not greatly offend him, and be horrid ingratitude, and a shameful abuse of his bounty? Pray observe what St. Luke says, “And he sent his servants at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready,” Lu 14:17. It was just at supper-time, when every thing was ready, and set upon the table, the King sent his

servants; if you come not, you cast great contempt upon the King, and slight his rich and gracious favours; nay, and so far as you can (to speak after the manner of men) disappoint him: shall he provide all these great varieties in vain? Shall the glorious Creator wait for, and look out, to see when his guests will come, and all to no purpose? "They all, with one consent, began to make excuse;" Ver. 18. Wonder, O ye heavens, at this!

EXHORTATION

2. Be exhorted to come away; he not like these wretched creatures: will you make excuses too? Have you other business to do, and cannot come? Then will the King be wroth, and say, concerning you that hear me this day, as in the words following, "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper;" Ver. 24. That is, not one of them shall have the pardon of their sins, be justified, sanctified, saved, none of them shall ever know how good Christ is, his love is, nor how good peace with God, and peace of conscience is. It is as much as if God should say, all these men shall be damned, and perish in their sins, and be undone for ever.

Sirs, mind the words as a strong motive, "Come, for all things are now ready;" can there be a more prevailing argument than this is, now ready; there is no staying one moment without the highest peril, and severe displeasure of Almighty God. What do you say? Will you deal kindly and truly with God, and with your own souls? Let me allude to, and make use of the words of Abraham's servant, who was sent to Rebecca, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, to take her to be the wife of Isaac, Ge 24:15. "And now (saith he) if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me, and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right-hand or to the left," Ver. 49. O that you would say with Laban and Bethuel in the next words, viz., "The thing proceedeth from the Lord, behold Rebecca is before thee, take her, and let her become thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken," Ver. 50, 51. Will you say, we will this evening go to Jesus Christ, or accept of this most gracious invitation, and embrace the Lord Jesus. The thing is of the Lord, and we cannot longer refuse to come to this supper: O were it thus, though it were but one soul that should thus do, what cause of joy should I have, who thus have spent my time and strength amongst you, though the great profit will redound to your own immortal souls!

I may truly say, this day, life and death are set before you, though it is God that must work in you, to will and to do of his good pleasure. If you do

come, if you do believe, and receive Jesus Christ, you have life; but if you do refuse him, and abide in unbelief, expect nothing but death: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mr 16:16.

CAUTION

Secondly, One word to you that are professors, and I will conclude at this time.

1. But by way of caution, you profess yourselves to be believers, such that are come to sup with Christ; but take heed lest you are deceived; you are this evening to come to eat the Lord's supper, and that you may do, and yet not partake of the provision of this marriage supper; they are not all that eat of the bread and drink of the cup, in the sacrament, that feed indeed on Jesus Christ, or that have union with him; no, no, many of the visible church may perish for ever.

Therefore, see what faith you have, what love you have to Christ, and whether you are thoroughly changed, effectually renewed in heart and life.

O see what fruits of faith, and of divine union with Christ, appears in you: do not please yourselves with a name, or with an external profession of religion; you may have lamps, but no oil in your vessels, you may have the shell, but not the kernel. Many in these evil days have a form of godliness, but want the power of it; but the time draws near now, when the sinners in Sion shall be afraid: fearfulness will surprise the hypocrite.

CONSOLATION

2. But to you that are sincere, who do believe to the saving of your souls, what comfort and consolation doth this doctrine administer to you! What though you are poor in this world, and despised of men, yet know, "You are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Ro 8. You have heard what your spiritual robes are, how rich, how glorious, and how high you are advanced. You are made near to God, espoused to Christ, and born heirs to a crown of glory. Live, O live as such that are thus raised to honour; carry yourselves as Kings' children, and trample all sublunary things under your feet.

SERMON XII

All things are ready, come to the marriage.—Mt 22:4.

He sent his servants at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready.—Lu 14:17.

The parts, according to Luke, are these following:—

1. Here is a mission, “He sent his servants.”
2. The person commissionating, a certain man; according to Matthew, a certain King, viz., the great God.
3. The persons commissioned, his servants, viz., his ministers.
4. The commission itself, “To say to them that were bidden, come,” viz., preach the gospel, and excite sinners to come to Christ, to believe in him, receive him, or eat of his dainties, or espouse Jesus Christ.
5. The time when this commission was given, viz., at supper-time.
6. The motive, “For all things are now ready.” We have observed,

Doct. That the blessings of the gospel, or grace, and union with Jesus Christ, contains in it all sorts of spiritual dainties; or of a sumptuous banquet ready provided, to which sinners are invited, to come and eat.

1. What this feast doth denote you have heard.
2. Why compared to a feast.
3. What King it is that made this feast.
4. What is meant by these words, “All things are now ready.”
5. I shall now proceed to show you, the nature, or blessed quality, of the provision which this feast, or marriage supper doth consist of.
7. And then show what is meant by coming, and by eating.

I. As to the nature of the food, I told you it is heavenly food, it is a spiritual or heavenly feast; therefore the nature of all the provision is spiritual, it is food for the soul, not for the body; as is the nature of the soul, such is the nature of that food it liveth upon: material food cannot feed an immaterial creature, that which is earthly, is fed with earthly food, but that which is spiritual, is fed with spiritual food; therefore the food of this feast must needs be of an excellent nature, the meat came from heaven, bread from heaven, the word of God is called “the incorruptible word, that liveth and abideth for ever,” 1Pe 1:23.

II. Transforming. This is the marvellous property or efficacy of this food, if a sinner eats it, it will beget in him a divine likeness unto God, or form Christ’s image in his soul: brethren, by eating, we lost God’s image; I mean, “by eating the forbidden fruit,” and by eating of this food, we have God’s image again restored in us; by our first eating we came to have an evil nature, evil qualities infused into us, or a likeness to the devil; and by eating, i.e., in believing, the Holy Spirit, infuseth a holy nature into the soul. “But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of God, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,” 2Co 3:18. This beholding and believing, or feeding on Jesus Christ, is all one, and the same thing, the Spirit is the only agent that doth it, he works this change, he works in the soul this faith, and in his helping a poor sinner to believe, eat, or receive Jesus Christ; holy habits of grace, and so a glorious change is wrought in the soul. “whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature,” 2Pe 1:4. Not a communication of the essence of God to us, but an infusion of divine qualities and dispositions, i.e., the true knowledge of God with righteousness and true holiness.

III. It is food of God’s own providing, and indeed the best of heaven, and it is food that can be had no where else, but at this marriage an earthly king may provide choice provision, or costly and rare dainties at the marriage of his only Son, and heir of his kingdom: but perhaps some of his nobles may provide as costly, as rare and rich dainties at their son’s weddings, but so it is not here, “thou hast the words of eternal life;” Joh 6:68. That is thou, and none but thee: none hath eternal life to give, grace to give, glory to give, but thee alone; “neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we must be saved,” Ac 4:12.

IV. It is wholesome food; other diet, or rare dainties, may be choice, sweet to the taste, and please the palate; but they may be hurtful to the body, and breed diseases, or forfeit the person that feeds on it; but so it is not here, it is not of a destructive nature, but contrary wise, by eating, by believing, sin dies; it tends to kill the old man, i.e., the body of sin. A wicked man may say, as those in another case, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot:" 2Ki 4:40. Sirs! there is death to every beloved lust, by believing in Christ, or feeding by faith, on him; therefore to the soul it is very wholesome food, you cannot eat too much here, no man ever believed in Jesus Christ too much, you cannot have too much faith, the more you eat and drink of this provision, the better, the more strong, healthy and hearty you will be.

V. It is physical food, as well as it is sweet to the taste, and excellent in nourishment, it will heal all your soul diseases, many are averse to take physic, they love no purging- potion, nor any other medicines whatsoever; but could they find a physician that could prescribe some delicious food to them, meat, or drink, that would cure them of all their bodily distempers whatsoever, such a physician would please them well; especially if upon trial they should experience a perfect cure thereby, O what flying would there be to such a person!

Why, if you come now to this marriage supper, and feed on these spiritual dainties, I can assure you sinners, on the word of my great Master, and by the experience of many thousands of true Christians, it will cure you of all your soul maladies, or spiritual distempers, let them be whatsoever they are, or can be.

VI. Though it be physical food,* yet it is sweet and delightful meat also; "I sat down under his shadow, with delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste," Song 2:3. It is sweet in the mouth, and it will not be bitter in the belly, not like John's little book; the very judgments of God, in the way of his providences, may be sweet to the souls of the godly, yet bitter to the wicked, nay unto the saints they may be bitter in some sense, yet in Christ is nothing bitter; how sweet is it to feed on his love, on his righteousness, on justification, on pardon of sin, on adoption, on communion with him? nothing is so good as God in Christ; whosoever feedeth on the creature, or on their lusts, how sweet soever they may taste in their mouth, they will be bitter at last, bitter in the belly, bitter to eternity. "Surely he shall not find quietness in his belly," Job 20:20, no, nothing but horror, pain, and perplexity, for ever.

VII. It is not cloying [disgust or sicken with excess of sweetness], a little of some food cloy a man presently; hence, saith Solomon, "It is not good to eat too much honey," Pr 25:27, he gives a reason for it, viz. "Lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it up;" too much of earthly and sensual delights are not good; they oppress the stomach, I mean the conscience, and must therefore be vomited up by repentance; but this sweet and delicate food will not turn the stomach, it is consoling, but not cloying, nor surfeiting.

VIII. It is (as one observes) undiminshable food, you may feed upon Jesus Christ day by day, and yet he is a whole Christ still, a full Christ still, this food doth not waste by eating, it is like the "widow's barrel of meal, and cruise of oil," 1Ki 17:14, it diminishes not. Let millions come and eat plentifully, they will not leave (notwithstanding) as much in Christ as they found. The blessed God need not go and buy more provision, though never so great multitudes come to this marriage supper.

IX. It is incorruptible food, immortal food, all other food perishes in eating, and he that feedeth upon it perishes also. But as this food, this bread, never perisheth, so shall he that eats of it never perishes; the meat that is eaten at this marriage feast, endureth for ever. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed," Joh 6:27. What labour is it which our Saviour intendeth? Are we to work for life, or must we earn our bread before we eat it? No, no, all our labour cannot procure it. Hence, he adds, "which the Son of Man will give unto you;" they that followed our Lord in the days of his humiliation, eat of those loaves, which he broke unto them freely, it cost them nothing; they had all on free cost; yet in following him from place to place, they are said to labour for it, for our Saviour alludes unto that, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled," Joh 6:26. Some think that the food Christ blessed and multiplied, namely, the bread of fishes, tasted more sweet, and was more delicious than any other of the same kind, perhaps it might be so, and that might make the multitudes follow him, to eat thereof, for no doubt many of them did not want bread, however they had it freely, though in following him they are said to labour for it, so, all the labour thou art to take for this incorruptible food, is to come to this wedding, or to come unto Jesus Christ, for though it perishes not, yet it is to be had "without money, and without price," Isa 55:1-2.

X. It is suitable provision, agreeable, and meat for all sorts of guests, that come to this feast.

(1.) Consider it suits, or is agreeable with every age of those persons which come, here is milk for babes, and “strong meat belonging unto them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern both good and evil, Heb 5:14. Here is the “sincere milk of the word,” 1Pe 2:1-2, for weak converts, that which suits and is agreeable to them, i.e., plain and easy truths for weak capacities, and also more sublime mysteries of Christ, or those deep things of God, which are proper for men of great knowledge and understanding, and of long experience to feed upon.

(2.) Here is food suitable to every state and condition, the souls of men can be in.

1. Such that are dead, here is that food that will quicken them, give life to them.

2. Such that languish, and are ready to die, here is food to revive, and increase life in them.

3. Such that are cold and lifeless, here is such food that will enliven, heat, warm, and quicken them; “thy word (saith David) hath quickened me,” Ps 119:50,93, before he was dead and flat in his spirit, but by feeding, i.e., by believing, or receiving the word of God, he was quickened, it strengtheneth the weak soul.

4. Such that have dim eyes, this food will strengthen their sight, as well as open the eyes of the blind; it is like “Jonathan’s honey; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple,” Ps 119:8,130. So soon as you let this food go down, or let the word enter into your hearts, you will find your souls much enlightened thereby.

5. Such that are sad, and dejected in their spirits, here is food to cheer and console them.

6. Such as are consumptive, here is food that is restorative, “He restores my soul,” Ps 23:3. I might enlarge, but let this suffice to open what we intend.

XI. It is suitable food, in respect it so well agrees with the souls of believers, at all times, in sickness and health, in prosperity and adversity, whilst they live, and when they die.

XII. It is soul satisfying food, go where you will else for food, it will be bread that satisfies not; “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” Isa 55:2. All things short of Jesus Christ, the bread of life, never nourishes nor satisfies the soul, they are all vain, empty, and foolish things, there is no soul-satisfying food, but at this marriage-feast, at the great King’s providing at the marriage of the Son; tis food will allay all spiritual hunger, fully satisfy all the desires, and necessities of the soul, as the prophet David found by blessed experience. “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles,” Psal.

103:5. Again, he saith, speaking of the Lord; “He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness,” Ps 107:9. It yieldeth such satisfaction that ariseth to joy, and sweet delight; they delight themselves in fatness.

Fifthly, what is meant by coming to this marriage supper.

1st. Negatively.

1. Not a bare coming to hear the word of God preached; No, no, a man may come to hear sermons every day of his life, but never for all that, come to Christ.

2. Not a giving heed to what may here be preached. They may attend with some diligence to the word, yet not come to Christ, or come to this wedding-supper. “The eyes of all that were in the synagogue, it is said, were fixed upon him; they heard no doubt with great attention, but few of them believed on him.

3. It is not legal repenting, or reformation of life.

4. It is not a simple obeying of the precepts of Christ, some talk of coming to Christ by repentance, and others by obedience; they think that if they come to baptism, they come to Christ. But, alas! a man may arrive to legal repentance, and reformation of life, and be baptized, and receive the holy supper, and never come to Christ, never come to the marriage supper.

2ndly. And directly in the affirmative, to come to Christ, or unto this wedding, so as to answer the purport of this invitation, is to believe, or receive Jesus Christ by faith. Believing in Christ, and coming unto Christ, are convertible terms, implying one and the same thing. "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," Joh 6:35. Here is mention made of bread, eating of it; our feeding upon him is employed and held forth by coming to him, which also he expresseth, by believing on him; all which is no more, nor less, than a true receiving him, as Mediator and the only Saviour.

Ans. What it is to eat of the food of the wedding supper

Sixthly. What is meant by eating or feeding on the provision, provided at this marriage supper?

1. I answer, the very same thing, believing, and coming, provided it be such a coming, such a eating, as the invitation intendeth; or that answers the design of God therein; for though there is one that was said to come, who had no wedding garment; yet he did not come in a true and right manner, i.e., he did not believe, he did not eat, for thereby the wedding garment is put on; had he believed truly on Jesus Christ, he had not wanted a wedding garment.

2. Feeding or eating, is to experience the preciousness and sweetness of the Lord Jesus Christ, or to know that the Lord is good, a man that sees food set upon a table, and beholds it with his eyes, may conceive or suppose it is good and excellent food: but he doth not without tasting know how sweet and choice it is. So a man that hears the word, hears Christ preached, and the excellencies of Christ opened; may be persuaded, in some degree that there is great good in him, or that he is a precious Christ; but if he doth not receive him by a lively faith, or not savingly believe in him, he knows not by experience how good he is to the soul. Hence David cries, "O, taste! and see the Lord is good," Ps 34:8. Labour to feed upon him, to receive him by faith, and then you will find how good he is. "If so be that you have tasted the Lord is gracious," 1Pe 2:3.

3. To feed on this supper, is to make Christ our own, as he that feedeth upon food makes that food his own; so a believer makes the promise, and Christ in a promise, and in an ordinance, his own. This it is to eat, i.e., it is to apply Jesus Christ to our own souls.

4. It is to live wholly upon Jesus Christ, or to go out of ourselves, to him alone, fetching all we want from him, leaning upon, and trusting in his righteousness, and on the merits of his blood only, exclusively of every thing else, and inclusively, of whatsoever in a spiritual sense, we need.

5. It is to stay upon Christ; as bread is the stay and staff of man's life, and he that feeds thereon finds strength and support thereby; so Christ is the stay and staff of the sold, and to feed on this food, is to receive strength from Jesus Christ. Strength against sin, against the power and dominion thereof; and strength against Satan's temptations, and also against slavish fear, and the spirit of bondage and strength; against all reproaches, trials, and persecutions, a believer may meet with (and all discouragements) for the sake of Christ.

APPLICATION

Reproof. This reproofs, and shows the great folly of all such sinners, who refuse to come to this marriage supper. Is such the nature of this food, and wilt thou slight and contemn it, nor desire to taste it?

2. It inform us also, what the cause is, that the spiritual diseases, and soul-sicknesses of sinners remain, and they are not healed. Alas! they do not come to Jesus Christ, they do not believe in him, receive him; there is in believing a cure for every disease of the soul. Also there is no help, no cure, no healing, anywhere else, nor by any other way or thing, but by Christ alone.

3. It, moreover, discovers the cause or reason, so many of the saints and people of God are so weak, so low, and ready to faint, in their spirits; it appears evidently it is because they have no more faith in Christ, they do not with a strong faith rely upon him, or feed upon him. Can a man expect to be strong, or gather strength, that forsakes his food, that cannot, or doth not eat? The way to be strong is, to feed plentifully on wholesome food; so the way to get spiritual strength is, to feed freely upon the Lord Jesus. This is to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, or to be "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus," Eph 6:10-11, i.e., to believe with a strong and

fixed faith, upon that fulness that is in Christ, “Eat, O friends, drink, drink abundantly, O beloved,” Song 5:1. O take in freely and plentifully, by faith, the merits of my blood, see how my Father in me is pacified towards you, and fully reconciled, and you in me are accepted, justified, and pardoned for ever.

4. From hence also we may see what the cause is, that some who come to hear the word, receive no spiritual and saving benefit thereby, nor know how good it is. Alas, they believe not, they do not eat the word, “Thy word was found, and I did eat it.” Such only receive Christ, and receive the good that is in the word of Christ, that truly believe in him.

5. Moreover, it informs us, how exceedingly precious the Lord Jesus is unto a believer, or what he is made to be unto him, even every thing.

EXHORTATION

Oh, believers! Be persuaded from hence, to bless God for Jesus Christ, and prize him as your all; you that have Christ, have all, you have every thing that is truly good. O how happy are all they that feed by faith on Jesus Christ! What soul-strengthening, soul-healing, soul-comfort have they!

But no more at this time.

SERMON XIII

But they made light of it.—Mt 22:5.

“THEY,” that is, the Jews first, it principally in the first place refers to them, and also to all who slight the Lord Jesus, or union with him, or his gracious benefits, and that glorious provision provided in the gospel. From hence let me take notice of this point of doctrine, viz.

DOCTRINE

That although there is so much good to be had in Jesus Christ, to whom sinners are invited, yet many of them make light of him, and all he hath to impart to them.

I. Show what it is to make light of a thing, and so what it is to make light of Jesus Christ.

II. Show you, what sinners do make light of.

III. Show you, the evil, and great danger in making light of the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Give you the reasons, or causes, why sinners do make light of Christ, or from whence it doth arise.

1. To make light of a thing or person, is to slight it, or slight the person, or not value him, accounting him not worth regard. And thus sinners make light of Christ, and of this most gracious invitation. They slight, and value not the Lord of life and glory; they value neither an interest in his person, nor the merits of his blood, but slight his love, grace, and infinite goodness; and regard not the offers he makes to them.

2. To make light of a thing, or of a person, is not so much as to think seriously of it, or of him, not accounting the person worth one deliberate thought. As perhaps a virgin may be told of a very good match, or of a deserving person far exceeding her quality or merits; but she cries, pish, away with him, she will not let out one thought upon him; perhaps she hath heard something of him, that is distasteful to her. Thus many sinners make light of Jesus Christ; tell them that Christ commends his love to them, and would

gladly embrace them in his arms, and espouse them; but they, in their hearts, cry away with him, I see no beauty, no loveliness in him; I cannot leave all my sweet delights and pleasures for such a choice, for such a companion. Pray, saith the poor messenger, (the minister of Christ) think seriously of this so great and glorious an offer: pish, say they, trouble not yourself with me, I will none of him: thus God spake of old, of his people Israel, "My people will have none of me;" They say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job 21:14. This is to make light of this marriage-feast, or of union with the Son of God.

3. To make light of a thing, or person, is to contemn it; this is a higher degree of making light of a thing, &c. Will you accept of such an offer, of such a person? The answer is, no, I contemn the motion and person you mention, I despise him in my heart; to set light by parents with a witness, is to despise them when old or poor.

And thus do some sinners make light of Jesus Christ, or set light by him, and all the spiritual dainties prepared at this marriage supper, i.e., they contemn and despise him in their hearts; "Ye have both hated me and my Father," Joh 15:24. You are so far from liking, loving, and receiving me into your bosoms, that you even abhor me and my people; "If the world hate you, you know it hated me before it hated you," Joh 15:18.

4. To make light of a thing, or person, is to do some action, directly contrary to that which is proposed: as Ahab, who did evil in the sight of the Lord, "And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the Son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal," 1Ki 16:31. That which he knew was directly contrary to the will of God, or distasteful to him.

Thus sinners do some base actions, contrary to what God professes to them in the gospel, viz., They join in with the devil, and in affinity with their filthy lusts, and strengthen themselves in their own evil ways.

5. To make light of a thing, may be yet further opened, viz., When a matter of greatest moment is propounded unto a person, and he presently says, truly, I will think of it, but I cannot now attend upon that affair, I have other business to mind at present, which, may be, is to go prove some yoke of oxen, or see a farm which he hath newly bought, or other things of like nature; or walk for their health in the fields, when they should attend on the

word: now when such frivolous things are chosen, before a diligent attention upon the means of grace, or about the affairs of another world; this is to make light of Christ, and of all the blessings which he hath purchased.

As of one of the French kings, who was playing at some game with his nobles, and one came to acquaint him with a treacherous design against his life; the messenger signifying it was a serious thing, or matter of a great moment, he replied, he would mind serious things to-morrow, he was not at leisure then, so he lost his life. Pray mind what Luke speaks of those whom Matthew saith made light of it; the first said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go to see it, I pray thee have me excused," Lu 14:18. One would have thought, he should have went to see it before he had bought it. "Another said I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and I cannot come." Now this is to make light of this great concernment; are not these frivolous excuses? And are they not strangely deluded, thus to court their own ruin, and to pray to be excused from minding their own eternal happiness? This is to make light of it, i.e., not only to defer this great business till to-morrow, or till hereafter: but to prefer earthly concerns above the matters of everlasting life, or union with Jesus Christ.

II. What is it which sinners make light of?

1. I answer, they make light of the word of God, or of the preaching of the gospel, which must needs be a very great sin and evil: because the preaching of the gospel is appointed to work faith, through the influences of the Spirit. "So then faith cometh by hearing the word of God," Ro 10:17; it is a mighty instrument of "God's power unto salvation, to every one that believeth," Ro 1:16: hence it is said, that it pleaseth God. "By the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," 1Co 1:21.

Now they make light of this great blessing, which is the means of their salvation: and will not attend upon the word, or when they heard it, slight it.

2. They that make light of the convictions of their own consciences, as Felix did; "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled," Ac 24:25. His conscience was awakened, and he was convinced of his sin, of his intemperance, and unrighteousness; Paul touched him in his tender place. Well, but did he cherish these convictions? No, no, but he, contrariwise, liked it not; but answered, "Go thy way at this

time, when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee.” But evident it is, he soon forgot Paul’s doctrine, and so made light of it, and continued in his former evils. And thus many sinners still daily do; it may be under the word, their consciences may convince them, and sorely gripe them, for living in this or that sin, and in the neglect of this and that duty; but they turn a deaf ear unto the checks and convictions of their hearts and consciences, and so make light of it, or regard it not. They that make light of the convictions and rebukes of their consciences, which rise from the light of God’s word, make light of God himself. Now, they that make light of this offer, do make light of the most gracious offer and invitation that ever was afforded to the sons and daughters of men; and this will appear by the induction of particulars following.

1. It is an invitation of the greatest and highest pity; God the Father is called, “The Father of mercies,” 2Co 1:3; because he is the fountain or original of good, which floweth to poor creatures. “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place,” 2Ch 36:15-16. And now as he, out of pity and compassion, sent to them, under that dispensation, so he hath sent his ministers and messengers to poor sinners, under the gospel, knowing what wrath and ruin will fall upon them, which they must endure to eternity, if they come not to this marriage supper, but rather slight and refuse his most gracious invitation.

2. It is not only an offer and invitation full of pity and mercy, but also as full of love and rich bounty. O, what a feast is here prepared! and what a design hath the Lord in it! He invites them to a noble banquet, and what is comprehended in it, and God’s gracious design therein you have heard.

3. It is an often repeated offer and invitation, “and he sent other servants.” God tries what one minister may do; but if sinners will not hear him, hearken to him, or come at his bidding, he sends another, another after him, “Go, say to them that were bidden, all things are now ready.” May be, some of you have been invited an hundred times, to come to Christ, to believe in Christ; yea, a thousand times, and yet refuse. O! how inexcusable will God leave sinners, that eternally perish. “I have called, and you have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.” Certainly, such who make light of this invitation, are such that do thus, i.e., they set at

nought all God's counsel, and contemn his love and favour extended to them.

4. It is a free invitation; all the provision (as you have heard) is prepared at God's own proper charge; sinners are not required to bring anything with them; no, that would be a dishonourable thing to him, and stain his glory.

1st. God was under no necessity to make this marriage feast, nor to invite this and that man or woman unto it; it was an act all of his own free mercy, love, and goodness; it was this only which moved him thus to do.

2ndly, doth the blessed God receive any profit, or advantage, to himself hereby? "Can man profit God? If thou art righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" Job 35:7. Our righteousness cannot oblige God; we are but unprofitable servants, when we have done all we are commanded: the righteousness, or righteous actions of men, contribute nothing to God; they are no advantage to him, the best that we can do; "My goodness (saith David) extendeth not to thee." If the righteousness of Christ added nothing to the essential glory of God, how should any thing that sinners can do? Can their believing make God more happy, more glorious than he is? "Who hath given unto him, and it shall be recompensed," Ro 11:34? All that we can do is due to him; it is a debt we owe to God. Besides, we can do nothing in a way of faith, &c., but what we received power to do from him. There can be nothing added to him, God is so full; what can be put into a vessel that is full to the brim?

O, sirs! All that God hath to impart to sinners, in this marriage feast, is of his own free grace; he receives not a pin of us for any thing: he says to his guests that come and eat plentifully, you are all heartily welcome, here is nothing to pay. It would, indeed, be ridiculous for a king to invite men to a wedding supper, and let them pay any thing for what they eat or receive; but much more dishonourable to God; therefore, they that join their faith, and sincere obedience with God's free grace, and Christ's merits, have cause to blush and be ashamed.

3rdly. All the good and heavenly blessings imparted to sinners, is bestowed without the least merit or desert of the creature. Doth a man deserve such favours? Can a rebel deserve a free pardon of a prince, or to be advanced to high honour?

4thly. It is a clear, a plain, and full invitation; God in the gospel speaks plainly to sinners, though sometimes in parables: which he pleased to help his servants to open them; yet at other times sinners may say with the disciples, "Lo! now thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb," Joh 16:29: doth not Christ speak plainly, when he saith, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mr 16:16. And again, "He that hath the Son hath life, but he that bath not the Son hath not life. If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," Joh 8:24. What plainer expressions could he use? He tells you it is not by works, but by grace ye are saved; nay, it is "He that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness," Ro 4:5. That is, Christ received by faith, or his righteousness so apprehended, is our righteousness to justification, in God's sight, Isa 55:1-2.

5thly, it is an open and public invitation; it is like a proclamation put forth by a king, to pardon all guilty and rebellious traitors, that come in and plead his gracious clemency, through an atonement made by another: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price:" be ye whosoever, whether Jews or Gentiles, great sinners or small, bond or free, young or old, rich or poor; whoever thirstest after happiness, or would be saved, but know not the way: "Hear, and your souls shall live," ver. 3. What grace is here, and how publicly offered! "Go, and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, return, backsliding Israel, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not keep my anger for ever; only acknowledge thine iniquities, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God," Jer 3:12-13. Here is a loud cry, an open proclamation to be made in the high place, at the opening of the gate. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words," &c., Pr 1:20-21. Those sinners that make light of this invitation thus openly made, will find many to witness against them at the last day.

6thly. It is a large and comprehensive invitation; it is to all sinners, none by name exempted; so that one hath no more cause or reason, to say I am not comprehended in it, any more than another. "Go into all the world, preach the gospel unto every creature," Mr 16:15.

The chiefest of sinners have encouragement to take of this gracious offer of pardon and peace, through Jesus Christ; yea, the backsliding sinner, the stout-hearted sinner; "I have spread out my hands all the day long to a rebellious people," Isa 65:2. One would think this should melt the hard and obstinate sinner's heart, and that none should be so vile, as to make light of this invitation. "Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness," Isa 46:12; that have no righteousness of their own, and seek not after any, but delight in sin and wickedness; "I bring near my righteousness," ver.13, I have provided you a righteousness of my own, a righteousness which I am well pleased with; it agreeing exactly with my holy law, and holy nature; and I bring it near to you, that are unrighteous, and ungodly persons, come to this marriage feast, and God will put this robe of righteousness upon you, though you are never so filthy, and unclean in yourselves.

7thly. It is a pressing and most earnest invitation. Alas! the sinner's life lies at stake, his soul is in danger; "We, knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade men," 2Co 5:11; to believe and be fully assured, that there shall be a great and terrible day of the Lord, and that the slights of God's gracious call and invitations, shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone; we therefore are earnest with sinners; "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God," 2Co 5:20. The angels bid Lot hasten, "while he lingered, the men laid hold upon him," Ge 19:16. Brethren, God must lay hold upon sinners, and pull them out of Satan's hands, and out of the pit where they lie.

8thly. It is at a seasonable time you are invited, it is while it is day, and just at supper time, when the table is spread, and every thing quite ready; and the great God waiteth for your coming. The Lord waits to be gracious, he (as it were) looks out for you; he sees a coming sinner, though he be as yet a great way off. Sirs! would not an earthly king be greatly offended, if such that he should invite to supper with him at such an hour, should delay coming, though he sends to them just at supper time, and waits for them, and yet they come not?

9thly. It is to some an effectual invitation, it tends to make the soul willing, that is, given to Christ. "All that the Father hath given unto me, shall come unto me," Joh 6:36. Whosoever has a heart, a will to come, a desire to believe, may be assured that they are given unto Jesus Christ. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live," Joh 5:25;

Christ calls shall be made effectual to them; Lazarus could not resist the call of Christ, when dead in the grave. Grace, my brethren, or rather the God of all grace, works irresistibly. "My people shall be willing in the day of my power," Ps 110:3.

APPLICATION

From hence we may infer, that sinners naturally are strangely blinded and deceived by Satan. Is it not strange that such an invitation should be slighted, that any sinner should make light of it?

2. This also may inform us, that God is infinitely good and gracious to undone sinners; what heart can conceive of it, or what tongue can express it? His mercy, love, and goodness, doth not only appear in his sending our Lord Jesus Christ, to espouse sinners; but also in sending his ministers to invite them to come, and accept of his most gracious offer; nay, and in his often repeating his call; his kind and compassionate invitations.

3. Moreover, from hence we infer, that God will leave all men at the last day, without excuse. What will such vile sinners have to say, when they stand at God's tribunal, who were sent to, and called upon, perhaps a thousand times, to come unto Jesus Christ, or to come to this marriage supper; who wickedly refused it, and made light of it?

4. Also, from hence we may be informed, how sinners are ensnared with the love of this world, and the perishing things thereof. They prize and value these things above their immortal souls! Nay, above an interest in Jesus Christ. They rather choose to have their lusts, their earthly riches, honours, and pleasures here, than the free pardon of all their sins; and to be acquitted, justified, and made the sons and daughters of the Most High God; and to be made heirs of the everlasting kingdom of glory, and a crown that fadeth not away.

5. Believers, also may from hence perceive, what cause they have to admire God's free grace to them. For had not he by his special love, and divine goodness, overcome them, influenced them by his Spirit, and drawn them to his Son; bowed, and subjected their rebellious wills, and changed their hearts, they would as certainly made light of this gracious invitation, as any of the rest do. This is signified by these words, viz., "Compel them, who hath made thee to differ from another," 1Co 4:7. Didst thou, O soul, make

thyselt to differ? Was it by virtue of thy own power? Have they anything to glory in, or make their boast of? "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that sheweth mercy," Ro 9:16.

6. Ministers may also learn from hence, not to be discouraged; though they see but little success of their great pains and labour; it is no new thing, if the people would not be entreated, be persuaded, nor prevailed with, to cleave to the Lord, and accept of his mercy, by the holy prophets, and apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; but made light of their words, and of that message. Is it any marvel, they slight the word in our mouths, and make light of the message we bring unto them? Well may we say, "Who hath believed our report?" Isa 59:1. And not wonder? If they would not hear their report? Nor the report of our blessed Lord himself.

7. And since this is so, let poor ministers labour to be like their Master, viz., to wait patiently upon the souls of those people, to whom they preach; God the Father waits long, Christ waits long, the Holy Spirit waits long, and are not weary; therefore let us also wait; let ministers faithfully discharge their duty, and deliver their message, and leave the success of all unto God; and say with their blessed Lord, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength," Isa 49:5.

SERMON XIV

But they made light of it.—Mt 22:5.

I have showed you what it is sinners make light of.

I shall now proceed to show further what sinners make light of, and also the great evil and danger that attends this sin.

1. It is a very great sin in respect of what they make light of. They slight and cast contempt upon that glorious contrivance, of God's infinite wisdom, in that high and sublime council, that was held between the Father and the Son, before the world began. They make light of the highest act of God's wisdom, that ever was; and this too, in the clearest revelation, and manifestation thereof: Our salvation was the highest act of the wisdom of God; and that the gospel containeth the clearest and fullest revelation of this glorious wisdom, none will or can deny. The result was to send the Second Person of the blessed Trinity, into the world, to assume man's nature, or to be incarnate in the flesh; and to lay the sins of all the elect upon him, as their great Sponsor, or Surety; public Head and Representative, and to die for them, i.e., in their stead and room. My brethren, should God have called the angels together, to consult about a way to raise fallen man, from under the fall and curse, for the breach of the first covenant (so that the honour of God might be preserved, in respect of all his blessed attributes, and that sin according to the demands of the law, and justification, might be unsworded and yet divine mercy be magnified, in pardoning sinners; could they, think you, have found out such a way? No, no, none but infinite wisdom, could do this; hence God saith, "Deliver him from going into the pit, I have found a ransom," Job 33:24. Our deliverance is by a ransom, by a price paid to satisfy the justice of God. I have found a ransom; it is the contrivance of God, the invention of God, and of him alone.

"If all men on earth (saith a worthy divine), yea, if all the angels in heaven, had sat from the foundation of the world to this day, in council, beating their brains, and debating this question, viz., how sinful man might be delivered, out of the hands of the law, or that condemnation or sentence, under which the law had cast and detained him, with satisfaction, or without damage, to the justice and righteousness of God; they would never have found it out, nor anything like it; this is God's own intention. Or if God had said to fallen man, I see thou art in a lost and pitiful condition; but sit down

and consider how I may do thee good, and not wrong myself; how I may relieve thee, and not dishonour myself, and I will freely do it. If God (I say) had given man a blank to write down, what would he have done to bring this about? he could never have found it out, but must have perished for ever in his sin.” Thus far this great man; no, no, it was God that devised the means, that his banished might not for ever be expelled from him.

But now, Sirs! must not this be a most abominable evil, for any man or woman to slight this contrivance of God’s profound wisdom, or cast contempt upon it, or to use the words of my text, make light of it. O! what is the nature of this sin? and what fearful danger do such sinners expose themselves unto for ever?

2. The evil and danger must needs be great, not only as it casteth contempt upon the wisdom of God, but it is also a making light of God’s infinite mercy, love, and goodness. No greater act of love could spring from boundless eternity, than for God to part with his own dear Son, the only delight of heaven: no gift could ever equal this gift. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,” &c. Gave him to what? To redeem sinners. Which way must he do it? He must die, he must bear the curse of the law for us. O, this was the most stupendous evidence of his mercy, and divine goodness! Nay, and it is to slight and make light of the precious love of Jesus Christ, who freely gave himself to die for his enemies. Oh! what ingratitude is this! What, make light of such love! such mercy! Be amazed, O ye heavens! and be astonished, O earth! What power hath the devil over mortals? What blindness is there in their understandings? What enmity in their minds? What rebellion in their wills? What earthliness and carnality is there in their affections? But what will be the end of these persons? What dangers do they run? and, what a hot hell do they prepare for their own souls for ever?

3. It is to make light of God himself, for he offers himself to be our God; he stands waiting to give himself and all he hath, so far as it is communicable to creatures. But as he said to Israel of old, “My people would have none of me.” So he may say now, this sinner, and that sinner will have none of me: they despise me, not only my love and tender mercy, but they also contemn me, and slight me. They value five yoke of oxen, a small parcel of land, and their pleasures, above me.

God offers himself, in Christ, to be the sinner's God, to be their Father, to be their Friend, to be their inheritance, and portion for ever: but what saith my text, but they made light of it. They slight and contemn him in their hearts. They think it is a better choice to enjoy their earthly riches, honours, and pleasures, their sensual delights, their cursed cups, and wicked companions, their pride and ambition, and merry meetings, which they spend in swearing, drunkenness, and blasphemy, treading the Holy God under their feet, vilifying his laws, spitting in his very face, and contemning all things which are good and virtuous. But what will be the end of these things?

4. They make light of Christ, who waits to espouse them. They slight his person who is "the chiefest among ten thousands," Song 5:10. They make light of his beauty, light of his riches, his unsearchable riches: make light of his most precious love, his early, his infinite, his incomprehensible, his dying, his bleeding, his redeeming, and his espousing love! O! what sin and folly, nay, madness, is in their hearts!

5. They make light of the merits of Christ, and of his satisfaction, of his sorrows, of his bloody sweat, when in his fearful agony of his bloody passion, they regard not the piercing of his hands and feet, by cruel nails, nor the piercing of his tender heart with that bloody spear. But by their contempt of him, by their unbelief, and hardness of heart, they make it a light thing to wound and pierce him again: they regard not his blood, no more than if it had been the blood of a malefactor: they offer violence to his Spirit, resist him that would apply his blood, to the salvation of their souls: they contemn his authority, make light of his kingly, priestly, and prophetic offices. O! what evil is there in this sin? and, what danger do they run? They make light of a marriage with Jesus Christ. To this end you have heard they are called, or invited to this feast. The evil therefore in refusing so gracious an offer, must needs be very great and abominable. What! will the prince espouse his poor servant, a person of so low and base degree? nay, one that hath been in actual rebellion against him? and shall this kindness, this love, this honour so undeserved, be made light of? Wonder, O heavens!

6. They make light of a marriage with Christ. This is the effect of this refusal. And this contempt they offer to the Son of God, and of all those glories that attend and accompany him!

7. They make light of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit waits upon them, to apply the blood of Christ to their wounded souls: but they make light of his motions, influences, and operations.

The Holy Spirit strives to unite their souls to the Lord Jesus, or to tie that most blessed and sacred knot. But they quench the Spirit, grieve the Spirit, resist the Spirit, in the discharge of his office, until he leaves them, and gives them over to their own heart's lusts; they must therefore of necessity perish, in regard the Holy Ghost is the only Agent that must make the death of Christ effectual to, their souls. What can a sinner do, when the Holy Spirit utterly withdraws from them? All spiritual life, and vital motions, are alone from the Holy Spirit.

8. They make light of their own precious and immortal souls; they contemn and wrong their own souls. "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all that hate me, love death," Pr 8:36.

Such that make light of Christ, hate him; the lesser love is counted a hatred, and they do not only hate Jesus Christ, but their own souls also. To love the world, to love riches, honours, and pleasures, above Christ; or husband, or wife, son, or daughter, more than the soul, is to hate and wrong Christ, and that precious soul God hath given them. Here is a blessed match offered to the soul, a spouse, a rich and glorious husband for the soul, but the sinner being led by the flesh, and by Satan, is beguiled of this inconceivable blessing. How might a child see cause to hate such an enemy, be it father, or mother, and any else, that should persuade it to slight the offer of a prince, who makes love to it, until he is so provoked, that he rejects it for ever, and resolves to visit it no more, wait at his door no more.

9. They make light of pardon of sin, which is only to be had in Christ, through his blood, and in obtaining of union with him. Brethren, none ever find pardon, who make light of Christ, and of his invitation to this marriage supper.

And, O! what is the state of that soul, whose sins are charged upon him, who lies under the guilt and power of his sins!

10. Their sin and danger is great, because they make light of all the promises of the covenant of grace, all the promises run in Christ; first, they were made to Christ, and then to believers in Christ. God hath promised to

be the God and Father of all that love Christ, that espouse Jesus Christ, and many other promises there are also. See Joh 12:26. "If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be; and if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." What a great evil is it to make light of such great and precious promises! Moreover, whosoever slights and despises the promises of the gospel, do incur on themselves all the evil, and direful wrath, that is contained in the threatenings thereof.

11. They make light of communion with Christ. "Behold! I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him, and he with me," Re 3:20. But they made light of this so great a privilege; they value not supping with Jesus Christ, communion with Christ; they slight all those choice refreshments he affords to them, that embrace him in the arms of their faith.

Moreover, as they make light of communion with Christ, so they also make light of communion of the saints, as if there was "No consolation in Christ, no comfort in love, no fellowship of the Spirit, no bowels and mercies," Php 2:1. No good in ordinances, no soul refreshment in the holy sacraments. They contemn the fat things of God's house, bread of life, and water of life, is not worth any thing with these persons; their souls loathe the heavenly manna, they cannot relish Christ's spiced wine, nor do they esteem of the sweet juice of his pomegranates, they prize their cups, their merry-meetings with their ungodly companions, above the meetings of the saints, and all the joys of Mount Sion.

12. They make light of eternal life, or of the salvation of their souls; therefore, the sin and danger which attends these persons, must needs be great. Heaven, and all the glory thereof, is slighted by them; they sell their birth-right (with profane Esau,) for a mess of pottage; they will not part with their earthly inheritance, for the glorious mansions above.

That "Far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory," 2Co 4:18; of which the apostle speaks, is as light as vanity, in the judgment of these persons; and as they make light of all things that are truly good, really good, spiritually good, whilst here; so, I say, they do of whatsoever is truly, and eternally good, great, and glorious, hereafter.

13. They also make light of hell, as not to fear the pains and punishment thereof.

They make light of the wrath of God, they fear not the anguish of an accusing conscience, the worm that dieth not; nor do they tremble at the thoughts of that fire that cannot be quenched; the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, is but a light thing in their eyes. These things considered, may serve to show their sin and danger is very great.

14. They make light of the gospel; such that sinned against Moses' law, died without mercy.

Every contumacious going beside the law, or casting it aside by commission of evil, was death; no such contumacious transgressor could escape God's just wrath; yet that obedience the law required, so far as men were capable to perform it, delivered no person from God's most strict and severe justice. But Jesus Christ, in our nature, hath answered all the demands; the gospel gives life, though the law could not. Therefore, to slight this great and glorious Redeemer, must of necessity bring the severest wrath and vengeance on all such sinners.

Sirs! There is no escaping, no avoiding the righteous punishment which the just God, will inflict upon all gospel sinners, see Heb 2:3.

15. The danger of such who make light of Christ, and of the gospel, must needs be very great, because it is the rejecting or casting contempt upon the only remedy God hath provided; they that sinned against the law, might fly to the gospel; but what will they do, or whither will they fly, that sin against the gospel? Who tread under their feet the blood of the Son of God! O what sore punishment shall these be thought worthy of? See Heb 10:2. Hath God sent his Son to be a sacrifice, to pour out his blood to save them, and shall they make light of such a cure, of such a remedy, of such grace, and divine favour? O! how low must such think to lie in hell. "Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city," Mt 10:15; for that city, or that people, or person, that will not hear the words of Christ's ministers, but make light of their message, or of that offer, which they in their great Master's name make unto them. These shall have a hotter hell than the people of Sodom. Sodomy is not so great a sin, as to make light of Christ, and his blood; which hath procured pardon for all such abominable sins. There is no sin, nor blasphemy either, against the Father or the Son, but the gospel offers pardon for. Therefore, such who slight such a remedy, procured at such a dear rate, must

needs be (it being a slighting, or making light of Christ,) the sin of unbelief, which is the worst of all sins. This is the root and foundation of all other sins, as faith is the root of all other graces. "Not one sin, (saith a learned author,) but will be engendered in the womb of this sin, as well as there is not one grace, but springs from the womb of faith." Why are men proud, covetous; why do they swear, lie, steal, commit adultery, &c., but because they do not believe, God hates them, and will condemn them; they believe not his word; nay, and this sin of unbelief, or making light of Christ, maintains all other sins in their full strength. As faith tends to weaken all sin, so unbelief keeps every sin in its full power. Also it is the great supporter of the devil's kingdom; as faith overcomes him and his kingdom, so unbelief strengthens him and his kingdom, in the soul of every such sinner, and in the world.

16. Their danger is great; for all the attributes of God, are set against this man, viz., against him that makes light of Christ. Not only divine justice, but divine mercy, love, and goodness also; therefore his sin and danger is great. "The face of God is set against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," Ps 34:16. The face of God may denote his glory, or the perfections of his nature. All God's holy and blessed attributes, are set against those persons who are guilty of this evil. O! it is sad indeed, when once mercy, love, and divine goodness, pleads against a sinner; no wrath like that which is kindled in the heart of God, for the abuse of mercy, and infinite love and goodness. Brethren, as all the blessed attributes in Christ, meet together in sweet harmony, and unite their strength to save a poor sinner that believes in Jesus; so they all unite together, to cut off and destroy for ever, all such who do not believe in him, but contrariwise make light of him, and of the merits of his blood.

17. The evil and danger that attends those that make light of Christ, and of all gospel grace, is great; because, in their so-doing, they are obedient to the devil: it is his lusts which they do, and in this he shows his utmost malice against God, Jesus Christ, and the sinner's own soul. This is to cast dirt upon God's glory, in the work of redemption. What is Satan's design herein, but to cause the sinner, as much as lieth in him, to render the grace of God in Jesus Christ, to be of none effect. So that his blood might be shed in vain. If Satan cannot hinder men from hearing the word, he stirs them up to make light of it; and such that so do, are obedient to him, and do his will, they show that they are his obedient servants and vassals.

6. From hence it appears, they do, as much as lieth in them, endeavour to nullify the glorious work of Christ's mediation, it denies him the honour of his meritorious passion; no sin doth so immediately oppose Christ as Mediator, and trample upon that inestimable sacrifice, as this doth. What, make light of such an undertaking! a work of such a nature, brought in as the result of such a council, effected by such a price; and to accomplish such a high design, and not value it above one base lust! What, choose rather to see a new bought piece of land, or a farm, or to prove five yoke of oxen, rather than to have an interest in Christ's most glorious mediation, person, and benefits!

APPLICATION

1. Information. We may from hence see the infinite patience of God, O I admire this God, in his long-suffering and forbearance!

Doth he still wait upon such wretched sinners, that thus slight and contemn his most infinite love, goodness, and mercy? Is it not a marvellous thing, that God should let such creatures live one day longer? God certainly bears infinitely more reproaches and indignity, by this sin, than all men in the world ever bore; yet he hath as much patience to bear with them, as he hath power to punish them: it is not because he wants power to ease himself of these adversaries, that he spares them so long; none but God could endure such affronts from an enemy.

2. This sin is aggravated by their continuance in this sin, as God's patience is greatedened, by his repeated offers of his grace and mercy. "He sent his servants to invite them again, he sent other servants to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready," Lu 14:17; but as often as God invited them, they rejected, and made light of his invitation. O wonder that after the first refusal of Christ, God will send to them again, and again! and yet doth the sinner persist in his obstinacy and infidelity; and will God still solicit the sinner, and call and cry to him? yea, knock again and again at his door.

3. Here is great encouragement for the worst of sinners, to come to Christ, and not to give up their hope, though they have many times slighted and made light of his sovereign grace; God nevertheless calls you again. If there were no sinners called but once, your state perhaps might be lamentable indeed, because some of you have been called many times. Oh,

how many times did some of you that are believers, make light of Christ, and of his gracious invitations, before you were made willing to receive him? Therefore, let not such that have refused his calls, despair of his acceptance, if they embrace him now.

4. Terror. It may be, notwithstanding, for terror to all such sinners that are guilty of this sin, i.e., of making light of Christ and the gospel.

1. Consider, as you have heard, how great this sin is, and what dangers you do run?

2. Is it not irrational, or a most unreasonable thing, to make light of God himself, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? do not you own the holy scriptures? and that the gospel is a true revelation of his eternal purpose, of saving men by Jesus Christ? Do you not own he was put to death to save your souls? and that there is no other way of salvation? and is it not a most irrational or unreasonable act in you, to make light of this Christ, and way of everlasting happiness? Art thou convinced, that there is no other way to save thy soul from hell? and wilt thou make light of this way? Art thou wounded to death! and art convinced there is no other balsam can heal thee but this? And wilt thou make light of it? Art thou convinced that thou art polluted, and abominably filthy, and that there is no other Fountain can wash and cleanse thee, and wilt thou slight, or make light of this fountain?

3. Is it not also a most ungrateful act, or a most unkind requital of God and Christ, for such inconceivable love, grace, and favour; what, wilt thou fly in the face of him, and cast dirt upon him that wrought out a way of life for thee, by his own blood? Do you not think it was a most horrid wickedness and ingratitude in the Jews, who preferred Barabbas before Jesus, and in Judas, to value Christ but at thirty pieces of silver? And dost not thou know that thou art as guilty of as great ingratitude, and casts as great indignity upon him, that dost value a soul-murdering lust above him, that will not part with thy beastly pleasures, sinful profits, and cursed companions, for all the good that is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ?

4. It is also an inexcusable evil, there is no plea for this thy great wickedness. The Jews (as one observes) had some plea, though it would not excuse them for their great evil, in refusing of the Lord Jesus, i.e., he was clothed with infirmities, appeared as a poor man, and had no form or comeliness, or no external beauty and glory, as they expected their Messiah

would appear in. But what plea canst thou make, since thou knowest he was indeed the Son of God? they saw darkly, and were under a cloud, and knew not well the meaning of those mysterious types and shadows, but we see, with open face, now the Lord is ascended, and glorified in his highest majesty and glory; thou dost not doubt of the truth of the Christian religion, and yet darest thou make light of this Saviour, and of that great salvation purchased by him? Will not thy misery be great? Is it not a just and righteous thing in God to set thee at nought, or make light of thee, who hast set him, and all his counsel, at nought, and hast made light of him?

5. Exhortation. Strive to be sensible of the malignity and greatness of this sin, and repent of this thy wickedness. There may be yet mercy, if thou dost not further proceed in thy abominable evil. All thy former sins shall be forgiven, if thou now dost believe, and come to this marriage supper.

6. This affords also much consolation to believers, who are delivered from so great sin and danger. Oh! prize God's favour, who hath dispersed the cloud of darkness, which had seized upon your noble souls. What a blessed state are you in, who are pulled out of the pit, and whose feet are set upon a rock, who are saved from hell, and have an undoubted title to eternal life.

SERMON XV

But they made light of it.—Mt 22:5.

Doct. Many sinners make light of Jesus Christ, and of all the blessings that are offered unto them in the gospel.

I showed you the great evil and danger of making light of Christ, and his benefits.

IV. I shall show you from whence it doth arise, or come to pass, that sinners make light of Jesus Christ; or give you the reasons of it.

I. It ariseth, or is occasioned from that great ignorance, and woeful blindness that is in the hearts of sinners.

1. They are ignorant of that need and necessity there is of coming unto Christ, and so to feed upon the provision which is prepared at this marriage supper. If people were convinced that there was no corn, no bread to be had, but at the king's court, or in his granary, they would haste thither; or, that there was no water, but in the king's fountain, provided the granary and fountain were opened, and free to all comers, and this was made known by his proclamation, what multitudes would resort to get corn to supply their necessity!

Now, brethren, it is thus here in a spiritual sense; there is no bread of life, nor water of life; no food for our souls to be had, but in Jesus Christ alone; it is in this respect, as it was in Egypt, there was no corn in all the land, but what was laid up in Joseph's hand by the order of Pharaoh, and when the people came to Pharaoh, he sent them to Joseph, so the Father sends all poor, distressed, and needy souls to Jesus Christ, the true Joseph, But whilst men remain ignorant of this, or do not see the absolute necessity of coming to Christ, or of coming to this marriage supper, they will not come, but make light of this gracious invitation, thinking that they may be provided other ways, or have peace with God, justification, pardon of sin, and eternal life elsewhere, or in some other way: as,

1. Perhaps they think to have it by a sober life, or by doing that which is just and honest in the sight of all men; they think this way to be justified, and saved for ever.

2. Others think inherent holiness through Christ's merits, is that which justifies them in the sight of God.

3. Another sort affirm, that the light which is within all men, is the true Saviour; and that, by obedience unto that light, men may be led into all truth, convinced of all sin, be justified from sin and be eternally saved.

Now, brethren, this is to seek justification by the works of the law; for pray note it well, that the law that was written on two tables of stone, and that law or light which is within all men that come into the world, is as to the matter or substance of it, but all one and the same law: hence the Gentiles, who were said to be without the law, (that is, without the law in tables of stone, or without the ministration of it, that was given to the people of Israel) had the law, or light thereof in their hearts; which shew the works of the law in their hearts, Ro 2:15. That is the sum of the law, i.e., to love God above all, and our neighbours as ourselves; or else the office of the law, which is morally and naturally just and good, and to convince and reprove such that walk not according unto it; but if by the law in either of these respects, justification is to be obtained, Christ is dead in vain, Ga 2:21. So that the ignorance and delusion of these men, is very great: for,

1. Their doctrine teacheth poor people to seek justification by the works of the law.

2. To frustrate and make void the grace of God, in sending of his own Son, and so to render his death a needless thing; for if Christ had not come, all men would have had the law and light within; and if by that righteousness, viz., by the law; either without us or within us, we might have been justified and saved, what need was there of Christ to come and keep the law for us, and to die hi our stead, to satisfy the justice of God, for our breach of the law? "But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent his own Son," &c. Ro 8:3. Therefore it appears, that these men who are for the works of the law, are under the curse, as the Apostle shows, Ga 3:10; und evident it is, that by the law no man is, nor can be justified: "for if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law," Ga 3:21. If there had been any law, or light which could have given life, justification, and salvation, it should have been by it: and thus these men, like the Jews of old, being ignorant of God's righteousness, that is the righteousness of Christ, who is God as well as man;

and from hence it is that most men make light of Christ, and of salvation wrought for us by him. The apostle ascribes it to their ignorance, and plain it is, it was these our Saviour, in the first place, means in my text, they made light of it, and it was upon this foot of account.

If I am persuaded, that I have enough bread of my own, I will not go to my neighbour's door for it; he that thinks he can spin a righteousness to clothe him out of his own bowels, he will never go to Christ to beg a garment of him, to hide his nakedness, and so to present him comely in the sight of God. But when a sinner comes to see all his righteousness is but filthy rags, and all his own food is but husks, as the prodigal did, he will soon see cause to go to the Lord Jesus, or to go to his Father's house.

2. They make light of Christ, and of all his benefits also, by reason of their great ignorance, of the nature, worth, and excellency of the provision which is prepared at this marriage supper. Alas! they never tasted how good God is, Christ is, how sweet his love and favour is! how desirable pardon of sin, and peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost is! O taste, and see that the Lord is good! Ps 24:8. This denotes their ignorance, or their want of experience. They may have heard of that great good which is in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ; but it was only by hearsay; they were ignorant of it, as to a true experimental knowledge thereof, and therefore may, and no doubt do, make light of it.

Ignorance of God's nature the cause why Christ is slighted

3. They are also ignorant of God in the perfections of his nature, and blessed attributes of his absolute purity, holiness, justice, and righteousness. They think that God forgives our offence, without a plenary satisfaction to his infinite justice, and holy law: nay, and many in these days are left so to the ignorance and blindness of their own hearts, as to disown all revealed religion, and hence some have of late affirmed, that there is nothing contained in the gospel, or doctrine of Christianity, that is mysterious, or above human reason; though, blessed be God, he has raised up some worthy men who have been helped fully to confute such notorious errors: the apostle says, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," 1Ti 3:16. &c. Is not that a great mystery, that God should be man, and man be God, in one person; that he that made the world, should become a babe of a day old; and that we should be justified by the obedience and righteousness of another, by a righteousness imputed to us.

The truth is, man is unable to understand, by all his natural wisdom, things of God; as the apostle show, in the wisdom of God, “the world by wisdom knew not God,” 1Co 1:21. And yet is there nothing contained in the gospel mysterious; but men being born under the covenant of works, and having some remains of that broken law in them, they contemn the wisdom of God in a mystery, viz: his great and glorious contrivance of our salvation by Jesus Christ; because it is above their carnal, or human reason to comprehend it.

It is strange to them that we should be justified, acquitted, and pronounced righteous, perfectly righteous in God’s sight, who, to that very time, were ungodly, and that by the righteousness and obedience of a poor man, condemned as a wicked person, or a cursed malefactor who was hanged upon a tree. This doctrine the learned Greeks of old accounted foolishness, and it ariseth from that great ignorance which is in them, of the holy nature of God, and tenor of his holy law; and from hence it is, that they make light of Christ, and of all his benefits.

4. It may also be through, their ignorance of God’s invitation as to them; they do not think that God speaks to them, or that they are the lost sinners Jesus Christ is offered unto; because perhaps they have got more righteousness of their own than many others have. They make light of Christ, and of his righteousness, because they are not swearers, drunkards, thieves, nor unclean persons: possibly some men may think none need trouble themselves about coming unto Christ, but profane persons.

5. Some of them also may be ignorant of the voice of God, in the ministry of the gospel: they know not the voice of God like Samuel, when a child, they know not who it is that calls them; Samuel thought that it was Eli that called him; “Here I am, for thou didst call me,” 1Sa 3:6. Many think it is not the voice of God that calls them; but the voice of such or such a minister, not Christ’s voice, but man’s voice, man’s invitation; “If thou knewest who it is that saith unto thee give me to drink,” Joh 4:10. She knew not it was Christ, the true Saviour, the blessed Messiah that spake unto her. She took him to be a mere man, only one of the Jewish nation: and thus sinners may think, when ministers call them to come to Christ, to come to the marriage supper, it is nothing more but a call of men, and perhaps they may conclude, that the servants of God, chiefly by all preaching, design to proselyte them to their opinion, to make them either Presbyterians, independents, or Baptists, whereas, if they are faithful ministers, it is chiefly

to bring them unto Jesus Christ, it is to deal with their consciences; but this they may be ignorant of, and so make light of this most gracious invitation.

6. They may, moreover, be ignorant of the freeness of these good things, to all right comers; some perhaps may think they may not come, must not come yet; they are not humble enough, or are not prepared for grace; the world is too much in their hearts at present; they dare not come whilst they are so much encumbered with worldly affairs; or that they must not believe in Christ, until they have got a good degree of repentance, and sorrow for sin; they think that they must bring some worthiness with them, some money, or something to commend them unto Jesus Christ, or else they may suppose they do not feel themselves so empty, so hungry, as they ought to be before they come to eat of the food prepared at this great supper. The truth is none will come to Christ, none will feed on him, or receive him by faith, but such that see the want, or need of him; it is the thirsty soul, the hungry soul that invited; but many may look for this to be in them, to a greater degree than at present they experience, which may arise from their ignorance. No doubt but some are more hunger pinched than others, or they may have a more extreme thirst in them than some have, and yet they are invited; it is not the degree of the sense of the want of Christ, as the truth of that sense they have of the want of him, and of his righteousness.

Brethren, this ignorance in some persons, as touching the way and manner how they must come to the Lord Jesus, may cause them to neglect, or defer coming. What, venture now upon Christ? what, believe now, before we have reformed our ways? or have got some meet qualifications? no, this they dare not do. What so filthy, so unclean, and yet venture to come to Christ? as if great sinners, such that are most abominably filthy, must not come to the Fountain to be washed; as if morality could prepare men for grace; or that none but sober moral persons ought to believe in Jesus Christ, and yet he says, that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners; and that the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Alas, sirs! all reformation of life, repentance, sorrow for sins before faith, are dead works, and profit no man as to the salvation of his soul. All these things are but a man's own righteousness, which are but filthy rags, and please not God; wouldst thou come in these vile and loathsome rags, to this marriage, to be espoused and married unto Jesus Christ? O blush and be ashamed! Know, O sinner, that thou must come as a poor, naked, polluted, and undone wretch (as you have been often told) and yet wilt thou not come to him until thou art more fit, more trim, in thine own eyes. Believe it is a delusion of Satan; if

thou makest light of this great truth, thou wilt be found to make light of the gospel, and of the free-grace of God.

II. It is from that natural enmity, that is in the hearts of sinners against God, which causeth them to make light of Jesus Christ; this is another cause why sinners do thus contemn and despise the riches and freeness of God's grace, in Jesus Christ; "The carnal mind is enmity against God," Ro 8:7. Sinners are in captivity, under the power of sin, yea, the very slaves of sin and Satan; and it is grace alone that slays that enmity. "Of the same that a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage," 2Pe 2:19; they are in strong chains (and fetters, to their own lusts) and Satan by these bands and cords, holds them back from coming to this marriage, he fills their hearts with prejudice to Christ, and stirs up that evil seed and principle, which is naturally in them, to make light of the Lord Jesus; "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his own sins," Pr 5:22. He thinks to be disentangled hereafter, from his lusts, and from the world, but it is all in vain; for he is in perfect bondage, and is neither able nor willing to see himself at liberty, his sins hold him fast,

III. Many make light of Christ, from the inordinate love of this world, in respect of the riches, honours, and pleasures thereof; there is a cursed trinity, as well as a blessed Trinity, a trinity below, as well as a Trinity above, viz., "The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1Jo 2:16; and sinners love these, adore these, and bow down to these three, more then they love, adore, and bow down to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; earthly things suit with earthly hearts, carnal delights feast the carnal part, the flesh shall be fed, though the soul be starved, and out of love to these things, all spiritual dainties are slighted, and made light of; they had rather feast at the devil's table, than feed and feast with the Lord Jesus Christ, they had rather be feasted with the sweet, flesh-pleasing meat, roasted at the fire of lusts, and as it is taken off the devil's spit, than with the fat things of God's house. Tell them where they may have a good bargain, or how to get riches, and be made great and honourable among men, or of a merry meeting, to carouse, drink, and be jovial amongst their beastly companions; it is out of love to these things, that they condemn all things that are spiritually good; but let such know that they cannot feed with Christ, and with devils, "Ye cannot (saith Paul) drink of the cup of the Lord, and of the cup of devils. No man can serve two masters," 1Co 10:21, that is, who are directly contrary the one to the other, and have quite opposite interests to carry on; "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," men cannot love sin, love the world,

and yet love Jesus Christ. "He will either love the one and hate the other, or cleave to the one, and forsake (and make light of) the other," see once again this parable as it is recorded by Lu 14:18-20. "And they all with one consent began to make excuse; the first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused." Strange! Is this all the business this man had for to do? It was not to go buy the piece of ground; no, he had bought it before, and no doubt but he had seen it before to: men do not use to buy land, before they have seen it: here was no ground to fear of loosing his purchase, for he had bought it, but he must needs go again to see it: it ran in his mind, it had got possession of his heart. But is not this a poor and lame excuse? Oh! for what a trifle do some men make light of Jesus Christ? They had rather go and walk into the fields, and see their land, and how their corn grows, then to attend upon the word of God, and to obtain an interest in the Lord Jesus. "And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused," ver. 19. It was not to buy his oxen; no, but it was to prove to them, no doubt but he had made some proof of them, before he knew they would draw; but this shows how little he valued spiritual things, and that his love was set upon the things of this life. "And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Sensual pleasures, drown and swallow up the hearts of some men; carnal men do not only pursue their lusts, or do such things that are a direct breach of the law of God, but also inordinately let their hearts run out upon lawful things, a man may lawfully marry a wife; marriage is God's ordinance, but some men through an inordinate love to their wives and children, make light of Christ, and of all the blessings of the gospel: I have, in speaking to another parable, largely opened this, and therefore shall say no more to it here. Whoredom and excess of wine,* take away the hearts of some, who like unclean birds, choose rather to feed on carrion on a dunghill, then with doves upon pure grain; or like swine, they will not exchange their acorns or husks, for the best rarities in the world: and others by overprizing earthly enjoyments, (which are blessings in themselves) eternally lose their souls; it is no wonder that men who have sensual hearts, are inordinately in love with earthly things, make light of Jesus Christ, and of union with him.

IV. Sinners make light of Christ, and of all spiritual blessings, from a conceit of self fulness; will such that are Laodicea like, i.e., see no need of anything, buy of Christ gold tried in the fire, to enrich them, or white raiment to clothe them? No, they, are increased in goods, and in their own conceit need nothing; such that have a fulness in themselves, bread to eat of their

own, will not come to this feast: tell some learned men who study philosophy, and other human arts and sciences, that they had better study their own hearts, and the knowledge of a crucified Christ; they will but laugh at you, and make light of such good counsel, and perhaps tell you, that you are a fool: and will you teach them, sirs? As there is a religious fulness, as well as a sinful fulness, so there is a learned fulness, which renders Jesus Christ but of little worth, and value with some men, they had rather study Aristotle, Seneca and Plato, than Jesus Christ and him crucified, some of this sort, study more how to get a fat benefice, than to feed on Christ, and win souls to him. Moreover, tell some other men, who are pure and righteous in their own eyes, of the righteousness of Christ: alas! they make light of that, and say, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men, nor as this publican," Pr 27:7; these men have such a full stomach, that their souls loathe the honeycomb.

V. Some make light of all gospel dainties, by reason their hearts are so full of the cares of this life; tell some poor men of the bread of life? Ah, (saith he) I had rather you could tell me how I may come out of debt, and have whatsoever I want for myself and family; intreat them to believe in Christ, and tell them that the Lord Jesus hath paid all the debts of poor believers, and that God is satisfied in Christ; that all that believe in him are happy for ever; press them to come to this feast, away with those stories (say they), we cannot sleep, our hearts are be full of the cares of this world; we fear our other debts, more than those you speak of, not knowing but we may be laid in prison are long: Martha, though a good woman, was too remiss in attending on Christ, through the incumbrances of the world, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful," Lu 10:41, &c.

VI. Many make light of Christ and gospel blessings, by reason of the sufferings of the cross, they that embrace Jesus Christ, may be undone to be religious, say they is the way to be ruined: I assure you, say they in their hearts, the food you invite us to eat, that is to be had at this marriage feast, is but melancholy diet, and it will embitter all the comforts of this life. But, alas! all this is because they never tasted how good the Lord is, they have no experience of that real, good, and transcendant sweetness that is in the enjoyment of Christ's love.

VII. Some perhaps make light of Christ and of this gospel banquet, by means of their carnal relations, they are afraid to displease them, it will cause

(saith a man) strife to rise between me and my wife, or saith a woman, between me and my husband, or between me and my father and mother, or between me and my best friends; by which it appears that they love husband and wife, father and mother, better than Jesus Christ. O, saith one, I must obey my parents, will you have me to be a disobedient child? Many are like Ahaziah, whose mother was his counsellor, to do that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; but know such, who in religious matters chose to please their parents more than to please Jesus Christ, make light of those things, and refuse the offers of eternal life. Some parents who are ungodly, hate the thoughts that their children should be religious, and are ready (like a wicked wretch I have heard of) to seek ways to debauch a pious son or daughter, rather than to see them truly religious; wicked relations and ungodly companions cause some to make light of this gospel banquet.

VIII. The main cause of all from whence most make light of this invitation, to come to this marriage feast, is unbelief. Some believe not what they are told of the blessed state such are in, who receive Jesus Christ, but are ready to conclude, they are but fancies and idle dreams.

Some others are also under the power of unbelief, and ready to say, though Christ be a blessed object, and pardon of sin be no small blessing, yet they are never like to obtain those high privileges, no, but seem to say, as some of old did, "there is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices," Jer 18:12. You have here, first, a desperate conclusion, there is no hope; and secondly a desperate resolution, "but we will walk after our own devices." There is no hope, that we should obtain an interest in Christ, and be justified, pardoned, and saved for ever. No hope, that we should get our hearts changed, or get power over our evil and abominable lusts, and hence they slight and make light of all the means of grace, they not considering the mighty power of God, who is able to change the vilest hearts in the world; but sin is so rooted in their affections, and they withal are lazy, and love to sleep, or abide in, a spiritual slumber, or slothful condition, and being not willing to strive against sin, nor attend upon the world, nor cry to God, they make light of this heavenly feast.

SERMON XVI

So the servant came, and shewed his Lord these things; then the master of the house being angry, said unto his servant, go out quickly, into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither, the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.— Lu 14:21

The rich Pharisees among the Jews made light of it as you have heard, and now the poor, the maimed, and blind, two things may be signified.

1. The poorest sort; the poor have the gospel preached to them, and they receive it.

2. Great sinners, or such that are in a miserable condition, in respect of their souls, or notorious sinners, as Publicans and harlots, the Scribes and Pharisees, making light of the gracious offer of eternal life; true, all men naturally are in a poor, maimed, and deplorable condition; but these no doubt appeared so to be, in their own sight:

“Go out quickly,” &c.

Doct. That sinner must presently, without delay, come to Christ, and even as sinners, as poor, maimed, halt, and blind.

I have, under another parable, showed, what to do a thing quickly doth imply; here it signifies the great speed sinners should make; they must believe presently, without delaying it one moment; they must not stay to get any previous qualifications, before they come to Christ.

First, I shall give you a few reasons, why sinners should presently come to Christ or not delay.

Secondly, Show, who are poor, maimed, halt, blind, &c.

I. Because God (or the great King that made this feast) was angry with others who made light of it, making excuse, and delay coming, and for this they were cut off from tasting of this supper. The base delays and trifling of some provokes God to anger.

II. Because this is business of the highest concernment in the world; what, are sinners wounded, mortally wounded, and shall they delay accepting

a plaister presently? what malefactor condemned to die, would not presently accept of a pardon, if it be offered to him.

III. Because now all things are just ready: shall God wait, Christ wait the sinner's time? Or, shall not God's time be their time.

IV. Because the present time is the accepted time: "Behold! now is the accepted time; behold! now is the day of salvation," 2Co 6:2. Now, "to day, if you will here his voice;" Heb 2:7. If God calls to-day, none must say to-morrow. "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth," Pr 27:1.

V. Because now is the day of sinners' visitation; and if they lose this day, the things of their peace may be for ever hid from their eyes, as they were from Jerusalem. "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes," Lu 19:42.

The gospel proclamation runs thus, quickly, presently; it commands sinners presently; to throw down their arms, and lay hold of the offers of free pardon now, and delay not.

VI. Quickly, Because ministers are commanded to endeavour to bring them in presently; they cannot assure any person, that he shall be entertained or find mercy, if he delays one day.

VII. Because the day of men's lives are very short and uncertain; sinner, thou mayest be dead before another day; God cast some off suddenly, therefore thou must presently close with Christ, or throw thy soul upon the Lord Jesus.

VIII. Because the harvest-day and gospel summer may be soon at an end; the length of other harvest-days may be known, and also market-days, but the length of the day of grace we know not.

Secondly, Show, who these poor maimed, halt, and blind are, who are to be brought in presently.

1. The poor refer to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, or to such that are sick, and see the need of a physician, or wounded and want a sovereign balm to heal their sores; that are also hungry, starved, having no bread of

their own to eat, or nothing to sustain food, satisfy, and support their languishing souls; so that a plentiful feast of fat things, must needs be welcome to them, though the rich and self-righteous Pharisees made light of it.

II. These poor and maimed ones see also, that they are naked, or have nothing but filthy rags to cover them; and therefore are glad to hear there is at this wedding a rich garment, prepared for all the guests that are invited, and that come to it. They see they have nothing of their own, neither to eat nor to clothe them, nor a penny to buy anything withal.

III. Neither can they work to earn anything to supply their necessities, being maimed, halt, and blind; he is not so poor and miserable, though he has nothing, if he can work, and that way get him bread to eat; but these see, that they have laboured for that which is not bread, and that which satisfies not.

IV. Moreover,* they are so poor and miserable, that they have no friend nor brother to do anything for them; no help by the law, no help by their own righteousness, no help from men, no nor by what any saints, ministers, or angels can do for them.

V. So poor, wretched, and miserable, that, besides their present want, they are in debt owing ten thousand talents, and not one farthing to pay.

Question. How came they to be in this miserable condition?

Answer. By original and actual sin,* or by falling among thieves, who wounded them, and stripped them of their raiment, and left them half dead; sin and Satan are those thieves.

Question. How come they to see and know this is their sad and deplorable condition?

Answer. 1. They come to see and know it by the law, the law being opened to them, in the spirituality of it; "sin revived and I died," as to all hope or help by it.

2. By the revelation of the gospel, in Christ's poverty, in his bloody agony and crucifixion, they came to see the horrid evil of sin; and know that there is

no help nor relief, but by his obedience, by his righteousness, or by his atonement.

3. They come to know this to be their miserable state, by the conviction of the Spirit; “When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince the world of sin; of sin, because they believe not in me,” Joh 16:8-9. The Holy Spirit convinceth these poor sinners, that they have no bread to eat, no clothes, no garment to cover them, nor any power or strength to work for life; and that they can do nothing to wash away the guilt and filth of their sins.

Question. Why doth God bring them to see this their condition, and send his servants to call such as these, yea, and with all speed, presently to bring them to the marriage feast?

Answer. 1. Because God would embitter sin unto them, which is so evil in itself, and was so bitter to his own dear Son. God will make all men know, what sin is first or last; either in this world, in a way of grace and love, or in the world to come, in a way of wrath and indignation.

2. Because the rich, or self-righteous ones will not come: they that have a self-fulness, that find no want in themselves, make light of this spiritual banquet, as you have heard: the prodigal thought not of returning home to his father until a famine arose in his souls.

3. Because until sinners are convinced that this is their condition, they will never value Christ, prize and esteem of the bread of life, nor will any but such exalt free-grace, and magnify the Lord Jesus; and then God sends for them in haste, or that they may quickly be brought to Christ; because otherwise, they will fall under utter despair, and Satan would get great advantage over them: they being ready to die, are proper objects of God’s rich mercy, love, and favour.

APPLICATION

1. This may tend to humble proud sinners, and show what a condition they are in: they will not come to Jesus Christ; they are blind, wounded, and wretched, but see it not know it not, and so are like to perish for ever.

2. This also may tend to reprehend such who tell us, that the elect are not really in a naked state, wretched and miserable, before faith is wrought in

them; but that they are actually justified, healed, and pardoned, whilst profane and ungodly persons, though they know it not; can such be said to be naked and miserable, that are clothed with the righteousness of Christ?

3. This shows the absolute necessity of Christ, and of a vital union with him; and also with what speed convinced sinners should come to Jesus Christ.

4. Moreover, it shows what a wonderful mercy it is, for a sinner to be brought to see his sin, and to have a true and real sense of his undone condition: God saith to his servant, "Go quickly, and bring hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind;" these shall come, nay they will come; God hath opened their eyes, and wrought a will in them to take the water of life.

5. These souls are willing to beg, they are ready to starve, and know they have nothing of their own, and so readily go to Jesus Christ for all things they want; they see divine wrath ready to consume them, but are convinced, that, by the blood of Christ, that wrath is quenched, and God reconciled; and they being maimed, are in great pain, and therefore gladly receive a plaister to heal their wounds.

"And the servant said, Lord it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room," ver. 23.

The poor outcasts of Israel, lost sinners of the Jews came in, they believed in Christ, they came to the marriage supper: but still there is yet room for more, even for poor sinners of the Gentiles also.

Doctrine. Though many receive Jesus Christ, or come to the marriage supper, yet there is room for more still.

First, I shall show you, what these words denote, there is yet room.

Secondly, show you, where there is room.

Thirdly, why it is said, there is yet room; and show you how long there will be room.

1. This word implies, that there is a certain definite number, that shall and must come to this supper, i.e., there are places prepared for more, which are yet empty.

II. It signifies, that God will have his house full: see “that my house may be full,” all the elect must be called, and many of them were among the Gentile nations.

III. It implies, either that some who were called did delay, or else that there were some that were not yet invited, or not yet called, the servant was sent again.

IV. It denotes the largeness, or the extensiveness of God’s love to sinners; his love is not extended to all universally, yet it is extended to all the nations of the world, not to the Jews only, but to the Gentiles also: Christ was “sent to be a light to the Gentiles, that he might be God’s salvation to the ends of the earth,” Lu 2:32. Many have been called, and yet there is room for multitudes more, who, in the latter days, shall be called, and shall flock like doves to the window.

Question. How may we know in what nation or place some of God’s elect are who shall be called?

Answer. 1. Where the gospel is sent, there no doubt are some of God’s elect ones, be it what nation, kingdom, city, or town whatsoever: God will not sow where he shall not reap. O happy England, happy London, happy Bristol, happy are those cities, that have the gospel in a clear ministration; if sent to them, there is a seed, a remnant, that God will bring or gather to himself.

2. Where God sows the seed of the word plentifully, and brings the gospel to their very doors; and also brings sinners under the word: this is a sign of grace to many of their souls; there is little hopes of them that will not hear.

3. When people give attention to the word,* hear it diligently, and the convictions of the word and Spirit takes hold of their hearts: when God opens the heart of a man or woman, as he opened the heart of Lydia, to attend upon the word, it is a sign they belong to the election of grace.

Secondly, where there is yet room.

Answ. I. There is room in the heart of God, and in the heart of Jesus Christ. Solomon; (it is thought) in his great love extended to so many, was a type of Christ; and also, that his loving of Pharaoh's daughter, held forth Christ's love to the Gentiles. Oh! what love hath Christ to us tawny and sunburnt Gentiles, that we should be the darlings of Jesus? there is yet room in the Father's heart, and in the Son's heart, for thousands of sinners.

II. There is yet room in the election of grace, that is not full yet; I mean, they that were given to Christ, and chosen to eternal life, are not all yet called: God sees and knows who are his, and who have been called, and are gone to heaven, and who are not yet called, and until they are all brought in, there is room in the election for the conversion of them.

III. There is room in God's house below, I mean in his Church; there are yet many empty places that must be filled, and God will fill his house with guests; Egypt, Ethiopia, Sheba, must come in; Turks, Tartar, Pagans, and infidels, shall be called: "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to the windows?" Isa 60:8. "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong people, I the Lord will hasten it in his time."

IV. There is yet room in the marriage chamber, i.e., the covenant of grace, into the bonds and bounds of which, Jesus Christ will bring all his elect; they that are decreetively his, and he struck hands for them, and therefore he will espouse and marry them all first or last.

V. And lastly, there is room in heaven, heaven is not yet full; "In my Father's house are many dwelling-places," Joh 14:2. And not one of them places shall be long empty.

Thirdly, why is it said there is yet room.

Answer. 1. Because God would discover his great love to poor sinners, even to the sinners of the Gentiles; and that no poor sinner might despair who is not yet called.

II. Because Christ's mystical body is not yet complete; some members are yet wanting; all the branches are not yet grafted into the true vine and olive-tree.

III. It is said, there is yet room, that ministers may know their work is not yet done; and therefore, be diligent to bring in all whose hearts are made willing.

IV. To let us know the great patience and forbearance of God, though sinners still refuse to come in, and accept of mercy, and persist in their evil ways, yet God sends to them, to acquaint them there is mercy for them in his heart, and a place for them, yea room enough still in his house.

Question. How long will there be room?

Answer. 1. So long that God is pleased to continue the gospel, to this or that place, land, or nation.

2. So long as the patience and long-suffering of God is continued, or he is upon the throne of grace, and is not risen up from his place, where he sits between the cherubims.

3. So long as the Spirit of God strives with men, or with any poor sinner: when God said, his Spirit should strive no more with the old world, there was no more room for them in his heart, no, nor in the world.

4. So long as the harvest lasts, and until all the elect are not called, and some things are not fulfilled that God hath spoken, even until Christ deliver up the kingdom to the Father, having finished his mediatorial work and office.

APPLICATION

I. Bless God, poor sinners, that there is yet room: O, how good is God, in providing so large a wedding-chamber! and to extend his love and favour to so many! “And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,” Re 5:11.

II. Let no sinner from henceforth say there is no room; if thou hast got room for Christ in thy heart, there is room for thee in his heart.

III. Comfort. Sirs! It is a sign you are some of them from whom there is yet room, for these reasons following:

1. Because you have the Gospel continued to you; the kingdom of heaven is not yet taken from you.

2. Because you (especially some of you) attend upon the word with diligence, as men that are sensible of the worth of it.

3. Because it begins to reach some of your hearts, and causes you to cry out, what must we do to be saved?

IV. Reproof. Yet it may be, by way of reprehension, to such of you that delay; O, consider you are called to come quickly, presently, and not defer the great concerns of your precious souls, to another day; for the Lord's sake take rebuke: what! will you be like Lot?

V. Exhortation. Haste, haste to the wedding-chamber, lest you never eat of the King's supper, no, nor taste of it; you know not how long the harvest may last, and the Spirit of God utterly leave you, and strive no more with you for ever.

“And the Lord said unto his servant, go out into the high-ways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled,” ver. 23.

I have already opened these words at the beginning, by way of exposition. These that are here mentioned are the Gentiles, who were out of the Jewish Church, and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and were afar off, who seemed mere outcasts or vagabonds, lying in the high-ways, and under hedges. What this compulsion is we have opened, and showed it does not intend outward force or violence; our Lord never taught any Spanish conversion, nor French conversion; not to dragoon them, or, by inhuman cruelties, to compel them against their consciences; no, this is of the devil, and not of Christ.

High-ways. Such that go on in the common road of sin, or in the high-way to hell and destruction, the ways that all the Gentiles walked before called. From hence, note the

Doct. God extends mercy to the worst of sinners, even to idolaters.

As all the Gentiles were; even such that sacrificed to devils: “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God,” 1Co 10:20. They had images, and the evil angels answered in those images, which they called oracles, and thought it was a speech from God, whereas it was the devil that spoke, and them they worshipped; as many of the poor heathens do now, whom they call evil gods, and fear and serve them, more than the God of heaven and earth, and yet God offered grace, and invited such sinners as these, to come to this blessed Gospel feast; which may be great encouragement to the vilest of men, to look to Jesus Christ, and not to despair of God’s mercy, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

For I say unto you, that none of those men who which were bidden, shall taste of my supper; that is, none of them, Jews or others, who desired to be excused; and made light of the gracious tender of the Lord Jesus; they shall not taste of my love, of pardon of sin, of free justification, nor of any other gospel blessings or privileges; they shall not taste of anything that is truly spiritually good; they shall never see my kingdom, nor know what heaven is. O! it is a dreadful and most dangerous thing to slight Jesus Christ, or make light of the offers of grace, or gospel invitations; let all such therefore tremble, who are found guilty of this great sin and wickedness.

“And when the king came to see the guests, he saw there a man not having a wedding-garment on, and he said, Friend, how earnest thou hither, not having a wedding garment, and he was speechless?”

Question. When may the king be said to come and view the guests? shall any wicked man get into heaven, or into the wedding chamber, when Christ comes at the last day?

Answ. No no, the door will be shut against ‘all unbelievers then; therefore it must refer to the visible church: here many get in amongst the saints, in the church militant, who have not a wedding garment, and Christ will say unto such, friend! How earnest thou here, or how gottest thou among my people, not having on a wedding garment, or not being clothed with my righteousness; but appearest in thy filthy rags, in my presence?

Doct. The Lord Jesus takes, or will take a view of all his guests; and if any have not a wedding garment, he will soon have his eye upon such a person.

In speaking to this point of doctrine; I shall,

First, show, what a view Christ takes of all his guests.

Secondly, show, why Christ will or doth take such a view.

Thirdly, show, what is meant by the wedding garment.

Christ views all our hearts

I. Jesus Christ doth and will take a strict view.

1. He will and doth view their hearts; “I am he that searcheth the heart and reins,” Re 2:23. This shows Christ is the most high God, he sees whether all those who are in his church have changed hearts, new, or renewed hearts, or not, whether their hearts be sincere and upright, or not, whether they have believing hearts, or true faith or not, whether they have humble obedient hearts or not.

2. He views their thoughts, to see whether evil thoughts are lodged in them or not.

3. He views all the motions, counsels, designs, purposes, desires, ends, and aims of all their hearts.

4. Christ views the lives of all his guests, or such that are got into his church, he sees how they live, and what conversations they lead, how they behave themselves at home, and abroad; when in the company of wicked men, as well as when among his own people; also he sees what conscience they make of their duty, and what love they have to one another, and to his poor saints, and faithful ministers, and how they carry it in their families, the husband to the wife, the wife to the husband, parents to children, and children to parents. “All the ways of men are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders their goings,” Pr 5:21.

5. Jesus Christ views their principle, whether they are sound in the faith or not, or hold such principles and notions of Christianity as are according to the holy doctrine taught by himself and his apostles, or not; if any hold erroneous or corrupt principles, he sees and knows them, as he did some in the church of Pergamos; “Thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam,” Re 2:14; which some think was marrying with idolaters, others a community

of women; “So thou hast also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate;” that all agree was the community of women, as it is said, Nicholas himself prostituted his own wife to others. Let all take heed what doctrine or notions they suck in, and see whether they consist with the revelation of the word, the holy nature, justice, mercy, and goodness of God, “Christ will judge the world in righteousness,” Ac 17:31; and though he saves in a way of sovereign grace alone, yet he will condemn none without respect had to their sins, and contempt of his word; “He will judge every man according as their works shall be,” Re 22:12. If men, by their notions, justify the wicked, whom God condemns, or seek to be justified by their own righteousness instead of renouncing it, and counting it as dung to be found in the righteousness of Christ, and so appear before him without the wedding garment, they will be speechless. Let such that join their faith, and sincere obedience, with the righteousness of Christ, in justification before God, (as they call it) sec to it; Christ sees and weighs men’s principles, their spirits, their actions; nay, their persons; “thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting.”

Question. In what balance will Christ weigh men?

Answer. In the balance of the sanctuary, or in the scales of truth, righteousness, and justice; therefore, he that is put into the scales without Christ, (or not both weighed together) the law and justice of God will find them as light as vanity; justice, the law, and the holiness of God, will have full weight and measure, thou wilt be viewed and weighed. O sinner, look well to it, you may be viewed by men, and pass for good Christians, but may not bear Christ’s view, nor his weighing here, nor at the great day; or men may, on the other hand, condemn you out of prejudice, and yet Christ may find you sincere and upright ones, and acquit you.

Secondly, why may, or will Christ put this question, “friend! how camest thou hither, not having a wedding-garment?”

Answer. I. Because none ought to attempt to come into the church, or to come to this marriage, without a wedding-garment: he alludes to the custom of the Jews, all that were invited to a marriage among them, were to have a wedding-garment.

II. Because such is the clear revelation of the gospel, in respect to this matter. What is more fully laid down than this, that no righteousness of the

creature, no inherent righteousness will avail any man? this is so sufficiently declared, that Christ may, and will say, how camest thou hither, not having on my righteousness; but thinks to be justified and accepted by thy own righteousness, or by thy works, or by thy faith and obedience: friend, why didst thou not give credit to my word and faithful ministers? Christ may say, did not I tell you, that all that trusted in their own righteousness should perish for ever? did not I confirm this doctrine by miracles; nay, by my own blood? and, how often did I tell you, that, unless you eat my flesh and drank my blood, ye had no life in you.

III. Or the Lord Jesus may put this question to him, because he had on nothing but filthy rags: what a bold and rude thing is this? Dare you appear, before the eyes of a holy God, in these loathsome rags, who hates all sin and filthiness? O what a pickle art thou in, and how odious and how hateful in the sight of God, and in my sight.

IV. Or, may be, this man was one that talked much of Christ's righteousness, as that only which justifies a sinner before God, i.e., he might hold that notion and plead for it, dispute for it, but only pleased himself with the speculative or notional knowledge thereof, but was no true believer; but perhaps one that turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and sinned because grace abounded; or never regarded sanctification, in order to a meetness for eternal life; but perhaps was one that pleaded for an imputative sanctification, (as some do now) as if the personal sanctification of Christ is imputed "to them, for their sanctification, as well as his obedience to the law, and his sufferings, is imputed to them that believe, to justify them in the sight of God, which certainly is an abominable doctrine, and tends to encourage sinners in their sins, and to damn their souls; for without inherent holiness, or the sanctification of the Spirit, no man shall see the Lord.

"Friend! how camest thou hither?" such a one as thou without a wedding garment, that spent so much time in talking of, and disputing for an imputed righteousness, or for a wedding garment, and yet hast it not on, but appears here without it? What can such a man say? he, to be sure, must needs be speechless.

V. Or, Jesus Christ may put his question well, to such who have it not on, considering what he hath done to procure the wedding garment. He may say, Friend! did not I take the nature of man, into union with my own divine person, (though without sin) that in the body I might work out a

righteousness, or a glorious garment, for all that I espouse? and, dost thou come hither without it? What contempt dost thou cast upon what I have done and suffered? Did I live that holy life in obedience to the law, and die in vain? for so it will follow, if any other righteousness, save mine only, could justify a sinner before God. This, my brethren, is according to what Paul saith, “for if their had been a law that could have given life, Christ, died in vain,” Ga 3:21. How speechless must this render all that think to be saved by any other righteousness, than Christ’s alone: besides, Christ may say, is not my church and people an holy priesthood, and dost thou think that any holiness, save that wrought by my Spirit, or imparted to them, can sanctify them?

VI. Moreover, was not this wedding garment offered to thee? Is it not tendered unto all? “Even the righteousness of God unto all, and upon all that believe,” Ro 3:22. It is offered to all, but it is put upon none, or imputed to none, but to them that believe in

Jesus, they and none but they have on the wedding garment; others are naked, even the elect themselves before faith, or before their actual union with Christ.

VII. Christ may say, how camest thou hither? thou art an unbeliever, and did I not say, “he that believeth not shall be damned?” Mr 16:16. And dost thou think to to be saved, and make me a liar?

Thirdly. What is meant by the wedding garment.

Answer. You have heard over and over, it is the righteousness of Christ God-man, as he is apprehended by faith alone; and whosoever hath Christ, union with Christ, hath on the wedding garment: some I know would bring sanctification as here meant; but certainly, Christ’s righteousness only is the wedding garment: whosoever hath Christ on, put on Christ for justification, he hath on the wedding garment. It is said, the king’s daughter is clothed with wrought gold: the wedding garment is put upon the soul, it is put upon all them that believe, it is not wrought in them: the king’s daughter is also said to be all glorious within; that I conceive refers to the graces of the Spirit, or to the righteousness of sanctification; but the wedding garment is not that righteousness that is inherent, or wrought in the soul, but put upon the soul; and though sanctification is a glorious work, yet it is not perfect in this life,

but Christ's righteousness is complete and without spot, and therefore that which renders the soul lovely in Christ's eye, and so the wedding garment.

Question. Why is it called the wedding garment? Also, what is the nature of it?

Answer.* Because I have spoken to it, in opening the parable of the Prodigal son, where it is called the best robe, I shall but touch upon this here; but to proceed.

1. It is a long garment, it covers the soul (as I may say) from the head to the foot; it covers all our infirmities and deformities; it covers like a garment, all the defects and blemishes, that attend our lives, our duties, and all the imperfections of our grace. O what is there wanting in our faith? what defects and weakness in our faith? and how weak and imperfect is our love to God, to Christ, and to the saints and people of God? and who is he so humble, so meek, so patient, so temperate as he ought? the sins that cleave to our graces and best duties, were it not that God looked upon us in the righteousness of Christ, we should be loathed in the sight of God.

2. As a garment is absolutely necessary since the fall, to cover our naked bodies, so is the righteousness of Christ also absolutely necessary to cover our naked souls; and as innocent Adam needed no garment to cover his body, so he needed not the righteousness of Christ to put upon him, to cover his soul: the necessity of this robe came in by the fall, through our want of a perfect inherent righteousness of our own.

3. A glorious garment is ornamental; it makes a poor beggar that hath it on, to appear like a prince; so the righteousness of Christ, put upon a vile and wretched sinner, puts a beauty upon him, and renders him like a prince, or very glorious in the sight of God; thou wast comely, through that comeliness I put upon thee, Eze 16:14.

4. As a garment defends the body from the scorching beams of the sun; so the robe of Christ's righteousness defends the soul of a believer from the scorching beams of God's wrath, and also from the fiery darts of the devil, and from the power, guilt, and punishment of sin, and the curse of the law.

5. As all old garments are put off by a princely bride, and esteemed of no value, in comparison of a rich wedding-garment that is bespangled with

jewels and diamonds, Php 3:8-9, so a poor believer, that puts on tins wedding-garment esteems all his own righteousness but as dung, in comparison of this glorious robe; “upon thy right-hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir,” Ps 45:9. The wedding-garment renders the bride amiable, and most lovely in the sight of the bridegroom, and to rejoice over her; “and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so thy God shall rejoice over thee.”

This garment none can tear, neither doth it ever grow old, nor is it the worse for wearing. It is called a white robe; but though it be so, yet it has no spot or stain; nor can the value if it be counted; nay, let me add, the holy angels are not so richly clothed, for they no other righteousness, than that of mere creatures: but this is the righteousness of God, i.e., Jesus Christ, the Mediator, who is God over all, blessed for evermore, Amen.

APPLICATION

1. This may put a rebuke upon such who attempt to come into the presence of God without a wedding-garment.

2. It also shows the miserable condition of hypocrites, who, though they may not be discovered in this world to men, yet Jesus Christ will find them out expose them to shame at the last Jay; “Friend, how camest thou hither, not having a wedding-garment?”

3. Also, by this we may see who will be rejected, and the cause of it, in the great day.

4. Be exhorted to seek after and provide the wedding-garment; the damnation of sinners will not only be for their horrid sins and unrighteousness, but also because they trusted on, and depended upon their own righteousness, good works, and inherent holiness.

5. This moreover informs us, of the happiness of the weakest believer; he that has the smallest degree of faith, is in as good a condition as the strongest believer; all are equally justified, or clothed alike, all have on the wedding-garment, all are pardoned and have the same righteousness of Christ put upon them.

6. O be persuaded to put a high value on his robe, and fetch not your comfort and hope of justification and acceptation with God, from the inward purity and uprightness of your hearts, nor from the liveliness of your frames; yet remember, that all such who are justified, are also sanctified: “Put on the Lord Jesus, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,” Ro 13:14. “And he was speechless,” ver. 12.

Doct. That when God comes, by Jesus Christ, to judge sinners, they will be speechless, or have nothing to say to excuse themselves, who have not got the wedding garment.

First, I shall prove this point of doctrine.

Secondly, I shall give you the reasons of it. Thirdly, apply it.

I. Let this be premised, i.e., I do not mean sinners shall speak nothing to excuse themselves, no, this is not meant when it is said he was speechless; for it is said, some will say in that day, “Lord, we have cast out devils in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works,” Mt 7:22. Moreover, our Lord, in another place, saith, “Then ye shall begin to say, we have eat and drank in thy presence, and thou hast preached in our streets,” Lu 13:26.

My brethren! sinners may speak many words to excuse themselves (as I hinted in the explanation of these words) one may plead his ignorance, he was not learned, and another that he was poor, and had a great charge of children to provide for, which took up all his time and thoughts; also another, that he was misled by his teachers; moreover, another perhaps may plead his moral righteousness, or sober life; another his external obedience and inherent righteousness; but, alas, none of all these things will avail them anything, they having not got the wedding-garment; therefore they shall be silenced, “All mouths shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,” Ro 3:19.

Their own consciences shall accuse them, and put them to silence, “Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to thy gospel,” Ro 2:15-16.

Secondly, to give you the reasons of this point, and demonstrate the truth thereof.

I. The first shall be taken from the justice and righteousness of God; “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right,” Ge 18:25. God will be cleared when he judgeth, and justified when he condemneth; his goodness and righteousness is such, he cannot do wrong to any man, and this every man shall see, and be convinced of in that day; and therefore when judgment passeth, all shall be speechless, or put to silence; hence it is said, the judge “will be upon a white throne,” Re 20:11, which denotes the justice and righteousness he shall be clothed with. “We know the judgment of God is according to truth,” Ro 2:2. “The sceptre of thy kingdom is a righteous sceptre,” Heb 8. Moreover, it is positively said, God “will judge the world in righteousness,” Ac 17:31. “The Lord shall judge the people righteously,” Ps 7:8.

II. They shall be silenced, and become speechless, because of that clear revelation and declaration God hath made of the necessity of the righteousness of Christ, to the justification of a sinner at his bar.

The law lays all men under wrath, that condemneth every unbeliever: there is no clothing, no garment to cover their nakedness, by the law, nor any standing in judgment before God in that righteousness; “Now we know, whatsoever the law saith, it saith, to them that are under the law, that all mouths might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,” Ro 3:19. Alas, the law, or light within, is weak through the flesh, that cannot help nor relieve one soul; and therefore God sent his own Son, and God hath plainly, and positively said, that “he that believes not, shall be damned,” Mr 16:16.

That is, he that flies not to Jesus Christ, or takes not hold of his righteousness, and the merits of his blood or wholly does not rest on him, or truly believe in him, shall perish. And this wretch, that had not on the wedding-garment, read this text, and many more of the like nature, and yet believed not in Christ, but either trusted to his own righteousness, to his own repentance, tears, contrition, and reformation of life; or else trusted in the simple mercy of God, without having a respect to the sacrifice and atonement of Christ’s blood; now this plain revelation of the gospel, so often repeated concerning the necessity of faith in Christ, or getting on the wedding-garment, will cause every unbelieving sinner to be speechless.

III. They shall be silenced, considering what the sacred scripture testifieth, concerning the inherent righteousness of the best of men, calling it filthy rags, and vile raiment, now this being so, shall any dare to appear in those rags? Isa 64:6.

Object. But it is not in the power of a sinner to get this wedding-garment, none have it without faith, and faith is the gift of God, may not a sinner plead this at the great day?

Answer. But though they know this is so, yet they do not look to God in Christ for power; but perhaps think, they may have this robe without faith, nor else trust to their own power, and they can believe at any time, and this will silence them in that day.

IV. They shall be speechless, because their own consciences will bear witness against them, that they did not what they had power to do: could they not forbear their lying, their drunkenness, their thieving, their whoring, &c., and could they not attend upon the word of God? or go to a meeting as easily as to an alehouse, or to walk in the fields, or be at home? or, could they not give as much credit to the word of God, as to a human history? The word saith, "He believeth not is condemned already; and that he hath not then Son, hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him," Joh 3:18-36. Had they not as much power to believe such a record of God, as to believe what is told them in human history? True, it is one thing to have the faith of credence, and another thing to have the grace of faith, but ungodly sinners do not act or exercise that faith on the verity of God's word, which they are capable to do; but rather by their pride and infidelity seem to declare God's word is not to be regarded, but look upon it to be a fiction; and from hence they will be speechless.

V. They will be silenced by those severe witnesses that will come in against them at the great day,

1. The moral law will be a witness against them: "Do not think that I accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust," Joh 5:4-5. The holy law will be brought in against them (by which they thought to be justified) they having broken it many thousand times, and are cursed as well as accused by it. Does not the law require a sinless righteousness, "This do, and thou shalt live," that is, live and sin not?

and doth not the law pronounce death and wrath against all that have broken it? This will silence all that have no interest in Jesus Christ.

2. The gospel will witness against them also; because that discovers there is no other way or name given by which we must be saved, but by Christ alone, and him they have rejected; the gospel offers free pardon to all that come to Jesus Christ, but they would not come to him, nor cry to God, to help them to believe in Jesus, and to change their hearts; therefore they shall be speechless.

3. All the holy attributes of God will come in, and witness against sinners, and put them to silence.

(1.) Divine wisdom will silence them, because that way infinite wisdom contrived to recover lost sinners, was slighted, and other ways adhered unto.

(2.) The truth of God will witness against them, and make them speechless, because neither the promises of the word were believed, nor the precepts obeyed, nor the threats thereof feared.

(3.) Divine power will come in and witness against them, because God's almighty arm was stretched out, to help and save them, but they did not endeavour to take hold of it.

(4.) Divine justice will also witness against them, and exact full payment of all their debts, and call for execution, because the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ was despised and slighted, they not pleading that, for their discharge at God's bar.

(5.) The mercy of God likewise, will come in and witness against them; because all that favour, love, and mercy, let out in and by Jesus Christ, was abused, and abominably neglected. The very flood-gates of mercy were opened, yet they went on in their sinful ways; and because the sentence against their evil works was not speedily executed, their hearts were fully set in them to do evil; and that goodness that should have led them to repentance, they abused, and made an occasion to harden them in their sinful courses.

4. Jesus Christ, the Judge himself, will witness against them; because against him, his love, and infinite goodness, their sins were committed, they

trampling upon his most precious blood, and disesteemed of all he had done. O then the Lamb of God will appear like a lion; and “will say to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,” Re 6:15-16. As the knowledge of the judge is infinite, and his righteousness just and wonderful, so his wrath and fury will be also terrible, “When he comes in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon all that know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 2Th 1:12. He then will say, “Bring out them my enemies, that would not have me reign over them, and slay them before me,” Lu 19:27.

5. The ministers of Christ will be called, it is thought, to witness against them, who offered Christ to them, and told them what their sins, and their unbelief, would bring upon them in the end; but they regarded it not, but, may be, contemned them in their hearts.

6. Their own consciences, I told you, will witness against them, and convince them, that the sentence will be just and righteous. Conscience now reproves them according to its light, but then all clouds and veils shall be taken away, and all these pretended excuses which now they make, shall be gone for ever, and they will see it will be in vain to plead their own good deeds or righteousness, and much more in vain to plead their perfections, which some now boast of; for they will find they have sinned, and did sin daily; that they had very proud, envious, lustful, unbelieving, and erroneous thoughts; as well as many sinful actions; they thought not rightly of Christ, and were mistaken in their moral and inherent righteousness.

Conscience, my brethren, keeps a record of all our thoughts, words, and actions; and in that day this book shall be opened; conscience is privy to all evil thoughts, evil words, and secret deeds of darkness, and will come in and witness against sinners in that day.

Jesus Christ, the Judge, will appeal to every man’s conscience, whether it be not a just and righteous sentence that he passeth upon them, and all will justify him in that day. “That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest,” Ps 51:4.

Now, from hence, all these things being considered, every man that is found out of Christ, shall be speechless.

APPLICATION

1. Let none think to escape the righteous judgment of God, or to hide his sins from his eyes. Now, you may hide your sins from men, but all your secret sins will be laid open in that day.

2. We infer, that God is very gracious to discover in his word how it will go with sinners in the great day; search, and you may know now what your state is, and what your doom will be then.

3. This informs also, that the damnation of sinners will partly be for their trusting in their own righteousness, and slighting of the righteousness of Christ. No wonder that they do not believe Christ's faithful ministers, who tell them of the danger they are in upon this account, and of the vanity of their hopes of being saved, any other way than by Christ alone, since our Saviour shows, they will have the boldness to plead for their acceptance some other way, than by his righteousness, before the great Judge of heaven and earth; for this is clearly implied here.

TERROR

Let hypocrites, and all unbelievers, tremble. O! what will you do, in the day Christ comes to view his guests, who are without the wedding-garment? Perhaps you may have something to say now, and may deceive yourselves; yet know, that in that day you will be speechless. Will a place among the people of God avail you anything then? No, you will be silenced in darkness for ever.

EXHORTATION

Let every soul despair of salvation any other way than by Jesus Christ; you must believe, rely upon Christ, be clothed with his righteousness, or perish; then labour to throw your souls upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe with all your hearts. But be not deceived, to think you do believe, unless you find the effects of true faith; faith without works is dead, it purifies and sanctifies the soul where it is wrought in any person.

Do not say, Wherefore should you strive to believe, because you cannot tell whether you are elected or not; for if you believe, this is the way to know you are one of God's elect. Think not you shall have any plea, upon the

account of election, in the day of judgment, that will avail you nothing; what, though he hath chosen some men to salvation, will he be unjust in condemning ungodly sinners? No, in that day you will find all men will be speechless, and be convinced that their condemnation will be just and righteous; if men cannot make their principles comport with the justice and righteousness of God, let them conclude they are false principles; for they shall find that every man shall be damned for his own sins, and abominable wickedness, in that day.

COMFORT

This may be for consolation to all true believers, or such who have espoused Jesus Christ; you have got the wedding-garment, you love the person of Christ, you value the Person as well as the portion, you love the image of Christ, as well as the righteousness of Christ; and therefore it appears, your state is happy for ever.

“Then said the king to his servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into utter darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” verse 13.

It is very observable, that our Saviour ends several of his parables after this dreadful manner, to deter sinners from their evil ways; and to assure them, that hell is a place of intolerable misery.

Binding them hand and foot, shows the certainty and unavoidableness of their punishment; the unchangeable decree of God shall be executed upon them, and when once in hell, they shall never come out; they shall be as unable to deliver themselves, as a man that is bound in fetters, and chains of iron, can stir or move out of the place where he is east.

And gnashing of teeth, denotes the great pain and anguish of those torments which they must undergo, for evermore.

“For many are called, but few are chosen.” Many hear the gospel preached, or have the outward call, but few are chosen to eternal life, and so are effectually called, or find the gospel come to them in power, and not in word only to them. But this being spoken to in the opening of the parable, Mt 20. ver. 16, I shall say no more to it here.

2. II. Parable, Matthew 24:25

The Parable Of The Faithful And Wise Servant

SERMON XVII

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season.

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing, &c.—
Mt 24:45-51.

We have the same parable recorded by the evangelist Luke, with a little difference; but whether our Lord spoke it only at one time is doubtful, from the coherence, or what proceeds in both the evangelists; as the occasion of our Lord's speaking this parable; the occasion of which, according to Luke, was that question put forth by the apostle Peter, "Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, who then is a faithful and wise steward," &c., Lu 12:41.

As to the scope or main design of this parable, it seems to me,

1. To excite or stir up all believers to watchfulness, and a due preparation for our Lord's coming, according to what proceeds in both the sacred writers, and the duty of watchfulness concerns all Christ's disciples.

2. Another reason of it is, to stir up all the ministers of the gospel to faithfulness, in their places, work, and office, both to himself, and to his church and people, whom they have the care and oversight of. Indeed, it chiefly refers to them, and shows:—

(1.) That they are stewards of God's house.

(2.) That they are rulers in or over the household where they are set.

(3.) To discover the blessed condition that all faithful ministers of Christ are in, and what happiness shall attend them, in the day when he cometh.

3. It also seems to be a prediction of the multitudes of unholy and unfaithful persons (who call themselves ministers) that there would be in the latter days, or a little before our Lord's coming, viz., such that would be drunkards, gluttonous persons, &c., and such also who would smite their fellow-servants, or be persecutors of Christ's faithful people and ministers, and that shall say in their hearts, the Lord delayeth his coming.

4. And to show what a dismal state they are in, and what a fearful end they may expect to meet withal, at the great day, when the Lord cometh. But to proceed, and open the parts.

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, &c.

Ministers are Christ's servants, not lords, but servants in Christ's house, not lords over God's heritage; and ought to be men of great wisdom, and of faithfulness; also St. Luke call them stewards, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household," &c.

Every steward a lord chooseth is a servant, but every servant is not a steward; and a steward over a lord's household is not a mean place of trust, nor is he a servant of a low or inferior rank or quality.

"Whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household," &c.

All stewards may not be made rulers over their lord's household; but only to perform that part of their work, or office they as stewards are appointed to do, which may differ; some are only made stewards, to gather in their lord's rents, others not only do that, but to provide all necessaries for the whole family in respect of meat, drink, &c.

Now the pastors of churches being made stewards, have a very great trust committed to them, in the absence of our Lord Jesus Christ; they are called stewards of the mysteries of God. "Let a man so account of us, as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," 1Co 4:1.

A minister is a servant, so that the honour that principally belongs to his master, he must not take to himself; yet ministers, being Christ's stewards,

and also his ambassadors, there is honour due to them, as they represent Christ's person; and such that despise, slight, and contemn them, they will be found to despise, slight, and contemn the Lord Jesus Christ; like as all princes look upon themselves slighted or contemned, when their ambassadors are slighted, &c.

“Made rulers over his household.”

Not over households; no steward of Christ is a steward or pastor of more than one church; they must meet, be fed, and worship God altogether.

“Whom he hath made,” &c. Men are made ministers and rulers by Jesus Christ. It is the Lord Jesus that gives them all their ministerial gifts, and divine graces. “When he ascended on high, he gave gifts to men,” &c. Eph 4:8. Moreover, authority to preach, and take care of the church of God, is given to them, by Jesus Christ. He hath left directions about the choice of his ministers, that are to be bishops or overseers, how they ought to be qualified,* and how, and by whom (in his name) to be ordained. “By prayer and laying on of hands,” Ac 13:3.

The rite of laying on of hands, was the way of investure into office, under the law, as well as under the gospel; “Moses laid his hands upon Joshua,” De 34:9.

Doct. A minister of Christ is his steward, and is entrusted with the household of Christ, and all he hath. In speaking to this, I shall,

1. Show what Christ's ministers are entrusted with.
2. Show what ministers may be said to be stewards and rulers.
3. Show what is required of them; or show, who are faithful servants.

I. Ministers are entrusted with the gospel, called the mysteries of God. The gospel is committed unto them, I mean, a ministration of it, even all the whole doctrine thereof to study, open and publish it unto the world, and unto the church of God, especially to that household they are made stewards of.

II. The administration of all the sacred ordinances of the gospel, is committed unto them, particularly the ordinance of baptism and breaking of bread, and to pronounce church censures.

III. The care of the church, or whole household, where they are stewards, is committed unto them, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," Ac 20:28.

IV. The souls of every particular member is committed to them where they are placed by the Lord Christ. "They watch for your souls, as they that must give an account," Heb 13:17.

Secondly, What ministers may be said to be Christ's stewards and rulers of his household.

Ans. Ministers are of two sorts.

1. Such who are only teachers, who preach by virtue of their gifts Christ hath given them, being regularly called so to do.

2. Elders or pastors;* now, they that are pastors, only are made stewards and rulers over Christ's household; the trust or care of the family may be committed to every particular teacher in a church; no, it is the pastor only that is the chief steward and ruler therein.

Question. What authority then have men to preach, besides ordained pastors or bishops?

1. Answer. Christ hath not only left pastors in his church, but teachers also, "He gave some pastors and some teachers," Eph 4:11. These two remained in church, when the extraordinary gifts and offices and officers ceased, as that of apostles, evangelists, and prophets.

If Christ gave some teachers to his church, besides pastors, then such to whom he hath given ministerial gifts unto, may and ought to preach, but the former is true; ergo.

2. Such that have those ministerial gifts, may and ought to preach, though not ordained ministers or pastors, because they are required so to do; "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another,

as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,” 1Pe 4:10. Some that oppose this, would have the gift here mentioned, to mean common gifts that every parent or master of a family hath received, or any gift or ability whereby he may be serviceable to the good of others, but do these at all turns of whom they speak, speak as the oracles of God; see the very next words, “If any man speak, (that is teach) let him speak as the oracles of God.”

3. There can be none chosen to be overseers or pastors, if there are no teachers besides pastors in the church, because a bishop or overseer must have (among qualifications) this one, viz., he must be “apt to teach,” 1Ti 3:2; and also by “sound doctrine, be able to convince gainsayers,” Tit 1:9; therefore there are teachers left in the church, and ought to be trained up there, and due encouragement given to them, besides pastors, and the consequence of denying it, would be pernicious to the churches of Christ. What church dares utterly dispense with one of the qualifications of a pastor or bishop.

4. Men are exhorted to covet the best gifts, but rather that they may prophecy, that is, teach or preach the gospel; but why should men desire such gifts, if they may not be allowed to preach?

Question. Who have right, or authority to preach the gospel, as teachers?

1. Answer. I answer first negatively. Not all who have human learning, or the knowledge of the tongues, although they may be set apart by men to preach; for Papists and profane persons may have learning, and take their degrees in universities, but doth that make them Ministers of Christ, or give them a lawful call and authority to preach. Christ, my brethren, hath not appointed such men to be his ministers; no, nor is the knowledge of the tongues any of the qualifications either of a teacher, bishop, or overseer. See 1Ti 3; Tit 1; in which two chapters, all the qualifications of pastors are left upon record.

2. Nor hath Christ ordained universities, or schools of human learning, to train up ministers, neither can that qualify, or authorize any man to be a true minister; if the word of God be a sufficient rule, (as certainly it is in this great case) for what can any man living say to the contrary, from God’s word, or confute what I say? Though I am no enemy to human learning, but have often wished (if God saw it good, and it might tend to his glory) that all that are true ministers had the knowledge of the tongues, but perhaps God hath

on purpose chose such who are base things, or men unlearned, to confound the wise and learned, “That no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord,” 1Co 1:29,31.

Learning is good, if not abused; it is a good hand-maid, but a bad mistress. It is indeed a shame to some that have lately rendered men, who have not the knowledge of the tongues, unfit to preach, as if they could not speak sense, or good English, nor understand the scripture; and what is this but to magnify such learning above the Spirit’s teaching, and the gifts of men above those ministerial gifts given by Jesus Christ?

3. Man ought not to preach, to whom Christ hath not given ministerial gifts unto, and capacitated to open the word of life. It is one thing to do it by art or by human learning, and another to do it by virtue of that gift God hath given to a man; and he cannot be a minister of Christ, whom Christ never gave gifts to, nor authorized to preach the gospel.

Secondly, and in the affirmative.

The call to the ministry is either extraordinary or ordinary. But none now pretend to have an extraordinary call, unless they are some imposters that are crept up of late times; but unless they could work miracles, no wise men will regard what they say or affirm, on that account.

1. Therefore, a true regular call to the ministry lies in a true church of Christ; and indeed, the churches are Christ’s universities, where all his ministers ought to be trained up.

1. God converts this or that man; he gives them his Spirit, his grace, and also ministerial gifts, of which gifts the church is the proper judges.

2. When gifted, or thought to be gifted, the church may, nay, ought to admit them to exercise their gifts, and try them, nay, try them again and again, “Let the prophets speak two or three, (though one by one) and let the other judge,” 1Co 14:29-30. As extraordinary gifts were then to be tried by the church, so ought ordinary gifts now.

Question. What kind of persons ought teachers to be?

Answer. 1. They ought,* as I told you, to be sure that are looked upon to be truly gracious, giving no just cause to the church to judge otherwise, but that they are regenerated persons.

2. They ought to be humble men; it is dangerous to encourage a proud conceited young man, who is already lifted up and appears to magnify himself above others: no, he must be nothing in his own eyes, or not conceited, but willing to submit to better judgments, wherein he differs from others. What fearful work have some conceited young men made in the churches, and what dishonour brought to the good ways of God.

3. One of a good report of them that are without, that the name of God be not evil spoken of.

4. One that there is good ground to believe, doth not take up the ministry for “filthy lucre sake,” 1Pe 5:2. Or for profit, as he doth it not for applause; though if wholly taken off of all worldly business by a church, he ought to be maintained, as God hath ordained; but not until then ought he to throw off his calling, or not till he hath a good and warrantable call so to do.

5. One sound in the faith, holding all the essentials of true Christianity, and a man of good understanding in the mysteries of the faith, or else how shall he feed others with knowledge and understanding?

6. He ought to be of a peaceable, quiet, and condescending spirit, and a holy and good life and conversation.

Question. What cause or reason are they to encourage gifts, or to train up teachers in the church.

1. Answer. Because what ministerial gifts Christ hath given to any man, he gave them to the profit of his church, and good of sinners.

2. Because the labourers are but few, and yet the harvest is great; and if upon that account, we are to pray to the Lord of the harvest, to send labourers into the harvest, much more when he hath sent them, we ought to call them forth, and encourage them to preach.

3. Because if otherwise, what will become of the churches in future times, when the labourers we have now are called home? though God can find labourers it is true, yet ought not we to use the means he directs us to use?

4. Because all that have received ministerial gifts, are but stewards of those gifts, and God will call them to give an account, about their improving them in the great day.

Objections answered, about encouraging the gifts of the church

Objection. Those that are called may be weak at first, and so it may not be honourable to employ them.

1. Answer. They should be employed privately at first only in the church.

2. Christ hath out of the mouths of babes and sucklings perfected his praise.

3. Many now perhaps that are able ministers, were at first very weak; and had not they been encouraged, what a wrong might it have been to the church of God, and, as the proverb is, use makes perfect.

Objection. But they are tradesmen, husbandmen, and may such preach, are they ministers?

1. Answer. Was not Moses a shepherd, though brought up in Pharaoh's court, yet before called, he kept the sheep of Jethro, his father-in-law, Ex 3:1. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush. And was not the prophet David also a shepherd, before he was called; and Amos an herdsman; and were not some of the apostles fishermen, Matthew a toll-gatherer, and Paul a tent-maker, and wrought at his trade after called to be an apostle: nay, it is thought, our blessed Saviour himself was a carpenter; "is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary?" Our annotators conclude he might work at that trade until he was thirty years old, Mr 6:3-4; for he began not his ministry until he was about that age: and, say they, it is not probable that he lived all those years in idleness: no doubt they cried, the carpenter is a preaching; and this might cause our Lord, in the very next verse to say, a prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

You that contemn tradesmen's preaching, may be would (had you lived in those days) contemned the ministry of our blessed Lord, and that of his disciples; take heed what you do.

Objection. The churches may not be capable to provide a sufficient maintenance for them; it is well if they can provide well for their respective pastors.

1. Answer. The maintenance of gospel ministers, is laid down as fully in the New Testament, as any one duty: but as you heard, the ministry consists of two parts.

1. Such who preach only by virtue of their gifts.

2. Such who are wholly set apart, and ordained to preach, watch over, and take the care of a particular flock; now these being discharged from all secular business, and must not entangle themselves with the affairs of this life, 2Ti 2:4, must be provided for, if the church be able; but such who are only gifted brethren, may follow their callings, and ought not to expect a maintenance, expect a church need all their time, and being able to provide for them, do take them off of their trades, then they must provide for them also.

1 Fear one thing that greatly hinders the flourishing of our churches, and obstructs some men who are gifted, from exercising their gifts, is that great neglect of the present pastors. Should we be called, say some, to that office, we and our families may be exposed to want, or to many straits, as we see others now are: Oh what provision did God make for his ministers under the law, and to be sure he would have his gospel ministers as well provided for. Such churches who are rich and do it not, are under great evil. "Who goes a warfare at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock: if we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things," 1Co 9:7. Are not you more obliged to us, than we to you? As if our apostle should say, what is it we receive from you, in worth or value to what you receive from us? If you have our gold, shall we be denied your copper? there is a far greater disparity between spiritual and carnal things. "Do you not know, that they that minister about holy things, live of the temple, &c.; even so bath the Lord ordained, that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Again saith our apostle, "Let him that is taught in

the word communicate to him that taught him, in all good things.” Shall poor ministers, who labour to feed our souls, not have bread, and any good things, to feed, nourish, and refresh their bodies, with their wives and children; God forbid: certainly, they little prize either their souls, or soul- food, that show no love to Christ, or his ministers.

Though it is an abominable evil to undertake the ministry for filthy lucre, yet it is equally as great a sin and shame, not freely and plentifully to minister to them who are discharged from all trades and callings, to provide for themselves: O how have the widows and children of some ministers suffered, through the neglect of this duty: it is not enough that you hand out to your ministers just enough to them to keep them alive, but that they may be able to give, and provide for their children.

Object. But some young men, who have entered on the ministry, have brought great dishonour on the name of God and religion, partly for want of parts and abilities to preach, and partly by their scandalous lives.

1. Answer. So have others, who are learned, many of them also being ignorant, or wanted both grace and gifts; both these ways you speak of have brought great reproach on the name of God, if not among us, yet among others.

2. Must not sincere and able persons be encouraged, because hypocrites get into the ministry, to the dishonour of God.

3. The fault may perhaps lay in the churches, who suffer such to preach whom Christ hath not given ministerial gifts unto: Indeed, some of late as well as formerly, run before they are sent, or preach before approved of by any true regular church, or are allowed to preach: such ought to be silenced, and it is a shame to them that countenance such; and for Christ’s sake let churches, and pastors of churches, see well to this, and labour to prevent this evil for time to come, that so none may be allowed to preach publicly but such who are of spotless lives (though they may be unjustly reproached) and able to preach, to the honour and credit of religion: it is not every one that thinks he has a gift that is to be allowed to preach, or called to the ministry, “and how shall they preach, except they are sent?” Ro 10:15.

Object. But some are very young, that are called out to the ministry.

1. Answer. Wisdom is not always with the aged.

2. Christ called John when young, Samuel when young, and Timothy when a youth; "Let no man despise thy youth."

3. Commonly those ministers who entered when young on the ministry, have proved most honourable and eminent in the ministry.

Thirdly, Who are wise and faithful stewards of Jesus Christ.

1. Answer. Such who dearly love their blessed Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, who serve him because they love him; not by constraint, but of a ready mind; not for filthy lucre, but in love to Christ's person, and his name, truth, and people; "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me, feed my sheep," Joh 21:16. Christ would employ none to feed his lambs, but such that love him and them.

2. Such that serve Christ in all humility; a proud person is no ways fit for this sacred work and office: He that is wise, and will be faithful, is nothing in his own eyes; "To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph 3:8.

A servant is a name of subjection, it is a shame for such to be as lords over God's heritage, or seek for the pre-minence above their place and station; a faithful steward of Christ esteems it a greater honour to be Christ's servant, than to be an earthly prince. Indeed, it is a contradiction to say, such a one is a proud Christian; for he cannot be a true Christian, much less a true minister, that is not humble, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," &c. Mt 11:29.

3. A wise and faithful steward of Christ is sincere, he serves him with a perfect heart. David had many infirmities that God overlooked, because his heart was upright in the sight of God.

4. A faithful steward of Christ is universal in his obedience, he will feed his Master's household with all that food his master hath provided or appointed for them; he will not come under a promise to please men, to keep back any one truth or ordinance of Christ, or forbear to preach it, lest it offend some that do not see it to be their duty; "And how I kept back

nothing that was profitable unto you; wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God,” Ac 20:20-27. Again, he saith, “Do I seek to please men for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ,” Ga 1:10; that is a faithful servant. Let such who promise not to preach up some one ordinance or another to please men, from hence see their fault and be ashamed.

6. A faithful servant or steward feeds the whole household, therefore must have them every meal altogether if possible. He must give every one meat in due season, that is, every Lord’s day; therefore he is not to have two households to feed, whom it is morally impossible to feed or give their meat too in due season, and how is a faithful steward of Christ’s household grieved, when he perceives many of the family are missing when he gives forth the bread of life to the household? This makes him to complain to his Master, to see such and such places empty.

7. A faithful steward of Christ seeks the honour of his Master in all he doth;* not his own glory, nor his own interest; no, but the true interest and glory of Christ; and thus our Lord did, “I seek not my own glory, but the glory of him that sent me.” All his wisdom, parts, knowledge, &c., is able to do, he ascribes to Christ alone, and acknowledges, he can do nothing without the Lord Jesus, nor will he add to, nor diminish from, or alter anything which his Lord commands.

8. A faithful steward rejoiceth to see love and union in Christ’s family, all drawing together, “Like the horses in Pharaoh’s chariot,” and every one doing their duties, and in bearing their burdens, so that there is an equality.

9. He that is a faithful steward, sees to take care of the weak babes, or little children that are in his Master’s family, and, like his Lord, he “gathers his Lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom,” Isa 40:10-11. He strives to support the weak, and strengthen the feeble minded.

10. He is constant and unwearied in his work; he faints not, though he meets with many difficulties, reproaches, and abuses from some in the family, as well as from others, “We therefore labour and suffer reproach,” &c. He will not decline in his work in a day of persecution, nor withhold corn from his people, though it exposeth him to the loss of his liberty, nay, to the loss of his life.

Lastly, he that is a wise and faithful steward of Christ, labours to have his accounts to give up to his blessed Lord, that he may be accepted of him when he comes again.

Question. Why is a steward, or pastor of a church, called a ruler?

Answ. First negatively. Not that the whole government of the church is committed to him; he is not to rule without the brotherhood. "If he will not hear the church," Matt, 18:17; it is not said, if he will not hear the pastor.

1. But in the affirmative,* he is invested with authority or power, as the chief ruler in the church, though there be helps of government, and for any to plead for an absolute or sole power of rule and government, to be in a pastor, that tends to expose the church and members thereof to tyranny, or to the will of the pastor, and so a worse government in its nature, than many civil constitutions among men. In a particular church rightly constituted, is the fixed seat and subject of all ordinances of public worship, and hath the seat of all officers, or organical members, that serve for the use of the whole; and that these with their officers, have the seat of that government that is judicially to bind or loose the soul. The government of Christ's household is ordained or appointed by himself, and not left to men to order and govern it as they think good.

2. A ruler is to govern by the law, and the constitution of the land, city, or corporation, where he is placed, and so an elder must govern according to the gospel constitution, or laws and rules left by Jesus Christ.

3. Some rulers, or chief magistrates, can pass no act, law, or sentence, without the people, either to acquit, or condemn, (according to the constitution of the government) it must be with, and by their assent and consent. So the steward or pastor of Christ's household, can pass no act, to receive in, or cast out, &c., without the assent and consent of the church.

4. A ruler, that rules well, is worthy of due honour. So ought a faithful ruler of Christ's household to have due or "double honour," 1Ti 5:17; yet know, there are some great disparities, between some earthly rulers and Christ's stewards, or pastors of churches, for they are not lords, &c.

5. A ruler ought to be a man endowed with much wisdom and humility. So ought a pastor or steward of Christ's household.

6. In most constitutions, there is one chief ruler who is to be obeyed, &c. So Christ hath made the steward of his house a chief ruler, and commands all the family to obey him. "Obey them that are over you," Heb 13:17.

Hath made rulers of his household. Note from hence,

Doctrine. That a church of Christ is his household.

1. I shall hint a few things to show, why a church is compared to a household.

2. Show, what a house or household it is.

1. In a household are persons of different ages, different tempers, strength, &c. So in a church there are little children, or babes in Christ, and also young men and fathers, some strong, and others weak, and some of a mild spirit, and others froward, which renders it the more hard and difficult for the steward of his house to please them all, and rightly to demean himself as a wise and faithful person in his place and office.

2. What is done in a particular family ought not to be published abroad by any of the household, and if any do it, it is a shame and reproach to them. So it is a shame and reproach to any member to publish to any out of the church, what is done therein.

3. Every family is under the government of him who is the chief ruler, and all ought to be in subjection according to his good government. So ought all members of a particular church, to adhere to the good government of Christ's steward, or pastor of his church.

4. It is a great honour to a household, when it is well governed, all knowing their work and places, and living in love together. So nothing is more honourable or lovely, to see a church well governed, all adhering to the majority, and government of it, striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, living together in love, and condescension to each other.

5. The whole household ought to be together at times of family duty, and also at meals if possible. So ought every member to be together in public worship of the church, and when the steward gives forth the spiritual food of the word in due season, to every one.

6. The steward of the household is to see good order kept up in the family; and so ought the steward of Christ's household, to see and labour that good order and discipline be kept up therein, according to the rules his Lord hath appointed.

2. What a house or household is it?

1. Answer. It is a spiritual household. "Ye also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood," 1Pe 2:5.

2. It is a great and noble household. 1. It is called the household of God, therefore a noble house, "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." As the universal church is God's household, so is every particular society, or congregation of Christians. 2. God himself is the chief householder, he is the Master and owner of this household. It is by his laws it is governed they are all his children and servants who are the true and proper members of this household. 5. God himself dwells therein, "Here I will dwell for ever, for I have desired it," &c. Ps 14:6. It is a noble and glorious house, because it is the place where "God's honour dwelleth," Ps 26:8; and an household where the "Glory and beauty of the Lord is seen," Ps 27:4.

3. It is a household beloved of God. "The Lord loves the gates of Zion, more than all the dwelling places of Jacob," Ps 87:4.

4. It is called, the "household of faith," Eph 2:9. There the true faith of the gospel, and the true worship of God, is maintained.

5. Christ's household is under a special and peculiar government from all other households whatsoever, (though others may call themselves by his name) its rules, laws, and discipline, agreeing exactly with the institutions and appointments left by Christ in the New Testament, and with the pattern of the primitive churches. This household will not admit of any human rites, or traditions whatsoever. This household will not suffer any to alter or change any of the rules of its ancient government, nor receive in the carnal seed of believers as such; but all that are admitted to be of this family, must be

qualified according as their great Lord hath left directions in the gospel. True, under the law God's household consisted of all the natural seed of Abraham, or the whole house of Israel, according to the flesh, that being a national church. "But old things are now passed away, and all things are become new," 2Co 5:17. According as the first gospel church was gathered, Ac 2, and constituted, so is, and ought every true spiritual and gospel community or congregation of saints now; we read, not of one infant that was admitted into any one of the apostolical primitive churches. No, none but such who, upon the profession of their faith, were baptized.

"Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing, Verily, I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods," ver. 46, 47. Or as in ver. 21, "I will make him ruler over many things."

1. This shows how exceedingly the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased with those ministers or stewards of his, who are faithful in all things, in the discharge of that great trust committed to them.

2. That Christ's faithful ministers shall receive no small honour, but be greatly exalted in the day when he appears, "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever," Da 12:3. All believers shall receive great glory, but ministers, who are faithful, shall excel in glory.

"But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delays his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow servant, and eat and drink with the drunken," ver. 48, 49.

Doct. Note from hence, "That in the latter days there will be evil or ungodly persons, who will assume the ministry, and hardly believe that Christ will come again, and from thence be led away to live unholy lives.

It may be feared, some of this sort may get into true churches; but by smiting their fellow servant, some think our Lord refers to persecution; and so to another sort of men that call themselves his ministers, who turn persecutors of his faithful servants, or at least vilify, reproach, or render them very odious to all they can, which horrid wickedness Christ will severely punish in the great day.

“The Lord of that servant shall come when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of. And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” ver 50, 51.

Note, that some who are preachers and ungodly men, shall perish eternally; and that such who either reproach or persecute Christ’s faithful ministers, shall be cast into hell.

My brethren, it ought to be well observed, how many parables our Saviour ends after this amazing nature, viz., of casting sinners into hell, to suffer God’s wrath and vengeance for ever.

USE

1. You may gather from what hath been said, who are true and faithful ministers of Christ.

2. And also that the gospel church is congregational, and not national; for what national constitution has a steward over it, as a chief ruler? No, a steward refers to a particular household.

3. Moreover we infer, that as a minister hath received a great trust, and is a great blessing to a particular congregation, so he being a ruler, is endued with authority, and ought to be had in esteem and honour.

4. And that he, and all Christ’s household servants, ought to watch, and be ready for Christ’s coming.

5. That wicked preachers of all people (especially such who smite Christ’s servants) are in a fearful state and condition.

6. Let every one that belongs to this household, labour to behave themselves well therein, for the eyes of God are always upon this household; “That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God,” &c. 1Ti 3:15. Many have not learned to carry it as they ought, in the house of God, with that zeal, holiness, and observation of the laws, rules, and precepts thereof, under the care and charge of the steward, and good discipline of it.

7. We infer, that it is no small honour to dwell in this house, and be one of this household, and much greater honour and dignity to be an approved and faithful steward of the household of Christ.

8. It may reprove such who belong to this or that particular church or household of Christ Jesus, who are so left to themselves, as to violate the sacred covenant they come under to dwell in, and there to worship God, and always be fed, and under the eye of the steward and whole household; such deserve no place therein, but as disorderly persons, ought to be proceeded against, and turned out of the family.

9. Union, love, and sweet concord, is to be pressed after, and endeavoured to be promoted, by every one that dwells in this family, or are of this household, nothing tending more to the glory of a family, than their walking together in unity, discord, contentions, and divisions in any family being hateful, and to be abhorred; and such that cause divisions in this household ought to be marked and proceeded against as directions in that case are given.

3. III. Parable, Matthew 25:12

The Parable Of The Wise And Foolish Virgins

SERMON XVIII

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom, &c.—Mt 25:1-12

This is one of those prophetic parables our Lord spake; also this and the parable of the mustard seed discovers the state of the church in the latter days, or just at the time of Christ's coming.

Parables I have formerly showed you, my brethren, are taken from earthly things, or actions of men, to illustrate some choice heavenly doctrine, or spiritual mysteries; and the first and chief thing that is to be considered, is the scope and main end thereof.

And evident it is, that our Saviour in this refers to what precedes in the foregoing chapter, where he answered a question put forth by his disciples, "Tell us when these things shall be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Mt 24:3. This question is three-fold.

1. Concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.
2. The sign of Christ's coming.
3. And of the end of the world.

The end of the world no man knows, "no, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son himself, but the Father only," Mr 13:35. And hence he exhorts all to watchfulness and prayer. "Watch ye therefore, for you know neither the day nor hour," Mt 24:42. That is, neither the day nor hour when our Lord will come, nor the end of the world.

Now this coming of Christ is either personal or precursory.

(1.) His second personal coming I judge will be at the beginning of the thousand years reign, when “God will tabernacle with men,” Re 21:3.

(2.) There is a precursory coming of our Lord, (as one notes) or a most glorious spiritual coming, to set up a more visible and universal kingdom in this world, which will precede his personal appearance; which I take to be the beginning of the latter-day glory, and which will be at the sounding of the “Seventh trumpet,” for then Jesus Christ will begin his spiritual and more visible and glorious kingdom; or “when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Re 11:15,18. One design of this coming of our Lord, is to destroy the son of perdition, and utterly to overthrow Mystery Babylon. “And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming,” 2Th 2:8. Now it is partly this coming of Christ (I conclude) our Lord in the first place intends, though I will not exclude his personal appearance; for I see no reason to doubt, but that the precursory coming of the Lord Jesus is to prepare things for his personal appearance; when, (as a bridegroom) he will appear to celebrate the marriage with his beloved spouse. Yet his coming upon mystery Babylon, or by his bright appearance to destroy the son of perdition, may be distinguished from the coming last mentioned, though both may be comprehended, or included by the Bridegroom’s coming. And now at this time, viz., when Christ will come upon Babylon, and begin to set up his more visible kingdom and rule in and among his people, the kingdom of heaven may be compared or likened unto ten virgins.

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven,” &c.

Even at the ending of the fourth monarchy, or at the time of the utter downfall of the Romish power, when the stone shall smite the image upon “the feet and toes,” Da 2:24, compared with ver. 44. “And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom,” &c., not in the days when the iron legs of the Roman monarch had the power, or when Christ began his spiritual or gospel church state, which was when Tiberius the emperor reigned at Rome, though some suppose this is meant by these words, “in the days of those kings;” but I conceive that the Holy Ghost refers to the government of the Romish monarch, when it came to the ten toes, being partly weak, and partly strong, signified by the “iron and clay,” which will not, cannot mix together; the “Ten toes” of the image, and “Ten horns” of the beast, Re 17, I conclude, refer to the same ten kings. “And in

the days of those kings (which no doubt, is now this present state and time of the Roman monarchy) shall the God of heaven set up” a most glorious and more visible kingdom than ever yet he had in the world, since the resurrection of our Lord from the dead; for evident it is, that this kingdom’s state must commence from the declining state of the papal power, and after the passing away of the “second woe,” and upon the sounding of the “seventh angel,” Re 11; Da 7:26-27. “The second woe is past, and behold the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,” Re 11:14-15. That is, it does begin to be his kingdom. I am persuaded that all the “seven vials appertain to the “seventh trumpet, and that not one of those vials, or “seven last plagues,” are as yet poured forth, nor shall till the Mahometan power is gone, or ceases to be any further woe to the antichristian state, which certainly is near, even at the very door. So that it is evident, the chief design of our blessed Lord in this parable is,

1. To discover what a multitude of formal and foolish professors there would be in the church at the time of this his coming.
2. To stir up all Christians to holy watchfulness, lest they meet with a dismal disappointment when he comes.

I shall in the next place consider the parts of the parable here following.

1. Show you what is meant by the kingdom of heaven.
2. What is meant by the wise and foolish virgins.
3. Why called virgins.
4. Who is meant by the bridegroom.
5. What by going forth to meet him.
6. What is meant by lamps the virgins took, and what by taking their lamps, and going forth.
7. What by the oil and vessels.
8. What by the bridegroom’s tarrying.
9. What by the midnight cry.
10. What by the virgins’ rising and trimming their lamps.
11. What by going to buy oil.
12. What by being ready, and going in to the wedding chamber.
13. What by shutting the door.

And under the several heads I shall note some points of doctrine.

To proceed:

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened,” &c., ver. 1.

The kingdom of heaven is taken variously, (as I have showed;) but here no doubt by it is meant the visible church, as all expositors agree, so that we may read it thus, viz., then shall the visible church be likened to ten virgins, &c. That is, at the latter end of the world, or a little before our Lord cometh. And from hence note,

1. Doct. The visible church in the times of the gospel, especially, may be compared to the kingdom of heaven.

1. I shall show you in what respect the visible church may be compared to a kingdom.

2. Show why it is compared to the kingdom of heaven.

First, Because the church is under a kingly government, or is governed by a king, viz., our Lord Jesus Christ; the church owns no other king or head, lord and lawgiver in divine or spiritual things, but Christ alone; “The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King,” &c. Again it said, “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty,” Isa 33:22, ver. 17. This King is the glorious Bridegroom of our souls, the government of the church is monarchical, and governed by a King clothed with absolute power and authority, whose will is his law; and yet his government is just and righteous, because he cannot will anything but what is good: “There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy,” Jas 4:12. We own no king to have command over our consciences, but Christ alone.

2. Because the visible church is a distinct state from any other kingdom and sort of government. Moses, who governed the kingdom of Israel, hath no command over Christ’s spiritual kingdom, nor any other person as a viceroy, the Pope, nor any earthly potentate have any thing to do to lord it over Christ’s subjects. What power hath the French king to lord it over the freeborn people of England? (we have a king of our own.) Much less what has he to do to lord it, and tyrannize over Christ’s saints, who are freeborn subjects of the king of heaven and earth.

3. Because every kingdom consisteth of divers sorts, degrees, and ranks of men, of different frames of spirit and dispositions; some noble, and some ignoble, some rich, and some poor, some old, and some young, some virtuous, and some wicked, some wise, and others foolish: so it is in the more refined kingdom of Jesus Christ, there may be some noble, some mighty, (though not many of that sort). “In a great house are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, some to honour, and some to dishonour,” 2Ti 2:20. In Christ’s kingdom are fathers, young men, and little children, and some sincere Christians, and some hypocrites, or wise and foolish ones.

4. Because the same laws bind all sorts of persons, within the compass of that kingdom or its jurisdiction, there is not one law for the great ones, (or for the rich) and another for the meaner sort; and as it is thus in an earthly kingdom, it is in Christ’s visible church, all are under the same laws, precepts and ordinances.

5. Moreover as ignorance of the laws of a kingdom or state exempts no man from obedience, or punishment for disobedience, because they are published, and may be known; it is not enough for any to say they did not know this or that law, statute, or ordinance; so ignorance of Christ’s holy ordinance and precepts in a people that live where the gospel is preached, and his ordinances published, will exempt no man from obedience thereunto.

6. In every kingdom there is a statute book, (if it be a regular constitution) wherein all the fundamental laws, statutes, and ordinances of that kingdom are written: so the word of God, or blessed gospel, is the great statute book of the church or of Christ’s spiritual kingdom, in which all his laws and ordinances are recorded.

7. A king appoints officers in his kingdom under him,* to govern and order and manage all the affairs thereof, and to do all things by his authority, and in his name; even so hath Jesus Christ set officers in his church to order and govern his spiritual kingdom under him, by his authority and in his name, and according to his blessed word, and they that submit not to his government, despise the king’s authority; the officers are elders and deacons, whose work is expressly laid down in the gospel: nor do we read of any other office or officers he hath left in his church (and to abide) but only those two.

8. And as in a kingdom those who violate the laws thereof, or such who own not the laws thereof, are called to account and punished; so are or ought all such in Christ's spiritual kingdom, who submit not to the government of it, to be called to account, and without repentance to be cast out as such that will not have Christ rule over them.

Secondly, why is the church called the kingdom of heaven?

1. Because the church in its constitution, laws, and government, is not of this world, but of a sublime and heavenly constitution, the legal ministration being carnal, is called a "worldly sanctuary," Heb 9:1. Indeed the church state of the Jews (though of divine appointment) yet might rather be called worldly than heavenly, because it was national, and much agreeing with reason and the nature of man; it being a law requiring obedience with the promise of life, and threatening death for disobedience (those moral precepts being the same in substance with those which are written in the hearts of all men;) but the constitution of the gospel church is founded upon grace, not on nature, though some who pretend kindness to her, confound nature and grace together in Christ's spiritual kingdom, being ignorant of the nature, quality, and righteousness of this kingdom.

2. All the laws (I mean all pure gospel precepts) in a special manner are from heaven, (as our Lord asked the Jews, concerning the baptism of John, whether from heaven, or of men?) The blessed Jesus positively saith he received his doctrine from his Father, and as the "Father gave him commandment," Joh 12:50. And hence he is said also to "speak from heaven," Heb 12:23.

3. The church may be called the kingdom of heaven, because the same king that reigns in heaven, reigns in this, and governs it; he is also always present with his people in his kingdom below: moreover, the saints are ruled, and do subject to him, so that though Christ is king over all the earth, yet they are believers only who are the subjects of his special spiritual kingdom; he has power over all, but his church is only the kingdom of grace, where Christ by his Spirit and influences thereof, and according to his own laws, rules and reigns.

4. Because the doctrine, faith, order, rule, and government lead to heaven, promoting an holy and heavenly life, and to prepare us for heaven.

5. Because the saints are the subjects of heaven, heirs of heaven, and their names are written in heaven; moreover “Their conversation is said to be in heaven,” Php 3:20. They live heavenly lives, and are influenced by heavenly principles, chiefly mind things above.

6. Because the church is a figure of heaven, or it resembles heaven, and ought to imitate heaven in unity, love, holiness, and also in singing God’s praises, with united hearts and voices, as the saints and angels do, and shall forever in heaven. And hence likewise ministers in the church are called stars; they are as stars to give light, and adorn these heavens: and if any of these stars fall, they are said to fall from heaven.

7. Because here is the glory of heaven begun,* and look (saith one) as the same sun which fills the stars with glory, yet the same beings touch the earth, even so the same glory which shines in heaven, shines in the church here: hence we are said to be “called into his eternal glory,” 1Pe 5:10. And also are “set down in heavenly places in Christ,” Eph 1:3.

USE

1. We may infer from hence, that it is no small privilege to be admitted members of the visible church; what, called out of the world, and not to be of this world, what a blessing is this! Infer. 2.

2. Moreover, it shows what honour God hath put upon his church below, in calling it the kingdom of heaven.

3. This therefore may reprehend such who strive to confound the church and the world together. Sirs, you know not what you do, you may as well endeavour to bring heaven and earth together. The church is a select separated people, and as distinct from the world, as heaven is from the earth, and hath in it different laws to govern it: and so are the subjects, men and women, that are born from above, being of heavenly spirits, tempers, and dispositions.

4. Take heed you do not defile these heavens; they that pollute the church pollute or defile heaven. O let us live as men in heaven: also know that the angels of heaven attend our assemblies, and observe how we walk and behave ourselves. But which is much more, our heavenly king hath his

throne here, he sits amongst us, and beholds our lives, spirits, and conversations.

5. Let sinners take heed of reproaching the church of God, for such “blaspheme God, his tabernacle, and those that dwell in heaven,” Re 13:6. As you read some are said to do. Moreover, let all seek the good, peace, and glory of this kingdom, promote the spiritual trade, riches, and the enlargement of it.

6. Terror; woe to them that would pull down this kingdom, or spoil the beauty and glory thereof, or cut off the provision of it, or seek to raze it.

7. Likewise this may inform such how vain and fruitless all their labour and attempts will be;* can they shake heaven? this kingdom (as to its state and constitution) cannot be shaken nor undermined, also God will undo all that afflict her in the latter day.

8. Pray for the latter days’ glory of this kingdom, it shall be great, “And kings of the earth shall bring their glory unto it.”

Caution. Take heed you raise not tumults, nor cause divisions in this spiritual and heavenly kingdom; they that seek her good, and love her, shall prosper; but such who show a bitter spirit against her,* or disturb her quiet, God will destroy for ever, unless they repent. Take heed you do not stain her glory, nor do that which may weaken this kingdom, and grieve this king.

“Shall be likened to ten virgins.”

Of these this kingdom doth consist, namely of virgins, and these virgins are the members of the invisible church.

Quest. Why are they called virgins?

Answ. Negatively, virgins do not refer to the female sex only, but to males also, “These are they that have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins,” Re 14:4.

1. Virgins are chaste and not defiled. So the members of the true visible church are not defiled with idolatry, not popish, nor any other superstitions, they hate spiritual fornication. Idolatry is often in the scripture called

whoredom, adultery, and fornication. Sirs, many churches consist not of virgins, but of such who are defiled with the fornications of the great whore. Hence in Israel such who kept themselves pure from idolatry, were called the virgin daughter of Sion.

2. Virgins are commonly the younger sort, and are of yielding or complying temper, will bow and be entreated by a lover they like and approve of. So these like young plants bow and bend to the word and entreatings of Christ. Old trees cannot be bowed, so many old sinners cannot be persuaded to bow to Christ, they will not yield to espouse him.

3. Virgins (perhaps) are often courted and tempted to uncleanness, or to unchastity, but they yield not. So Satan tempts the saints, and wicked men tempt and entice them to sin, and to idolatry, but they that are wise yield not, they abhor all such motions of the devil and his instruments.

4. Virgins are often espoused; so believers are espoused to Jesus Christ. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ," 2Co 11:2; they forsake all other lovers, and cleave to the Lord Jesus in all sincere and cordial affections; they die to the inordinate love of this world, and the law, being "become dead to that, that they may be married to Jesus Christ," Ro 7:4.

5. Virgins delight to be clean and neatly dressed,* (unless they be foolish and slothful ones) who are often ashamed of their foul linen; but others will have their linen white and without spot: so wise virgins, or sincere Christians, love to be clothed in linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of Christ, called the righteousness of the saints, because it is that which was wrought for, and is put upon them that are virgins, or true believers; and also they love to be clothed with the garment of inward holiness or sanctification, and hate the garment spotted by the flesh.

6. Virgins love also to be richly adorned: so true believers love to be adorned with all the graces of the Spirit; particularly with a "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," 1Pe 3:4.

7. A virgin espoused (if wise) hath cordial affection or dear love to her bridegroom (or him that hath espoused her) so sincere believers most dearly love Jesus Christ the Bridegroom of their souls; but foolish ones, though

they have espoused Jesus Christ by a visible profession, love other things more than him.

8. Virgins love and take delight in the company of each other; so true Christians delight to converse with each other: "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in thy word," Ps 119:74. And again he saith, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee," Ps 119:63.

9. Virgins are commonly beautiful, or comely: so all wise and sincere believers are beautiful and comely in Christ's sight, being richly adorned, and having the image of God upon them; and hence they, like beautiful virgins, are exposed by Satan to manifold temptations, to corrupt themselves (by false worship and other enticements also,) "I am black but comely," Song 1:6: black by reproaches and persecution, and by their own inward corruptions, but in Christ very beautiful and comely, having doves' eyes, a most chaste and single eye; set upon Christ, and delighting in Christ alone.

10. Sincere believers may be compared to chaste virgins, because they hate the hire of an harlot; "They give gifts to all whores," Eze 16:16,33. But though the devil offers all the world to entice true Christians to forsake Jesus Christ, and cleave to idolatry, they abhor the hire. What have some virgins suffered before they would submit to unchaste embraces? and pray what have some Christians endured before they would cleave to the idolatry of the heathen; or to the idolatries and superstitions of the church of Rome! Even to the most cruel deaths that bloody tyrants could invent; so that neither the pleasure nor profit of sin, could or can entice the true children of God to defile themselves; and though it is true, God hath sometimes suffered some of them to fall in an hour of temptation, as David, Peter, &c., yet like chaste virgins they commonly (unless fearfully ensnared) withstand all temptations of sin and Satan, as Joseph did.

11. A virgin, if beset or waylaid, she will cry out, (and indeed so she must or else not be guiltless, but it will be deemed a consenting;) so a poor believer when beset by sin or Satan, doth and must cry out to God, as Paul did, and will not yield or consent, so much as to evil thoughts, and so are guiltless; for there is no defilement or charge of sin without the parties' consent, or the yielding of the will; "The evil I would not do, that do I," Ro 7:15. Evil thoughts may not be charged as sin, that are only Satan's suggestions, if they are abhorred, and the soul cries out: "For this I besought the Lord thrice," &c., 2Co 12:8.

12. Virgins are careful to avoid all debauched and scandalous company: it is the counsel of wisdom, not to come near the harlot's house," Pr 8:5; so believers should take heed to avoid the company of the wicked. "Who can touch pitch and not be defiled?" Who can worship in a false way once, and not be defiled thereby? Or keep company with swearers, drunkards, or profane persons, and not get himself a blot? Dinah was defiled by wandering abroad, or getting amongst the uncircumcised: "Abstain from all appearance of evil," 1Th 5:22. With the froward we soon learn frowardness.

13. A virgin will not put on an harlot's dress;* we read of the attire of an harlot, this an honest woman abhorreth: so Christians will avoid all superstitious rites, traditions, and ceremonies of the false church; they reject all popish relics and superstitions, which seem to be the attire of an harlot.

14. It is the character of a chaste virgin, that she be seen and not heard: a comely silence is an excellent virtue in damsels; "An harlot's voice is loud," &c., Pr 7:10-11. As some persons, my brethren, hang all their riches on their backs, so some professors' religion is all in their tongues and airy notions. An empty vessel (if you strike it) sounds more than that which is full: so an empty professor commonly makes a greater noise than a pious Christian; empty professors boast many times of their assurance, when a true believer is full of complaints and doubtings. "In the multitude of words there wants not sin," Pr 10:19; but a fool by his silence is counted wise. Sirs, frothy and light discourse, discovers a vain and frothy heart; hence David resolved to keep his tongue as with a bridle, while the wicked were with him. "A wise man spares his words," Pr 17:27.

15. Virgins are apt on every turn to blush, they are shame-faced, but a "whore's face is impudent," Pr 7:13. God complains of some that sinned "and were not ashamed, neither did they blush." A true believer at every occasion is ready to fear he hath spoken or done amiss, and the blood is as it were ready to come into his face he is ready to blush and to be ashamed before the Lord; his conscience is tender, and presently checks or smites him.

16. Virgins desire to have manifestations of the love of them who have espoused them; so doth every believer: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine," Song 1:2. The Son of God might be said to kiss his elect, his spouse, (1.) When he took our nature into union with his divine Person. And (2.) When he discovers to us, that he loved us

from everlasting, by effectual calling. (3.) When he applies his robe of righteousness to us in free justification. (4.) Also when he stamps his own image upon us in regeneration, and sanctification. (5.) When he seals his love to the soul by his promises, or in an ordinance. For he gives us evidences and manifestations of his love in all those respects.

1. This we may be said to do when we own and worship him;* we read of some that had not kissed Baal, that is, they had not owned him to be a god: such refuse to kiss the Son, who own him not to be God over all, or that deny his Deity. (2.) We kiss the Son when we worship him; there is a kiss of adoration: "They say to them, let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves," Ho 13:2; that is, let them give adoration to them, they that honour the Son as they honour the Father, may be said to kiss the Son. Kisses are a demonstration of honour and reverence; as when a man kisses the king's hand, the king honours him. Thus Christ confers love and honour on those persons who are admitted to kiss him. (3.) When we believe in Christ, or touch him by faith, we may be said to kiss the Son; we embrace, cleave to him as our Saviour, and the Bridegroom of our souls. (4.) When we love the Lord Jesus with a superlative love, the highest love, we may be said to kiss the Son; and thus all the wise virgins show their love to Christ, and own him as their Saviour, and chief Beloved of their souls. (5.) Moreover, there is a kiss of reconciliation; the Father kissed his returning prodigal, to denote he was reconciled to him: when we are reconciled to God and to his ways and people, and are united to Christ, we may be said to kiss the Son.

16. Virgins are commonly strong in their affections; the lamentation of a virgin is put for the debt of sorrow. O what love has a true believer to Christ! (David's soul was broken with longings after God,) and as their joy is unspeakable when they have his presence, so their sorrow is extensive when he is absent.

17. A virgin is the object of a prince's affection; so are believers the object of Christ's affection and delight. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse," &c. "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse, how much better is thy love than wine," Song 4:9-10.

Lastly, virgins used to go forth in the night (in those eastern countries) to meet the bridegroom, and attend on him into the marriage-chamber: so believers in the latter days (this prophetic parable shows) should in a dark

time go forth with great expectation to meet Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of their souls, as you will hear more hereafter.

“And went forth to meet the Bridegroom.”

1. I shall show who this Bridegroom is, and why so called.
2. What may be meant by the virgins going forth to meet him.

1. This Bridegroom all understand is our Lord Jesus. And though I have in opening the parable of the marriage feast set forth the excellency of his person, (and also in the opening the parable of the pearl of great price,) yet I shall here show why he is called a Bridegroom.

Doct. Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of all believers.

I shall show,

1. How fitly he may be called a Bridegroom.
2. Show that he excels all bridegrooms.

I. A bridegroom all know is one that proposeth to marry,* and not live a single life, how happy soever he might be, did he resolve never to change his condition. My brethren, the Son of God, notwithstanding all that glory he had with the Father from eternity, he being his only-begotten Son, lying in his bosom, and was the joy and delight of his Father's heart, and being clothed with all the personal excellencies of the eternal Father, yet resolved to dispose of himself in the marriage: and by calling himself a Bridegroom he declared to men and angels, that he hath a spouse (who as his bride) he resolved should live with him in glory for ever and ever.

II. And in obedience, as a wise Son he consulted with his Father about this important affair, and would not proceed one step without his Father's hearty agreement and consent. Hence it is said, “The counsel of peace was between them both,” Zec 6:13. As it was a counsel of peace, it signifies the persons beloved were fallen under God's displeasure; and though multitudes of the angels were so fallen as well as mankind, yet he passed by the first, and fixed his heart and thoughts on a remnant of the lost offspring of fallen mankind, who were chosen and given to him by the Father from everlasting;

now this marriage being determined by the whole Trinity, and who the spouse should be that the Second Person should marry; when the fulness of time was come, the Father sent him into the world on this glorious and gracious design; hence he said, "I proceeded and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me," Joh 8:42.

III. A man that designs to marry, maketh choice of the person he purposeth to espouse. So Jesus Christ with all cordial affections made choice of God's elect seed amongst the fallen lump of mankind, whom he designed to redeem and betroth to himself for ever: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham," Heb 2:16.

IV. When a man hath fixed upon the object he designs to marry, he contrives the proper way and method, in order to the accomplishment of his design and purpose; so the Son of God consulted with the Father, what was best and fittest to be done, that he might bring to pass and actually accomplish this his glorious design, the result of which was,

1. That the Son of God enters first into a holy compact or covenant with the Father, and so became a covenanting party or common Head, Representative, and Surety for all God's elect who were his intended spouse.

2. That he must marry (or take into union with his divine person the nature of his elect, or) fallen mankind, and so be incarnate, in the flesh, in the womb of a virgin; for if he was not flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, he could not be a proper Mediator between God and man, neither could he be a fit and proper Bridegroom to espouse and marry us, but, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same," Heb 2:14.

3. That in taking on him our nature he became our kinsman, and so had the right of redemption fell upon him, and thereby also was obliged to espouse us unto himself, (or all that were given to him by the Father.) And,

4. That in that nature he must work out a perfect and complete righteousness, which the sacred law of God required, and because the intended spouse was fallen under God's high pleasure for treason and rebellion, (in violating the sacred law of heaven) and was also condemned to die, (and none but he alone could satisfy for her horrid crimes) he foresaw it was absolutely necessary that concerning the flesh he must be put to death

for her, or in her stead and room, to all which he heartily agreed, and obliged himself to the Father in the said covenant to do, and readily took that long journey from heaven to earth, to be clothed with our nature, and in garments dipped in blood, so became a suitor, to woe and entreat the sinner's love and affections.

Stop here, and wonder, O my soul! O what a journey did the Son of God take upon him! and what glory did he leave, and into what a dolesome land of darkness and horror did he come, and what great abasement, ignominy, shame and spitting upon, expose himself unto! and what a cursed death did he die, that he might become the Bridegroom of our souls!

V. A man that hath fixed his love on a person (he hath thoughts to espouse) propounds questions to her, among which this is one, i.e., whether she be not preengaged? and if she be (through folly in a wicked way to her utter undoing) he strives to break off such a sinful and unlawful contract. Now the Sun of God well knew that sinners whom he designed to espouse, were entangled in love in a wicked way, and to their utter ruin, with many lovers, viz., with this sensual world and their own horrid lusts, and that many of them also were fallen in love with their own righteousness: which unjust contract he strives to break, and disentangle each soul from all those soul-undoing lovers, and this he intimated when he said, "Unless a man deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple," Mt 16:24. Nay, moreover, that such that espouse him must hate all things for his sake, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," Lu 14:26. That is, Christ must have the preference, or have the sinner's chiefest love, and affections of his heart; the lesser love in scripture is called a hatred, Leah was said to be hated,* because Jacob loved Rachel above her.

VI. A man that designs to become a bridegroom, discovers his intentions to the person, and makes offers of his love to her, so the Son of God discovers to sinners his great love, and also makes most gracious offers of his endeared love unto them.

1. He discovers the earliness of it to them; the Father gave him, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love," Jer 3:2. By his entering into that covenant (I mentioned) with the Father for them. 3. By taking our nature into union with his divine person. 4. By his undergoing all those hard things

for our sakes, as reproaches, spitting on, plucking off the hair, and by being made a curse for us, and in dying the ignominious death of the cross, 5. By coming to the sinner's door, standing long, and knocking there. 6. By sending his servants (his ministers) as his spokesmen, to entreat and beseech them to grant him their love and affections. 7. By his own importunate invitations, saying, "behold me, behold me,"—"O come to the waters," &c.,—"Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden," Mt 11:28. And multitudes of the like gracious invitations. 8. By the many promises he hath made to them that receive and embrace him in the arms of their faith.

VII. A faithful lover respecteth the person of his intended bride, than more than her wealth, beauty, or any thing whatsoever. Brethren, Jesus Christ sees nothing in sinners to move his affections; for they have neither beauty, wealth, honour, nor good conditions, being in themselves filthy, deformed, lying polluted in their blood, and enemies to him.

VIII. A lover uses all due means and the strongest arguments he can, to engage the affections of the person he loves, so Jesus Christ uses most strong and powerful arguments to obtain the sinner's love and affections, and 1. What can be greater, than the worth, dignity, and glory of his person? "I and my Father are one." "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star," Re 22:16. "The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb 1:3. (2) He mentioneth also the greatness, strength, and sincerity of his love. 3. His wonderful riches,* being the heir of all things. 4. His shedding of his blood.* 5. The greatness of his beauty. 6. His admirable wisdom. 7. The greatness of his power. 8. The sweetness, meekness, and humbleness of his spirit. 9. Also the necessity sinners have of him. 10. And the great benefits all that receive him shall partake of by him. "He that hath the Son hath life,"*1 John 5:12. 11. He sheds his love abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost. Yea, 12. He circumcises their hearts to love him.

IX. A lover, when he hath obtained the full consent of the person beloved, espouseth and marries her,* so Jesus Christ having obtained the full consent of sinners, espouseth, betroths, and marries them to himself, "For I am married to you saith the Lord," Jer 3:14. The Lord is thine husband.

X. The Bridegroom hath the bride, she is his only. "I am my beloved's, and he is mine." "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." Believers are his many ways. (1.) By virtue of election, or by his and his Father's choice. (2.)

His by the solemn covenant between the Father and himself, by which covenant they were given to him. “Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me,” Joh 17:6. (3.) And his we are also by the right of redemption, he bought and purchased them. (4.) His by virtue of conquest; he hath overcome them, and all their enemies who had power over them, and kept them in bondage and slavery. (5.) His by the holy resignation of themselves to him. They renounce all other lovers, and cleave to Jesus Christ.

XI. The bridegroom (if a prince or a noble person) settles a rich dowry upon his bride, so Jesus Christ settles upon every believer a vast dowry, or bestows on them, a vast inheritance; for he makes them joint heirs with himself, and makes over a crown and kingdom to them.

XII. A bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride; so doth the Lord Jesus Christ. “As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee,” Isa 62:4-5.

XIII. A bridegroom marrying his bride (if she was in debt, and in danger of an arrest) she is thereby discharged from all fear and danger, for her husband is accountable for all she owed, so by the Lord Jesus marrying poor sinners, (they being before far in debt, owing ten thousand talents) they are thereby freed, and discharged of all danger and fear of being arrested by divine justice, and sent to the eternal prison of hell and divine wrath.

XIV. The person that a prince espouses and marries, (though she was never so mean and ignoble before, is thereby raised to great honour, having his name put upon her, and is become a queen, and hath also his own retinue, or a noble guard, to wait upon her; so all believers Christ marries, (who were mean, ignoble, and base-born,) are thereby raised to great honour, and are called by Christ’s name, and have the holy angels to be their retinue, to guard and wait upon them. “They minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation,” Heb 1:14.

XV. A bridegroom sympathizes with his bride in all her afflictions, if he be a wise, sincere, and faithful person. So doth the Lord Jesus. “In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old,” Isa 63:9.

XVI. A bridegroom makes great preparations for the marriage-day, and on that day both are very gloriously adorned. My brethren, though believers are espoused and secretly married to Jesus Christ, yet there is a day appointed for the public solemnization of their marriage, when the bride will have made herself ready; and in that day the king will appear in his glory, and shine brighter than the sun in his strength, in all his amazing grandeur, and “At his right hand shall stand the queen in gold of Ophir,” Ps 45:9, and hence it is said, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory.” Col 3:3-4. And indeed (as I conceive,) this is partly the day to which this parable refers; for though the bridegroom’s coming may refer to his more glorious appearance in the last days; yet, (as was hinted,) it may likewise refer to his personal coming.

17. The bridegroom at the marriage-day, hath many virgins to attend him, or wait upon him; it was so amongst the Jews. So many virgins shall go forth with their lamps to meet Jesus Christ, and wait upon him at his glorious appearance; but more of that hereafter.

Secondly, Jesus Christ excels all other bridegrooms in many respects.

1. What noble and high-born prince ever set his heart upon such a mean, low, base, and ignoble person, as Jesus Christ ever did? He loved a leper; set his heart upon such that were very poor, naked, and loathsome creatures; even such that were condemned and cursed by the law, and full of sores and filthy ulcers also.

2. Jesus Christ became poor to make his bride rich. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich,” 2Co 8:9.

3. Christ, the spiritual Bridegroom, laid down his life, or shed his own most precious blood to redeem his intended bride, in which he excels all bridegrooms that ever were. Some have died for love, (it is true,) because they could not obtain the object beloved; but Jesus Christ died to obtain our love; he could never enjoy his spouse, unless he died in her stead.

4. This Bridegroom confers beauty on his bride; he makes her comely, who naturally was filthy and very deformed, which no other bridegroom ever did, nor can do. “And thou wast exceeding beautiful. And thy renown went

forth among the heathen for thy beauty, for it was perfect through my comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord God,” Eze 16:13-14.

5. Bridegrooms among men, do not usually clothe and adorn their brides, or the persons they court, at their own proper charge; but Jesus Christ puts on his bride, the glorious wedding-robe whom he found naked or covered only with filthy rags, and also the garment he puts upon her, is of “wrought gold, she shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work,” &c., Ps 45:13.

6. Many other bridegrooms cool in a short time in their love and affections; but Jesus Christ never decays or cools in his love to his beloved bride, but his love is ever the same, and a love that passeth knowledge; the height, length, depth, and breadth thereof is infinite.

7. Other bridegrooms are sometimes absent from their brides, and evils befall them, which they neither know nor are able to prevent. But Jesus Christ is always with believers, and nothing can befall them without his knowledge, and that which will not be for their good he will prevent. “Lo I am with you always to the end of the world,” Matt, 18:28. “The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain,” Ps 76:10.

8. Other bridegrooms and husbands die, and oftentimes leave their wives widows, but Christ never dies. “I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I live for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and death,” Re 1:18.

9. Death breaks that union that is between earthly husbands and their wives, and they live but a short time together, (though it be sixty years, it is comparatively but a moment,) but Christ and his sponse shall live together for ever; death cannot dissolve this marriage knot; in all which respects, and many more, it appears that Jesus Christ far excels all other bridegrooms on earth, or that ever lived.

APPLICATION

1. It may be improved by way of admiration. Strange, doth the Creator court the creature! an abused prince fall in love with a rebellious and traitorous subject!

Wonder at the condescension of the Son of God! doth he assume our nature, and become man, that he may be a proper and fit Bridegroom of our souls, and undergo so many indignities and heart-breaking sorrows, to make us so near unto him, as to be his dear bride and spouse, and lie in his bosom for ever; this will be matter of our admiration to all eternity.

2. O sinners, will you not fall in love with Jesus Christ? Can you refuse such an offer? If you do, how will you look him in the face in the great day? He is a coming, his day is near. "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," &c., and do you make no preparation to meet him?

3. What say you who are the virgins? I fear you are asleep, however let all tremble. It seems there are many foolish virgins in the church at the time when Christ comes. You may hate idolatry and all false worship, and yet be but foolish virgins. My brethren, is it not high time to rouse out of sleep, and look out, and prepare, when the Bridegroom is just at the door? let us all arise, get upon the watch, and look out.

SERMON XIX

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. &c.—Mt 25:1.

You have heard the kingdom of heaven signifieth here the visible church, and by the virgins are meant professors of the true religion, and members of the church, and by the Bridegroom is meant the Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall now proceed. “And took their lamps.”

1. I shall show you what these lamps are.
2. Show to what custom our Saviour here doth refer.

Commonly by lamps here, is understood a visible owning of Christ, or the profession of faith, which all the members of the visible church should take and hold fast, viz., continue in the practice of all the ordinances of the gospel, and so maintain the public worship of God, and the profession of this faith; all these virgins were found, they all took their lamps. Yet a reverend author saith, “Lamps signify the readiness of the churches to meet Jesus Christ.” And according to another author (who wrote upon this parable), “the taking their lamps is meant the furnishing themselves with what might be of use to lead them in their way at such a time.”

All (it is true,) ought to be ready,* but five of them were not ready; yet all took their lamps; therefore lamps (I humbly conceive), cannot refer to a readiness to meet Christ, though none can be ready to meet him, who take not their lamps, or hold not fast the profession of their faith. It is the trimming our lamps, and having them lighted, and burning clearly, and also having oil in our vessels, that renders us to be ready to meet the Bridegroom.

And as to what the other author saith, I answer, What can be of greater use to lead us (more visibly and externally,) in our way, in order to meet the Lord Jesus Christ, “than the holding fast the form of sound words,” or a constant maintaining and keeping up the public worship of God, and profession of our faith?

All the virgins took their lamps; viz., they had all the lamps of a visible and external profession, and were deemed true worshippers of God. But,

For the further clearing of this, I shall show you how fitly a visible profession of the gospel may be compared to a lamp.

I. A lamp is provided to contain oil, that it may give light to ourselves and others in the night. So a Christian should have grace, that his lamp of profession may give light to himself and to others.

II. A lamp may be empty of oil, or have but a very little in it. So a man may have (or make) a profession of religion, and have no true grace (or only a little common grace,) in his heart; for it was only that which made the lamps of the foolish virgins to blaze a short time, for had they had the true and proper oil, their lamps had not gone out; because to true believers more grace is promised, and all their needs shall continually be supplied, according to “the riches of glory that is in Christ, or according to that abundant grace that is in him,” Php 1:19.

III. A lamp must be supplied with oil from another vessel. So a believer’s lamp of profession must be supplied with spiritual oil, and that from a two-fold vessel, (or else their profession will soon go out, and give no light in this dark world.) (1.) Primarily and mediatively from Jesus Christ, who is the fountain-vessel of all grace. (2.) More immediately (and in a secondary manner,) a believer’s lamp of profession must be supplied from within, I mean his own heart. It is said, ver. 4, “The wise took oil in their vessels;” that is, (as I conceive) they had true spiritual oil, (or true faith, true grace) in their own hearts; and he that hath only a lamp of profession, and not oil in his vessel, will find his lamp not burn, and give light but a little time: but the wise not only profess, but also possess Jesus Christ in their souls.

IV. Lamps may have much oil put into them at first; but that may not be sufficient, they must be recruited, more must be put in; nay, they must be often supplied with more fresh oil from some vessel or another. So a true believer may receive a good measure of grace, when he was first converted, he received the grace of faith, the grace of love, hope, patience, humility, &c. But notwithstanding this, yet he needs more grace, or an increase, an addition, or further, and fresh supplies of grace in his heart, to furnish his lamp of profession, to make it burn continually, clearly, and not go out.

V. It is oil which makes a lamp to burn, and to give light to him that hath it, and to others also, or otherwise the bare empty lamp signifies just nothing:

so it is true grace in daily exercise that makes a professor in his conversation to give light, and to shine in holiness, by which his profession tends to his own profit, and to the benefit of others. A bare profession signifies just nothing without true grace and holiness. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven,” Mt 5:16.

VI. Lamps must be daily trimmed, or else they will burn very dimly, and give but little light, the trimming a lamp (or candle), is to prevent what hinders (or obstructs) its burning; (we sometimes say, there is a thief in candle) the lamp or candle must be snuffed, or dead ashes, or something or another may hinder its burning clearly, so as to give a good light. Even so must the lamp of profession be carefully trimmed, or everything be removed that may prevent, hinder, or obstruct a Christian profession from giving a clear light. Sin is like a thief in the candle, it will waste it, and spoil or hinder a man’s profession from shining, or the corruptions of the heart, the lusts of the flesh, and inordinate love of the world, are like unto dead ashes, that hinder the lamp of profession from burning clear and bright.* Therefore sin and corruptions through the Spirit must be mortified. Brethren, we must top or snuff the lamps of profession, or take away the dead ashes of unbelief, pride, carnality, and formality, or else our lamps will burn very dim, and be ready to go out—and indeed the lamp of hypocrites, though they for a time seem to blaze or shine, yet they go in a little time quite out, which is occasioned,

1. By reason they had not the right oil, it was counterfeit grace, or not the right lamp- oil, or the true faith of God’s elect.

2. It comes to pass also for want of trimming their lamps, they neglect their hearts, and are remiss in their lives, and suffer corruption, deadness, and carnality, to prevail in them; for though it was but common grace that made their lamps to give any light, yet had they trimmed them, or took more care of their outward conversations, their profession might have given more light, and have burned longer also.

VII. The going out of the lamp in a dark night is a very dismal and dangerous thing, especially when a person hath the greatest need of it; so it is a dismal thing for a professor to have the lamp of profession to go out in the dark time of temptation, or in a time of dark providences, or perhaps just before the Bridegroom’s coming.

Secondly, To what custom doth our Saviour here refer, or by taking lamps alludes unto?

1. Answ. No doubt our Lord hereby alludes to the custom of the Jews and other people in those eastern countries, who held their nuptial or marriage feasts in the night, from whence this parable is taken. The custom was this, viz.:—Young men and virgins in the night went forth to meet the bridegroom, as he was coming to the marriage chamber; among the Jews, it was with lamps, and among the Romans with torches. Among the Jews all that were invited were bid to bring their burning lamps with them, and by the bright shining, or clear light of their lamps, the glory of the marriage solemnities was much greater, the light of those lamps shining by them; and such who had not lamps lighted and burning, were not admitted into the wedding-chamber.

2. Our Saviour also may allude to lamps here, because a lamp or a candle is a proper light for us in the night; and hence David saith, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,” Psal, 119:105; not only a light as of the sun by day, or in prosperity, but as a lamp in the night of adversity, or under dismal and dark dispensations, or amazing providences, and times of temptation.

3. A lamp burning with clear light, may denote a true believer’s readiness for to meet the Bridegroom in the marriage-chamber; the righteousness of the saints in Sion “is compared to a lamp that burneth, and to this our Lord alludeth in another place: “Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately,” Lu 12:33,36. That is, be every way ready. The Bridegroom being come to the marriage-chamber amongst the Jews, it seems on a sudden knocked, to let the virgins of the bride-chamber in; but none, as I said, were admitted but such who had their lamps lighted and clearly burning. So none shall be admitted into the marriage-chamber by Jesus Christ, but such who are ready, having not only lamps, but oil in their vessels, and who in grace and holiness shine in their conversation.

Some in our days pretend to have oil in their vessels (i.e.), saving grace in their hearts,* who have not right-made lamps, that is, they have not the true profession of the Christian faith; they boast of the power of godliness, but

contemn the true form, or have not kept that form of doctrine that was once delivered by Christ and his apostles.

It is also called the “form of sound words, and also the form of godliness.” These men “have a form of their own” devising, 2Ti 1:13; 3:5, but neither have the true constitution of a gospel church, nor the doctrine and discipline thereof, but pretend to walk by the light which is within them (and in all men), which cannot either discover the true Christ, the true faith, nor the true church: for neither of these are known but by the gospel, (or the sacred word of God)—it is good and commendable to have lamps, nay, absolutely necessary, and such that are also fashioned by the unerring pattern, though without oil that lamp will avail no man anything, we must have both the form and the power of godliness.

“And went forth,” &c.

1. Their going forth doth doubtless imply that all these virgins looked upon themselves to be chosen and invited persons, (or such that were called to attend the bridegroom on the marriage day) i.e., they all thought themselves to be saints and godly Christians, though some of them were mistaken.

2. Their going forth may denote their great expectation of being received and kindly entertained by Jesus Christ, when he comes; this certainly must needs be meant hereby: who would go forth to meet the bridegroom as virgins of the marriage-chamber, (according to the custom of the people in those eastern nations) that did not conclude they were some of those select and chosen ones, to attend the bridegroom?

3. It may also signify that desire and longing which they seemed to have, to see and behold the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

4. Their going forth be sure denotes that visible profession they made of Jesus Christ, owning his worship and ordinances, which our Lord hath appointed to remain in the church until he comes, as baptism and the Lord's supper: “Let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” To this also the Holy Ghost alludes in the sacred song, “Go thou forth by the footsteps of the flock,” Song 1:7.

5. This going forth to meet the bridegroom in the wise virgins, may denote their great love and affections to the Lord Jesus Christ, and their longings to see him, as when Isaac went forth to meet Rebecca; and Joseph went forth to meet his father Jacob, Ge 46:29; it is for full enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

6. It may also denote that great confidence that was in all these professors and church members. My Brethren, there are a number of persons that may have great confidence, both living and dying, and yet at last may be disappointed. Nay, and Christ (as one observes) can hardly beat them off from their hope and confidence. "I tell you, I know you not—I profess I know ye not." The wise virgins knew not there were so many foolish ones among them, they took them to be true Christians. O what need have we to try and examine ourselves, and see whether Christ be in us or not, or whether we have oil in our vessels or not. Some think they are in a good estate, because they are hearers of the word; but alas, these did not only hear, but obeyed Christ in all his external ordinances, and were members of his church, and held communion with the saints, and went out into a visible profession, with expectation to meet the Bridegroom.

Doct. That Jesus Christ at his second coming, cometh, or will come, as a Bridegroom to his people, to marry his spouse, and then will publicly hold his marriage solemnity.

Those expositors,* who in speaking to this parable, make it their chief business to open the soul's espousal to Christ, I humbly think, greatly mistake the scope and design of our Lord; for that I think is not so much intended here, as it is to put us in mind of his coming to the marriage chamber at the last day, and to be ready for it: as to the espousing of Christ, which I have spoken to that in opening the parable of the marriage supper, to which I shall refer my reader. I shall not therefore insist upon matters of that nature here.

Now in speaking to this proposition,

1. I shall prove the truth thereof.
2. Show what a day of solemnity that day will be.
3. Apply it.

I have showed already that Christ is the bridegroom here meant; and the present time, my brethren, is the wooing time, or the day of our espousal to the Lord Jesus Christ; and it is said, a virgin espoused is a man's wife, and from hence the church is called the Lamb's wife, who shall be presented a chaste virgin unto Christ, which shows the public marriage day is not yet come,* though ministers (as Christ's spokesmen) are said to espouse sinners to him, and they are also said now to be married to him. "Let us be glad, and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready," Re 19:7. This time refers to the day of Christ's second coming. But,

Secondly, to show you what a glorious solemnity that marriage day will be.

I. It will be a day of clearing up, or resolving of all doubts, and for ever scattering of all fears. May be many godly Christians now do much question the truth and sincerity of their faith in, and love to, the Lord Jesus Christ; but then it will be fully known they did truly believe in him, and sincerely love him, and they shall never have any more doubts about it.

II. This marriage day will be the day of the manifestation of the greatness of the love of Christ to his spouse, and unto every believer; I mean they shall more clearly and sensibly know the greatness of his love to every one of their precious souls in that day; "and to know that I have loved thee," Re 3:9. True, by his word and providences, Christ makes this partly known now, but not so fully as he will in that day, and not make it manifest to themselves only, but others shall in that day know it also, who perhaps thought that Christ loved them not, because he so sorely afflicted them whilst in this world.

III. It will be a day without clouds; all darkness shall then for ever be vanquished, and all tears wiped away from the faces of all God's children; it will be the day of joy and gladness of Christ's heart, Song 3:11, and of the hearts of all believers; (crowns were wont to be worn on the marriage day of a prince): so Christ then will not only have his crowns on his head, but his spouse and beloved bride shall be crowned also; yea, every believer shall in that day have a crown of glory on his head; Christ will rejoice over his bride, and she shall rejoice with him with unspeakable joy, their hearts shall rejoice; "But I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you," Joh 15:22. No day like this marriage day, and good reason there will be for it.

IV. It will be a day of great glory and splendour, which may appear by considering these things following.

1. Jesus Christ will appear then like a glorious king in all his royalties, such a king before did no created being ever behold; (though in a figure Peter, James, and John had a small representation of his glory in the holy mount in the transfiguration). My brethren, some have been amazed to behold the glory of an earthly prince on his marriage-day, and no doubt but the marriage of king Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter (which might be a type of this solemnity) exceeded all that ever was on earth. But O what will be the glory of this day, when the Son of God will have on all his rich and glorious wedding robes, and appear in the glory of the Father, and when his spouse the queen shall also be brought unto the king, in raiment of needle-work, and stand before him clothed with wrought gold of Ophir," Ps 45:9. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory," Col 3:4. The heavenly Queen will on that day shine in rich heavenly pearls, jewels, and diamonds.

2. In respect of that glorious attendance or retinue, which Jesus Christ and his bride shall have to wait upon them; viz., all the mighty and glorious angels, whose glory be sure will be very great, and no doubt but their glory (though they are spirits) shall be manifested to the saints. Sirs, poor believers now lie among the pots; but what saith the Lord? "Though ye have hen among the pots, yet shall your wings be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," Ps 68:13.

V. The glory and happiness of the saints in that day will be wonderful, in respect of the sight that will be then seen.

(1.) The admirable glory of the Father,* which will appear in the person of Jesus Christ, for otherwise no created being could behold; for they shall see God. I do not say the essence of God, for such who affirm that (I humbly conceive they know not what they say; not in Christ's person as a proper medium we shall see the Father. And,

(2.) We shall behold Christ as he is, now glorified in heaven.

(3.) We shall also see all the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, blessed martyrs and ministers, and all the saints of Jesus Christ, that ever lived; O what a sight that will be.

VI. It will be a glorious solemnity, in respect of that heavenly melody; O what songs will they be, that the heavenly hosts of saints and angels shall sing; no mortal (be sure) could hear it; it will be so ravishing, when all the saints shall join with the angels, and sing in sweet comfort.

VII. In respect of those rivers of celestial pleasures, which will abide for evermore; they will be pure, sweet, and soul-satisfying pleasure, without any sting, cloying or surfeiting; all the choicest (and lawful) delights and pleasures of this world are, my brethren, but a shadow of those heavenly pleasures: “In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. Thou wilt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,” Ps 16:11; 36:8.

Rivers denote the quantity or abundance of them: thy pleasures, thy joys they are the joys of our Lord, that signifies the quality of them.

VIII. In respect of that wonderful knowledge believers shall attain unto: “When that which is perfect is come, then shall that which is in part be done away. But then we shall know as we are known,” 1Co 10:12.

Whilst, brethren, we are here in this body, we know as children, see as children, but then we shall arrive to perfection in knowledge; we shall know fully, or in great and wonderful manner, though not in the same degree of the fulness and perfection whereby God knows us, for that is impossible, how large soever the vessel be, for God is infinite and we (though glorified) are but finite creatures. However, we shall have a wonderful knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, and of the secrets of God, of his decrees and purposes, which here we understand and look darkly unto: and also shall know more fully the nature of God’s redeeming love, Christ’s redeeming love, and his espousing love. Moreover, we shall have a full knowledge of one another, and of all the saints, whom we never saw before, though we hear much of them. Certainly one great part of the glory of that day will consist in that amazing knowledge we shall arrive at. My brethren, we shall know then what heaven is: ah what a little do we now understand of that glorious place, which is called paradise, and the throne of God.

IX. I might speak of the power, rule, and authority, which the saints shall have in that day, and how kings shall bow down before them, and men and devils be judged by them; the saints (with Christ) shall judge the world.

APPLICATION

1. Infer. We may from hence see what fools the men of the world are, who slight all the joys above, and contemn the glory of this happy day; they are more pleased with toys and rattles, than with true riches, glory and satisfying delights and pleasures of heaven; they value the shadow above the substance, they would be seemingly happy for one day, and choose that rather, than be really and eternally happy, or happy indeed; if there was, sirs, no punishment of loss, to lose God, Christ, and everlasting joys and consolations, what is such a loss?

2. Be exhorted you that are professors and children of God, to prepare to meet the Bridgroom of your souls.

FOR MOTIVES

1. Consider, the design and scope of this parable, is (as I said) to excite us all to a due preparation, or to be ready for the marriage day.

2. Consider that you are espoused,* who are true believers, by Jesus Christ; you are the person whom the king in that day will publicly marry, and embrace in his arms, and crown with glory, and set down in his throne. O make ready, hast to the wedding chamber.

3. You are gone forth by your visible profession to meet the Bridegroom, you are gone out of yourselves, trust not in yourselves, and be gone out of Babylon, and out of all false worship; you are therefore called virgins, this is really so, or but in appearance only. O how sad will it be, if be not in reality; let this motive stir us all up to a due preparation for the marriage day.

4. Consider that now the Bridegroom's coming is very near; now the slumbering time of the virgins is upon us, though near gone, and all things long towards the time of the end. Some years ago what a cry was heard, behold the Bridegroom cometh, and with what expectation did many in this nation go forth to meet him, not thinking he would yet tarry: this is that time

in which he is said to tarry, but it is near expired. Though I look for a dark hour just before the day-break.

5. Consider the end and design of the whole of the Christian religion, is to enjoy the lovely Bridegroom. Brethren, the end I say, of all our religion, faith, and expectation is lost as to us, if you and I are not prepared and absolutely ready to meet Jesus Christ. Why did Christ die? why is the gospel preached? why is grace given? why are prayers made? why is holy watchfulness pressed upon us? why is grace to be exercised? why are trials and afflictions patiently borne, but that we might glorify God and Jesus Christ here, and be ready or fully prepared to meet him, be embraced by him, and glorified with him for evermore? Is our hope in this life? God forbid; for then we are of all men most miserable. Is not the end of our faith the salvation of our souls?

6. None but they only that were ready, went into the wedding-chamber, the door was shut against all others; or rather it will be shut, and how vain then will all their religion be, who are unprepared! what will the foolish virgins do at that day? Many professors do but deceive themselves and others, who think they are going to heaven, when they are indeed going to hell.

7. It is, my brethren, a great disparagement to the Lord Jesus Christ; nay, a slighting of him, and a casting contempt upon his glorious appearance, not to be prepared for his coming, as if he was not worthy of our utmost diligence, or as if this was not matter of the highest importance.

8. Consider, that our carelessness about preparing for Christ's coming, bespeaks want of love to him: what! love the Lord Jesus, and not prepare for the marriage day? Moreover, it may bespeak the want of faith touching his appearance, and this because he seems to delay his coming. About fifty years ago what a mighty expectation was there of Christ's coming, and of the near approaching of his kingdom; (but lo, an amazing hour intervenes) and a second war is commenced by the beast, and all this tending to the slaying the witnesses, by which great security seized upon the Lord's people, and but few now think or speak of Christ's kingdom; it is but little talked of, and doth not this intimate a declension of love to him? "The love of many waxeth cold." Most professors pursue the world, and, I fear, serve the world, and forget their Sovereign, and as the proverb goes, out of sight, out of mind.

9. We read of great preparation, and purifications of virgins for their marriages with earthly princes; and shall not these spiritual virgins labour after soul-preparation and purification for their marriage with the Prince of heaven and earth? see Es 2:12. “Now when every maid’s turn was come to go to the King, after she had been twelve months, for so were the days of their purification accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours.” Thus these virgins were prepared and purified to be accepted by the king Ahasuerus, and shall not believers much more strive to be prepared, beautified, and perfumed with all the sweet odours of divine and rich oil of the Spirit, and precious grace, for the embraces of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of their souls, and King of heaven and earth?

II. By way of caution. Let the virgins take heed they are not mistaken touching their state, and by self-confidence, or by a feigned, and mere presumptuous faith, deceive themselves, and rest in a hope that will make them ashamed, such as the foolish virgins had. A true believer’s hope is such that it maketh them not ashamed: “And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,” Ro 5:5; no, no, it is a hope that he that hath it, is purged and purified: “He that hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as he is pure,” 1Jo 3:3. This hope! what hope? why hope when Christ appears to be like unto him, prepared for him, and to see him as he is. Grace, whether it be the grace of faith, hope, or love, is of a soul-transforming and heart-purifying nature; grace hath in it a sanctifying quality.

III. Trial, my brethren, what need is there that we try and examine ourselves as to our graces and safeness of our condition, and about that due preparation called for. And in order to this, let me hint some of my fears. Sirs, the present state of professors makes it appear doubtful, whether many have true faith in, and love to Christ or not.

1. For religion in the notion of it, it may be feared is got too much in the heads of many, but too little, if at all, into their hearts and lives.

2. Many also are found smiting their fellow-servants, by reproaching and vilifying them. What scandals have some ministers unjustly cast upon others, and some wicked members, false brethren, raised and spread of faithful ministers.

3. What may we think of the general decay of the power of religion and practical godliness? the power of which lies, (1.) In a contempt of this world, and in being weaned from it, or in dying to all earthly things. (2.) In self-denial, humility, and self-abasement. (3.) In holy walking with God in prayer, watchfulness, meditation, mortification, and in a great restlessness after a further likeness unto God. (4.) In preferring the good of others, and promoting Christ's public interest with the peace and unity of the churches. But now, alas, all generally seek their own things, not Christ's things, not his interest, not the good of one another, not contemning, but rather loving the world; not seeking peace, love, and union, but rather foment strife, discord, divisions, and contention in churches; no doubt but these things are bad signs that there are many foolish virgins in the churches in these days, and that the Bridegroom is near.

4. What is the reason the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ is no more talked of? Are we, my brethren, like those the psalmist speaks of; "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power, to make known to the sons of men his noble acts, and glorious majesty of his kingdom," Ps 145:11. Alas, now-a-days these things are little talked or spoken of, but professors talk of the world, of their trades, of their losses, or else of their notions, but not how to revive the cause of Christ, how to strengthen and preserve peace, love, and union, and to provoke one another unto good works; but to conclude with this proposition.

Sinners, what say you concerning Christ's coming? you hear some that have lamps, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom, shall not be suffered to go into the wedding-chamber. O then what little ground have you to expect it! if professors fall short, what will become of you that are profane? you have no oil, no lamps, nor see any beauty in Christ to desire him; certainly your case will be very sad in that day; you are married to the world, to your lusts, to your own foolish opinions of your good condition, while others are married to the law, or to their own righteousness, and others to idolatry, to the traditions of men, and to foolish superstitions, and some others to their errors, and to abominable and damnable heresies.

O come, resolve to cleave to the Lord Jesus, embrace him, get faith in him, cry to him, and leave your cursed sins and wicked ways; for know assuredly, Christ comes, he comes: "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give unto every one according as his works shall be," Re 22:12. If you do not go forth to meet him, he will quickly meet you, but not like a

bridegroom, not like a lamb, but like a lion, like an enemy to tear and devour you in his wrath.

SERMON XX

And five were wise, and five were foolish.—Mt 25:2.

From hence observe,

Doct. That in the church in the latter days, though there will be some wise or pious Christians, yet there will be many foolish professors, or false and hypocritical ones also.

In speaking to this point of doctrine, I shall

1. Show what is meant here by wisdom, or by being wise.
2. Show wherein the wisdom of pious Christians does consist.
3. Show wherein the folly of the foolish also consisteth.
4. Apply it.

Wherein true wisdom consisteth not

I. Negatively, I shall show you wherein the wisdom here meant does not consist.

It consisteth not in that which the men of the world call and count wisdom.

1. Not in being wise or crafty to get the world, and to grow great and rich, or in getting abundance of earthly wealth; such men I know are counted wise, but these being not rich towards God, the Lord calls fools: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall he required of thee." Is not he a fool that labours for the wind, and pursues a shadow, who, in gaining the world, loseth his own soul?

2. True wisdom is not in studying more the knowledge of the law of our country, or laws of the land, than the knowledge of the law of God, and the knowledge of Christ and his glorious gospel; though some cry up this sort to be wise men, understanding men, they know the law, and can give as good counsel as lawyers themselves; and so they may, and yet be but grand fools, in respect of the wisdom meant in this parable; they study the law, but study not the knowledge of themselves, they know the law, but know not Jesus Christ.

3. True wisdom consisteth not in human learning, or in the knowledge of the tongues, or of human arts and sciences; it is not in them who esteem of the knowledge of these things above the knowledge of a crucified Christ, they have attained to natural, moral, and metaphysical, and all curious philosophical notions, and these men are counted by some the only wise men; and such who have not this knowledge, though endowed with true spiritual knowledge and gifts from Christ, they are slighted and contemned by them. But this wisdom is not that by which men come to know God in Christ. See what Paul saith, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Again he saith, "for after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God," 1Co 1:23,21; after that way, or according to the profound depths of God's wisdom, the world by their wisdom knew not God; no, they were so far from approving or understanding the wisdom of God in a mystery, or as it is revealed in a crucified Christ, that they count it foolishness; that wisdom that God counts foolishness is magnified, and esteemed the chief wisdom, and the wisdom of God accounted by them foolishness.

4. Nor doth this wisdom consist in bare head or mere speculative knowledge, though it be in divine things; "Men may understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge," 1Co 13:1-2; that is whatsoever is notional or speculative, whether divine or human, and yet have not one dram of saving wisdom. Knowledge puffs up, &c., such are conceited, and wise in their own eyes, and therefore fools, and not wise men.

5. This wisdom lies not, or consisteth not merely in a wise and prudent behaviour, or in a man's wise and discreet management of himself, and of all his worldly affairs; for though much folly may be in those who prudently manage their earthly business and concerns, yet such who with prudence order such matters, may utterly neglect their souls, or seek not, regard not the things of another world. In a word, the wisdom our Lord refers to, is not worldly wisdom, or the wisdom that is from beneath.

2ndly. In the affirmative.

1. This wisdom consisteth in the true fear of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," Pr 9:10; the beginning of knowledge, "But fools despise wisdom and instruction," Pr 1:7. And again Solomon saith, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, arrogancy, and the evil way," &c., Pr 8:13.

No man is truly wise, that is not truly godly; all sinners are fools, and are often so called.

2. This wisdom lies in the knowledge of the chiefest evil, so as to escape it and in the knowledge of the chief good so as to obtain and possess it. Sin is the chiefest evil, and God is the chief good, and to know God truly in Christ, or with a saving knowledge, is that wisdom our Lord refers here to.

3. True wisdom consisteth in knowing what we want to make us truly happy, and to endeavour to obtain that good which will make us blessed for ever. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," Joh 18:3. He that hath this knowledge, i.e., that understands the principle, together with the means, and end, that universally is necessary to the possession, or enjoyment of that which renders a man blessed in soul and body for ever, is certainly a wise man. These things more generally show what is true wisdom.

I. A man that is truly wise knows himself; he knows the worth of his own soul, together with the vast capacity and comprehension of it, and what object can answer all its wants, fill all its desires, and yield it full and perfect satisfaction; which nothing can do but an interest in God himself.

II. Now in order to this, he must know what it was which made his soul miserable, nay, both soul and body, which was the loss of God, and of his blessed image by sin.

III. True wisdom consisteth in the knowledge not only of the rectitude of God's holy nature and attributes, but also in the knowledge of the law of God, which is a written impression of his image.

IV. Moreover, it consists in knowing how impossible it is for a man in his fallen state to be justified by his own righteousness, in obedience either to the law or gospel; he is wise that knows how God's wrath is appeased to him; and his justice satisfied, and hath obtained remission of sin through the blood of Christ. The foolishness of the Jews appeared in their ignorance of these things. "Being ignorant of the righteousness of God," &c. Ro 10:3. And in this also appeared the folly of the Greeks. Alas! they counted justification by Christ's obedience, or by a slain or crucified Christ, to be

foolishness, and thereby showed themselves to be fools, the worst of fools, who thought all fools but themselves.

V. True spiritual wisdom consisteth not in knowing the way of salvation only, but the means of it also. A man must know the means as well as the way, and the end of every great undertaking; and so in this he that knows that Christ is the way of salvation, the end, the eternal enjoyment of God, yet if he knows not the means how to obtain an interest in Christ, and to abide in the way so as to obtain the end, is a fool.

A man that wants health, or is sick, may hear of a remedy that infallibly will cure him, but if he knows not how it must be applied, may die of his sickness, notwithstanding the remedy he is told of. The means is union with Christ, faith in Christ; the Spirit must apply the remedy, viz., Christ's merits, Christ's blood; and he that makes use of this means, as he is in the way, so he shall obtain the desired end, i.e., the salvation of his soul. "He that believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," Joh 3:16. And he that thus believes, as all wise virgins do, attains to true wisdom. Pray remember Christ is the way, God is the end, and closing with Christ by faith is the means.

VI. From hence it appears that the wisdom of the wise virgins consisteth in building alone on the true foundation;* not only knowing it,* but in building rightly upon it. Some build on sands, and these our Lord compares to foolish men; some build on self principles, or without a foundation, and what folly is that?

VII. True wisdom consists in a right and direct motion towards the end; he that misseth the end, which is the glory of God, will miss of happiness, miss the end, and all endeavours and knowledge are vain and fruitless. Some aim at a good name, some seek applause, some follow Christ for profit, or for loaves; now all these are foolish persons; the wise only aim at God, seek the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and to enjoy him for ever.

But perhaps self happiness is the only end some aim at, all their care and business is to be saved, and some of this sort are ready to say, what may I not be saved, if I do not this or that? may I not be saved except I am baptized, and come into this or that church, and break bread, or though I pray not so often as some do, and hear not so many sermons, as if nothing was to be done for Christ's sake, or to glorify God, and to manifest our love to Jesus Christ, and our subjection to him as our prince as well as our Saviour.

VIII. The true wisdom of the wise virgins does consist in a timely making use of the means; they would not be contented with empty lamps, nor would they fall into a slumber before they have provided oil in their vessels, or have it to seek when the Bridegroom was come. The foolish ones missed it here; they took lamps, but no oil in their vessels, nor saw the need of it until it was too late. "Why is there a price in the hands of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it," Pr 17:16. He is a wise man that takes hold of the present opportunity, or who redeems the time; such as soon as they are sick, will seek out for a physician, and another buys what he wants before the market be over, and also sows in the proper season, and not defer sowing to the time when he should reap.

IX. True wisdom consisteth in preferring the concerns of the soul above the body, or in a greater care how to live for ever hereafter, than how to live here for a moment, or in labouring more for the meat that perisheth not, than for that which perisheth.

X. In value grace above a visible profession, or in prizing the grace of God's word above the hearing the word of his grace; the one is for the cabinet, the other for the jewel; the one is for the gospel in word only, the other is for the gospel in its power and inward efficacy also.

XI. He that is truly wise will try his heart,* try his love, and ponder his paths, understand his way, and look well to his goings, he will not take up things on trust, nor see with other men's eyes (as to matters of faith and practice). Moreover, he is for the reduction of what he knows unto the rule of practice. "Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," Jas 1:22. They are fools that are contented with bare hearing. Such that are wise,* are greatly concerned about the state and frame of their hearts, being not satisfied only to have life, but would be lively also.

XII. True wisdom does consist in getting a sure title, and a proper meetness for eternal life; the wise virgins had a sure and certain title to eternal blessedness, though they were fallen (through Satan's temptations) into a slumbering frame, and also it appears they had a meetness for heaven, and entered into the wedding chamber. I do not say they had this meetness to such a degree when they fell asleep, but they were awakened, and trimmed their lamps, and so fitted for the Bridegroom's coming.

APPLICATION

1. We may from hence infer, there are but few truly wise. O what folly abounds in the world.

2. It informs us also that the men of the world are justly to be charged with the greatest folly, in counting the godly fools; for that which wicked men think is their folly and madness, is the greatest wisdom.

Exhort. Labour after this wisdom, let this be all our care.

For motives,

1. Consider that many professors are fools in their profession; O how sad is it! men count them fools because they are professors, and God calls them fools because they are no more but professors.

2. Consider this spiritual wisdom is the only true wisdom, and none but the saints, none (as I told you) are wise, but believers, or godly persons.

3. This is the way to honour, "The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools," Pr 3:35. That wisdom which raises some men's name and honour in the world, is foolishness with God; but godly men Christ honours, and the Father will honour them also.

4. These persons God will commend for ever for that wisdom he gave: when all others shall be confounded for their folly and madness.

But to proceed,

"And five were foolish." That is five were no more than professors, or not sincere Christians; they had no more than a name, or lamps, and no oil in their vessels; they were graceless wretches; the church, it appears, hath good and bad in it, hypocrites, as well as true believers.

Doct. Hypocrites are foolish persons, or false professors are fools.

1. I shall show you wherein the folly of these professors does consist.

2. Apply it.

1. The folly of these professors, called here foolish virgins, consisteth in their attaining to some degrees of the knowledge of the way of salvation, and yet have no interest in the blessed Saviour, and so prefer an empty or bare profession without the power of it, or in getting lamps but no oil, and so prefer the name of Christ above the nature of Christ; this discovers they are fools.

2. In that they had the means but never used it, a price in their hands, but no heart to improve it; not to use the proper means to attain any great thing, or to rest wholly in the means, are like folly, or grand foolishness; but all these acts of folly, are these professors or foolish virgins guilty of; they might be under the proper means, viz., the preaching of the word, but used it not, they made use of false means, i.e., they went to buy oil of the wise virgins, they went to him that sold oil, but was not timely, but when it was too late, and no doubt rested wholly in a long time upon the bare use of the external means, as the preaching of the word and outward ordinances.

3. To sleep in harvest, or come to the market when it is over, certainly argues great folly in such persons; to know that winter will come, and yet make no provision for it, discovers the man void of wisdom; to foresee the evil, and yet take no due care to prevent it, is great folly. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple (i.e.) pass on, and are punished," Pr 22:3. And according to the nature of the evil foreseen, or forewarned of, when endeavours are not used to avoid it, such is the degree of the folly; now what is a greater evil than the loss of God, Christ, and the immortal soul? but these evils they might have foreseen, and of which they had warning, yet persisted on in the neglect of laying hold of Christ, or in seeking timely faith in him, and so to be prepared for his coming.

4. Their folly consisteth in running the greatest hazard, and yet think themselves safe, though told they are running into a lion's den. What greater madness can there be, than not to see nor believe most dismal danger (though told of it a thousand times) until it is too late, and there is no remedy; none can help them; in this their folly consisteth.

5. Is it not great folly to refuse to cut off a corrupt and rotten member, when told death will inevitably ensue, or their life must go if it be not done? or for a person to refuse a bitter portion, and rather choose to die than to take it, this shows the person is either not sensible or else a great fool. Now these professors refused to pull out a right- eye sin, and refused to have a

right-hand sin cut off, though they were assured by Christ himself if they thus refuse to do, their whole soul and body should be cast into hell. These persons rather choose to be damned for their sins, than to suffer the pain of the mortification of their sins, therefore were fools.

6. Their folly consisteth in believing the father of lies, and in trusting in their own hearts, when nothing is more deceitful; Satan no doubt persuaded them their hearts and states were good, and they saw not how they were deceived, until the bridegroom came. Is it not folly to think to reap, and never sow? or sow tares, and yet hope to reap wheat? or to expect to get the victory and never fight, or to win the prize and never run? or to delay that work which will take up all our days on earth, to one hour or moment a little before death? It discovers the greatest folly any can be guilty of; but this folly appears in these persons, and therefore might be well called foolish persons.

7. To value the good opinion, and have the approbation of men, above the love of Christ and the approbation of God, is folly with a witness; but this these foolish virgins do; they desire to be called saints, though they are sinners, and strive to keep up in the good opinion of men, but never laboured above all things to be accepted of God, and therefore are fools.

8. Their folly consisteth in losing the love, both of God and the world; nay, and in exposing themselves to the wrath of God and man, for because they are professors of religion, and free from idolatry, and will not worship with the world, or be defiled with popish superstitions, they are hated of men, and perhaps suffer hard things; for a man may give his body to be burned, and have no true love to God; and because they are hypocrites, or no more than bare possessors, God hates them, so that they may be said to lose earth and heaven too, and therefore are called foolish virgins.

APPLICATION

I. We may from hence infer, that the visible church is made up of a mixture; the net of the gospel takes good and bad.

II. We infer also that hypocrisy is hard to be discovered;* for had the foolish virgins been known to the church, be sure they had not so long continued in it; but doubtless the wise virgins knew them not, but took them for true Christians; nay, (as one observes) could hypocrites be discerned, they

should not be received, because matter fit to ruin a church, are not fit to make a church.

III. We infer that it is no wonder there is so much trouble in churches, such contention, strife, and quarrelling, and many disorderly walkers (for though it is true, through temptation, it may sometimes be occasioned by such that are sincere) yet commonly no doubt it riseth from the rubbish, I mean, hypocrites that get in among them; and from hence it is there is so much work on the days of discipline, and also by reason of this sort religion and the church of Christ is exposed to reproach.

IV. Also from hence it appears that no church is pure or free from chaff or hypocritical members; nay, and in the latter day it appears the church does abound with false professors; “five were wise, and five were foolish.” I will not say there are as many foolish as are wise, (though some think it may be so from these expressions) yet certainly it signifies that there are or will be many corrupt and false-hearted ones in the churches in these latter days.

Quest. From whence doth it come to pass that so many unsound persons get into the churches?

1. Answ. Certainly, it ariseth from the subtilty of Satan, who by his cunning wiles deceives poor mortals, together by the reason of that great deceit or deceivableness that is in the heart.

2. From the malice of Satan, who is an enemy to purity, who being an unclean spirit himself, if he could, would make heaven itself unclean, but that being beyond his power or policy; hence he strives to pollute the visible church, and stain the beauty and glory thereof.

3. It may arise from the carelessness of the church and ministers thereof, in not being so strict and careful as they ought about examining all persons, whom they receive as members among them: and this also should be a mighty caution to them to watch, and be very diligent and careful in this matter. “While men slept, the enemy sowed tares.”

4. It also may arise from the carelessness of these foolish ones themselves, in not trying, searching, and thoroughly examining their own hearts; for certainly many think who are hypocrites, their state is good, and

they are true believers; moreover, common grace, common operations of the Spirit, much resemble true and saving operations.

V. From hence let all professors and church members be exhorted to have a jealous eye over their own hearts, lest they are deceived and be undone for ever.

But to proceed,

“They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them,”
ver. 4.

Pray well observe the first verse of this chapter.

“They took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.”

That is, all of them, but the foolish took no oil with them; that is (as I noted) in their vessels, i.e., they had no true grace in their hearts. This going forth some think refers to the time of the witnesses finishing their testimony. We know that there was a wonderful expectation of the coming of the Bridegroom about fifty years ago, in this street of the great city, where (as I conceive the witnesses about those times arrived to the top of their testimony) and then might be said to go forth, in expectation of Christ’s sudden coming to set up his more visible and glorious kingdom.

“Took no oil,” &c.

Certainly, they going forth in the night, or in a day-time, had some kind of oil in their lamps that gave some light, though it was not of the right sort; for else how could they say as they do afterwards, “Our lamps are gone out?”

Doth not that imply their lamps had been lighted and did burn for a time?* therefore by their taking no oil must be meant no saving grace, or they went forth without having obtained like precious faith, or the faith of God’s elect; they were graceless persons, and had not the Spirit of God in its saving graces and operations in their souls. For by oil I understand is meant the Spirit of God, which is often compared to oil: “Therefore God thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows,” Ps 45:7; this is that anointing which we have received in Christ, and that abideth in us, or

that unction from the Holy One, 1Jo 2:27, by which we know all things necessary to salvation.

Secondly,* by the oil here also most expositors understand is meant saving grace: thus one expresseth himself; by oil I understand (saith he) the saving grace of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, true justifying faith, repentance, never to be repented of, and love out of a pure heart. And by taking no oil I understand (saith he) the true saving grace of God in the heart. Another worthy writer also saith, (having confuted the foolish notions of the blind papists) but by oil is meant the Spirit of Christ, and the graces of it, peculiar to all the elect.

Now the Spirit and graces of the Spirit may be, and is, compared to oil from the nature or quality of it. Grace is compared to leaven from some of the qualities of leaven; to the wind, to water, to fire, upon the consideration of the nature of those things; and so here the Spirit and saving grace is compared to oil, from the qualities of nature thereof, though in respect of one or two of its properties chiefly in this place.

1. Oil is of a softening, and a mollifying and healing nature; and so is the Spirit and grace of God.

2. Oil is contrary to scorpions, and expels poison; so is grace also contrary to Satan, that old serpent, and it also expels the poison of sin and Satan's temptations.

3. Oil will not mingle or incorporate with other liquid things, but it will be always uppermost: so grace, whether considered in the spring (from hence it proceeds,) or in respect of the subject of it, and its own quality; it will not mingle with any other thing, it will not mix with a man's own righteousness; it will not mingle or mix with works, much less will it mingle with sin, or the inordinate love of the world; neither will free-grace mix with free-will. Take grace for the favour of God, the rich bounty and good will of God, it will not mingle with any of these things, or take it (as principally meant here,) for the fruits of the Spirit, or effects of God's special grace and love; it will mix with nothing that is contrary to its own nature: Moreover, grace will reign, predominate, or be uppermost where it is received.

4. Oil is of a reviving nature, and opens obstructions, causing a man to breathe freely. So grace revives the soul, and removes all obstructions of

deadness and unbelief, and causeth a believer to breathe forth his desires freely unto God.

5. Oil is of a feeding and fattening nature, as well as beautifying; it causeth the face to shine. So grace feeds, nay, fattens the soul, and makes the soul shine in holiness and good works.

6. And lastly. And more directly, (as intended here,) it is oil that makes the lamp to burn, that feeds it, and continues its light. So the grace of God in the heart of a believer makes his life, profession, and conversation to burn, and give much light, and also as more grace is given, so the believer's lamp is continued burning.

7. If the lamp be not fed with oil, with proper lamp oil, it will soon go out. So for want of true grace in the heart, the lamp of the foolish virgins went quite out; and were not true believers supplied day by day with more grace, their lamps would go out also.

There must be oil in the vessel as well as in the lamp; and so there must be grace in our hearts as well as gracious acts and holiness in our lives, or in the lamp of profession, and in our conversation.

Pray observe, both the wise and foolish virgins had their lamps; both professed the true faith, owned the doctrine of the gospel; both went forth together into a visible profession; both were church members; both were taken for true Christians; both went to meet the Bridegroom.

From hence note.

Doct. That false professors or foolish virgins may go a great way in a profession of religion, and be taken for true believers.

In speaking to this proposition,

1.1 shall briefly show you how far the foolish virgins may go.

2. Show wherein the wise outdo them, or differ from them. 3. Apply it.

My brethren, having, in opening the parable of the sower, showed you how far the stony and thorny-ground hearers may go. I shall be very brief in speaking to it here.— But,

I. They may hear the word, and seemingly retain it, those persons signified by the highway-side, heard the word; but Satan caught it presently out of their hearts. But the foolish virgins do more, they for some time seem to keep the word, it takes some rooting in these.

II. They may for a time appear very zealous, and forward, in hearing the word preached; this sort of professors followed our Saviour from place to place, nay, took shipping to go after him; but it was not (as our Lord told them) “because they saw the miracles which he did,” Joh 6:26. Not from a love to his person, nor to his word, but because they eat of the loaves, and were filled.

III. They may seem to delight to hear the word, and to know the ways of God. “And delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness. They take delight in approaching to God,” Isa 58:2. These foolish professors in Israel they knew the will of God, and inquired after the Lord. “They come unto thee as thy people come, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them,” Eze 33:31-32. Nay, the word seemed sweet and pleasant to them. “Thou art to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument,” &c. Who would think these were not sincere persons?

IV. They may receive the word. So the stony and thorny-ground hearers are said to do. They heard the word, and anon they received it; they received the word into their heads, and were somewhat enlightened by it. They may believe. “Simon also believed,” &c., Ac 8:13. “Many believed on his name, when they saw the miracles he did; but Jesus did not commit himself to them,” Joh 2:23-24. So in Joh 8:30, they may have the faith of credence, a presumptuous faith, a historical faith, a temporary faith; nay may have the faith of miracles, and cast out devils, and yet not have grace, no charity, no true love to God, nor true faith in Jesus Christ.

V. They may leave all gross acts of sin, and reform their ways as to their outward conversation, and so escape the corruptions of the world, through that knowledge which they have attained of Jesus Christ. Herod, when he heard John the Baptist, reformed many things.

VI. They may be “enlightened, and also taste of the heavenly gift,” Heb 6:4; those high attainments the apostle mentions in Heb 6:4-6, are no other than the operations of the Holy Ghost, which foolish virgins, or hypocritical professors, may attain unto.

1. They may be enlightened or instructed in the clear doctrine of the gospel, or be illuminated with some kind of supernatural light and knowledge, by partaking of the common operations of the Spirit.

2. As to be under the sense of the evil of sin, in respect of the guilt thereof; and see that sin is against the nature of God, and hateful to him, but never come themselves to hate and abhor it, in respect of the defiling nature of it.

3. They may also be so far enlightened as to know God is man’s chief good; for if heathens came to discern this, much more this sort that had the common illuminations of the Spirit.

4. They may be enlightened so far, as to know all the essentials of the true Christian religion.

5. To know the true Christ, and the church in his nature, constitution, government, and discipline thereof.

VII. They may also taste of the heavenly gift. (1.) The doctrine and ordinances of the gospel are an heavenly gift, and of this gift they may taste. (2.) The extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost are called the gift of God: “Because thou hast thought the gift of God may be purchased with money,” Ac 8:20. This heavenly gift false or foolish professors may taste of: “In thy name we have cast out devils. And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity,” 1Co 13:1-2; that is, true love to God: which shows it was possible a man might have such a faith, and yet have no true grace, or not have the grace of faith. (3.) The gospel dispensation in general is an heavenly gift, of which dispensation these have a taste of.

VIII. They may partake of the Holy Ghost; so it is expressed, “And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,” &c. This, as Dr. Owen shows, is (in effect) the same thing mentioned before (though in different words

expressed) they may partake of the common operations, and common gifts of the Spirit, which keep their lamps for some time burning.

IX. They may taste of the good word of God.

1. The good word of God intends the gospel, which word they give credit unto, and so with some kind of faith tasted it, and so are said to believe, or by and by “to receive the word with joy,” as the stony-ground hearers are said to do, Mt 13:20.

2. They may taste some sweetness in the word of God, particularly in the doctrine and promises thereof; but a bare tasting may be where there is not a true spiritual feeding on that doctrine, and on those blessed promises of the word of God; nay, they may partake of such great gifts of the Holy Ghost, as to become eminent preachers of the gospel, but whatsoever taste the foolish virgins have of the good word of God, they never digested it, so as to be fed, and nourished thereby.

X. They may taste of the powers of the world to come.

Two things let me note here.

1. What is meant by the world to come.

2. What by tasting the powers thereof.

(1.) Some here by the world to come assert is only meant the gospel church state, or spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. Dr. Owen seems to be of this opinion; and if this be meant by the world to come, then their partaking of the miraculous operations of the Spirit, was their tasting of the powers thereof.

(2.) But by the world to come I rather think the apostle alludes to the glory of the kingdom of Christ, (when he appears the second time) which will be that new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” 1Pe 3:13; Re 20:1.

(3.) As to their “tasting of the world to come,” it may be this, *i.e.*

1. They believe the truth and certainty of the glory of the world to come; they give full credit to the truth of that future state, in respect to the resurrection and eternal judgment, and to the mighty power that will attend both; they believe the revelation of those things concerning the world to come, and so are said to have a taste of them.

Moreover, they may taste some fancied sweetness in hope of the joys of the world to come, and be under the restraining power of the Spirit, through dread of the punishment of the world to come.

XI. From hence it appears that the foolish virgins may be baptized, break bread, and so have external communion with the wise in the church of God; for nothing is more clear than this, viz., that they were visible church members, nay, they may obey all external ordinances of the gospel, or precepts of Jesus Christ.

XII. They may desire grace; "Give us of your oil:" they desire it, and ask it, but not of him, (or not, in a right manner) who hath it to give.

XIII. They may pray, nay, be much in prayer; for thus did the Pharisees, and desire others to pray for them. For so did Pharaoh, and may have also much seeming zeal for a time, and contribute to the poor saints, though not from a principle of love.

XIV. In a word (to close with this) they may be under a great visible change, being formerly profane and ungodly persons, they may be reformed, and to appearance become other men, even great and notable professors of religion; and all may take them for saints, and very little difference may appear between them and true Christians. Moreover, they talk of Christ's coming, and go out to meet him with the wise.

Secondly, I shall show you wherein the wise virgins outdo them, or differ from them.

1. The wise hear the word, and hear it not with joy only, but understand it also; that is, they have a true experimental knowledge of the divine power of it upon their hearts. Their hearts are thoroughly changed by the efficacy and effectual workings of the Spirit; so that regeneration passeth upon all their souls, they are not only other men, but new men; they do not only assent to the truth of the word, or receive it into their understanding, but

with a full consent of their will close with Christ, and yield obedience to him from the heart.

2. They are not under the common, but special illumination of the Holy Ghost; their convictions are not legal but evangelical; they are not convinced of the guilt, but also of the filth of sin; their convictions are not chiefly of scandalous sins, but it reaches their hearts and secret sins also, and not only actual sins, but the evil of original sin likewise; and not only as sin is against them, but also as it is against God, and hath wounded the Lord Jesus Christ; these things are the chief cause of their grief and sorrow: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," Ps 51:4. It causeth them (from hence) to loathe themselves; yea, "to abhor themselves, and to repent in dust and ashes," Job 42:6. Common convictions rise from the sense of God's wrath, but special convictions flow from the sense of God's love in Jesus Christ; they seeing a free pardon of all their sins through Christ's blood offered to them, this melts them into tears of sorrow, mixed with joy.

3. They are not only convinced of sin, (and particularly of the sin of unbelief) but of righteousness also.

II. They have not only a taste of the good word of God, but feed also upon it; their taste and eating ariseth from spiritual hunger, or from a true sense of want; they have a craving appetite, and nothing but God in Christ can satisfy their souls; they digest the word, they feed upon it, or live upon Christ by faith, and to them the word is "sweeter than honey, or the honeycomb," Ps 119:97; that which they eat, is turned into good nourishment, it being mixed with faith, it strengthens, revives, and comforts them.

III. The wise virgins do not receive the Holy Ghost only in the gifts of it also, they have true faith, unfeigned love to Christ, and hope that maketh not ashamed, and also attain to humility, temperance, patience, and brotherly kindness.

IV. The wise virgins have all those things that accompany salvation, or such things that accompany a saved state. (1.) The Holy Spirit, as the great new covenant promise. (2.) Union with Christ. (3.) A new heart, or the image of God created anew in them; they are justified, adopted, and sanctified. (4.) They have a dear love to the saints, and as they are the members of Christ's mystical body, they minister to them, which is more, or a higher attainment than any of the foolish virgins arrive at.

V. The wise virgins are sincere Christians, really in heart before God what they appear to be before men; they act from right principles and from right motives; the love of God and the love of Christ stirs them up to follow him, to cleave to him, and to obey him in whatsoever he commands them; also they act to a right end, that God may be glorified, and Jesus Christ may be exalted.

SERMON XXI

While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.—Mt 25:5.

Some think this slumbering and sleeping of the virgins refers to the “sleep of death; they all slept, that is, (say they) they all died. But certainly they are greatly mistaken who are of this opinion.

1. Because when they were awakened, the foolish virgins were bid to go and buy oil, which will not be said unto any at the day of the resurrection.

2. Because all the virgins are said to rise out of this slumber and sleep at one and the same time, and trimmed their lamps; but no hypocrite or unbelievers shall rise from the dead, when all that sleep in Jesus shall be raised, which will be at the very time when Christ comes; “The dead in Christ shall rise first,” 1Th 4:16.

3. Because they rose out of this sleep some time before the Bridegroom came; the foolish virgins after they were awakened, went to buy oil; “But while they went to buy, the bridegroom came,” ver. 10.

Before I speak to the slumbering and sleeping of the virgins, I shall speak to the “Bridegroom’s tarrying.”

1. Some think our Lord refers to that long time between the ascension of our Saviour, and his second coming, and how long that will be we know not, though most believe not more than two thousand years.

2. Others think he refers to that time which is between the time of the soul’s espousal to Christ, or conversion, and the marriage day.

3. Others perhaps upon better grounds conclude, it refers to that distance of time, that will be between some remarkable signs and expectation of Christ’s appearance and his actual coming, and I rather adhere to this.

Certainly, These words refer to a time when all the virgins shall be full of expectation of Christ’s coming; nay, and when many would be very confident of it, by means of some providences, signs, and appearances, which I take was about fifty years ago; do but call to mind what an hour the church was then under, and what wonderful expectation was amongst the people of God

in these nations, and in other nations and kingdoms also? Oh what preaching and writing about the coming and kingdom of our Lord, was there then, and what mighty things were upon the wheels, of which I gave you some brief hints before!

But lo after this time the Bridegroom tarryes; he then came not, but all those brave men saw they were mistaken, and a dark cloud (not expected) comes upon the Lord's people both here and in other kingdoms and nations; and this seeming delay, I conceive, was partly the cause of all the virgins falling asleep, or into a sleepy and slumbering condition, which drowsy frame of spirit we are still under, and shall I fear be for some time.

But know assuredly, that though the Lord Jesus seems to tarry (or tarryes past that time his people longed for him) yet he will not tarry one hour longer than the appointed time. "For yet a little while he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." The least moment shall not exceed the fixed time, that is determined: "For the vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come and not tarry," Hab 2:3.

Yet from those words, whilst the Bridegroom tarried, we may note,

1. That Christ comes not at that time, when many of his own people looked for him, and this we have seen clearly fulfilled.

2. That he will come when he is not expected; "In such an hour "ye think not, the Son of Man cometh," Mt 24:44; and that also some shall be left to such temptation, as to say my Lord delayeth his coming, but such who say thus in their hearts, our Saviour calls evil servants, ver. 48.

3. Moreover know, that when our Lord comes, he comes suddenly, even as a thief in the night; and it will be very surprising, like a cry at midnight, when many will be asleep, or very secure. And are not many at this present time ready to say in their hearts, the day is afar off, and perhaps one reason of it may be from the boldness of some good men, who have unadvisedly spoken of the accomplishment of those things, which are to precede his personal appearance, as the passing away of the second wo, and the utter downfall of mystical Babylon, by the sounding of the seventh angel, "when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ," Re 11:14-15. The seventh trumpet must sound, before one of the

seven vials are poured forth; and by the pouring forth of all the seven vials will the utter ruin of the beast and mystery Babylon be accomplished. For as a worthy writer hath noted, the seventh trumpet cannot declare the ruin of antichrist, unless the seven vials be poured out under it, and the seventh trumpet soundeth soon after the slaying of the witnesses, which I hope is past: I cannot with some others be yet of another mind, but that they have a few years since been slain, and are now upon their feet, and that we are in that cloud (though perhaps it may be yet darker) in which they shall ascend: doubtless they that think that several of the vials were poured out under the sixth trumpet, were grandly mistaken, and were dark as to that part of the sacred vision.

But those good men, who too boldly formerly, and of late time fixed upon this and that time or year, having been mistaken, hath, as I hinted, caused many to be secure, and others to turn scoffers, and say, as St. Peter intimates; “Where is the promise of his coming? Though the Lord is not slack concerning his promise,” &c., 1Pe 3:2. It greatly behoveth us to consider of the great danger, which attends some people by means of those great disappointments they have seen, and by means our Lord seems as they think to tarry; the longer the night is the more oil we shall need, and greater patience must be exercised.

Quest. Why doth our Lord Christ seem to tarry?

I. Answ. It may seem to us in respect of the length of the time between Christ’s first and second coming, and also because the primitive Christians thought his coming would have been very soon, even in their days: whereas there are more than sixteen hundred years since that run out, and yet they waited for his coming from heaven, and thought the time very near; though Paul laboured to inform them better, as you may see 2Th 2:1

II. He may seem to us to tarry, by reason our days are short, and we reckon not as God doth, to whom a thousand years are but as one day, but it chiefly riseth from our ignorance of those mystical numbers left in God’s word about the end of the wonders, and also of those many things that must and shall precede Christ’s second glorious appearance, which were we informed in and about, we should not say our Lord taries, or delays his coming.

III. It may also arise by reason of our impatience, or want of a due and quiet exercise thereof; he that believeth maketh not haste: also by reason of those disappointments some have laid us under, their times being not the time “the Father hath put in his own power,” Ac 1:7. Certainly the curiosity of some men in late days deserve rebuke with them of old, who said, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” ver. 6. To whom the Lord answered, “It is not for you to know the times and seasons,” &c. It is (as if he should say) reserved for some in after times: but I refer not here to the day nor year of Christ’s personal coming, but to the beginning of Christ’s kingdom, upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

IV. Christ may seem to tarry out of pity and compassion to poor sinners,* his elect must be all called or brought in; he is not willing that any of them should perish, nor can they perish; therefore he for their sakes seems to tarry, for many of them amongst the Gentiles shall not be called, nor can they have the gospel preached to them, until Babylon is overthrown: for then will be the time, when multitudes in many nations and dark regions of the earth shall flow in to Jesus Christ, then, and not till then, shall the fulness of the Gentiles come in, and until that is done, blindness will remain upon the poor Jews, as Paul clearly showeth; but then they shall be that nation, that God hath foretold shall be born at once; “And so all Israel shall be saved,” Ro 11:20. And this brings me to the next reason.

V. Because all things which God hath spoken in his holy word, (as antecedent to his coming) must be accomplished. (1.) The image power must be utterly broken “into pieces, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing floor,” Da 2:35,44. (2.) And to this end the stone must smite the image upon the feet, which I daily wait to see. (3.) “The gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all the world, and then cometh the end,” Mt 24:14; but not until then. (4.) “The little stone must become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth,” Da 2:35,44. (5.) Whether the Jews shall be called before the coming of Christ, or not, is a doubt to some, but none to me; because when Christ comes his bride is completely ready, not one member of Christ’s mystical body shall be wanting.

VI. Therefore he seems to tarry, that all his elect may be brought home. The bride must have her full time allowed her in order to be ready; shall Christ be married to an imperfect bride? There shall not, my brethren, be one member of his mystical body in that day wanting or uncalled, or not actually united to the glorious head. “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to

him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready,” Re 19:7. It may be also in mercy to them who are already called, that they may be in an actual fitness for his coming, and also to try their faith and patience.

VII. It may be that so the harvest and vintage of the earth may be fully ripe; “Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe,” Re 14:18. The children of Israel could not possess the land of Canaan, until the sins of the Amorites were fully ripe. Moreover, by Christ’s tarrying and offering to the world so long a time, through the exercise of his patience, he will leave the world without excuse; for God came not upon the old world, before he gave warning; nor will he come to destroy this present world with fire, without giving them sufficient warning of it.

VIII. And lastly, our Lord may seem to tarry, to put all men, especially his own people, upon a constant and continual watch: “What I say to one, I say unto all, watch.” We have time given us to get upon our watch tower, and enquire what of the night?

APPLICATION

Sinners, take heed you are not found among the scoffers that the apostle speaks of; “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation,” 2Pe 3:3-4. Beware of harboring any atheistic or unbelieving thoughts, and of growing bold in wickedness, because Christ seems to tarry or defer his coming; it is, you hear, for holy and wise ends: the old world would not believe what Noah told them, but were fearless of any such flood; “They builded, planted, married, and were given in marriage, until the flood came and took them away.” They found the word of God spoken by his servant was true, though it was deferred an hundred and twenty years, though they believed him not, but reproached him. Many, it may be, believe not, (because they see all things remain as they were from the beginning) hence think that Christ will never come, and so this world never have an end; and the world to come never begin, but it will not be long before they will see themselves deceived.

2. What a dismal state will they be in, who are found not ready when the Lord Jesus cometh, better they had never been born. O look out, what signs have we of the last days upon us; how are many “eating and drinking, and smiting their fellow servants?” Such who pretend they are Christ’s servants, his ministers, and yet live an abominable course of wickedness, and have been, (and long again to be) persecutors of their fellow servants, and say in their hearts, the Lord delays his coming: how many gluttonous, and drunken, and whoring preachers are in these days?

But to proceed.

“They all slumbered and slept.”

This slumbering and sleeping I showed you is not the sleep of death: by slumbering, &c., therefore I understand is meant a want of that due watchfulness which is required in all the disciples of Jesus Christ; they all fall into a drowsy and secure frame of spirit. To slumber is when a man is drowsy and ready to take a nap (as we commonly say.) But sleep is a binding up the senses; but pray note, the wise virgins do never so sleep, but their hearts are awake, they therefore sleep not as others do.

Doct. The wise virgins as well as the foolish are subject or liable to spiritual slumber and sleep: or, the saints may fall into a slumbering state.

1. I shall show from whence this cometh to pass.

2. Show you the signs of a sleepy frame of heart.

3. Discover the danger that attends such a state and condition:

1. Sleep or spiritual drowsiness riseth from those gross vapours which seize on and clog the soul; I mean in-bred corruption, or that body of sin and death; as gross vapours in the body incline to natural sleep: “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,” Mt 26:41. The spirit sanctified by divine grace stirs up to constancy in duty, but the flesh, the sensitive part, is apt and prone to temptation and remissness, and is soon weary; and this part is too apt to overpower the soul in its spiritual activity and liveliness; besides, Satan hath great influences upon the fleshly part.

2. Slothfulness, or a careless and dull frame, hath a great tendency to produce sleep, as Solomon saith, “Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep,” Pr 19:15. When a man refuseth to labour or is idle, gross vapours gather and becloud the senses, and hold us as prisoners for awhile; and so it is with the soul, when a Christian is idle or of a slothful disposition, the spiritual senses are soon darkened or beclouded, and the soul (for some time) is as it were a prisoner.

3. Wearisomeness; Solomon saith, “The sleep of a laboring man is sweet that is, when he is tired out or weary at his work. Some Christians are too apt to be weary and to faint in their minds, especially when they see little comes in, while they labour, they hear, read, and pray, but profit little, gather hardly any strength or comfort, and so are ready to faint and be weary, and to drop asleep or fall into a drowsy and indifferent frame of heart.

4. A dark and cloudy day, (we find by experience) is very ready to put us into a drowsy frame: so a dark time or dispensation of God’s providence under which we may be exercised, is very apt to cause us to fall into spiritual drowsiness, if not to fall asleep; we may perceive this is so in the case of the disciples of our Lord, upon his crucifixion; it was in such a dark and cloudy day that they were ready all to fall asleep. And from hence one said, “I go a fishing,” they were ready to give up all their hope, and cease being fishers of men any more, but thought to go to their old trade.

5. An apprehension that it is a great while to-day. Though a man waits for the morning, yet if he thinks it is not midnight, he lays himself down again to sleep; so a Christian that apprehends it will be a great while before Christ will come, or death will come, tends to cause sleep, or inclines him to give way to slumber through the temptations of Satan. What need I (saith he) to be so much concerned? my state is good, and I shall have time enough to set in order what is yet wanting, and provide for the coming of Jesus Christ; such that apprehend the night almost gone, and the day approacheth, ought to rise and look out, but I perceive no such thing. I may have many days on earth, and it will be hard to hold the pace I have hitherto run; I may slack or abate a little in that heat and zeal I have showed.

6. Moreover, when a man apprehends no danger, or hath no fear seizing on him of approaching evil, when he is in bed, or inclined to drowsiness, he from thence is apt to give way to it; he fears no thieves breaking in upon him, nor hears the cry of fire, nor of amazing providences. Thus many poor

Christians seem secure, and are not sensible they are both beset with thieves, nor perceive the danger and dismal hour they are in, though some talk of amazing judgments and providences very near, but they see no cause to believe or fear any such things, and so give way to a slothful and sleepy frame of spirit, pursuing the world, and loving their ease. Jacob's sleep departed from him, for fear his sheep should come to harm, Ge 31:40. Some men know not what rich treasure they are entrusted with, and so fear not the enemy of their souls.

7. Some distempers or diseases which seize upon the body, causeth an unusual sleepiness, so that all the means made use of, can hardly prevent the sleeping and dozing of such persons.

So, my brethren, a spiritual lethargy, a cold earthly distemper, seizeth on too many professors, by which means their spiritual senses seem much gone, and excessive drowsiness overtaketh them to such a degree, that nothing can awaken them; no, neither the word of God, the reproofs of his ministers, the threatening judgments that draw near, nor the secret rebukes and checks of their own consciences, though they may perceive their love to Christ, to religion, to the church, to ministers, and to the people of God, is much abated.

8. Surfeiting and drunkenness causeth immoderate sleep,* or an excessive use of the creature. What a sleepy frame was Lot in by means of drinking too much wine, and how sad was the effects of it! Our Lord intimates that by surfeiting and drunkenness, many professors in the last days would fall asleep, and put the day of his coming afar off. Some are drunk with riches, others with earthly pleasures, and others with errors, and so are giddy-headed, and by such means drop asleep: "They stagger, but not with strong drink," Isa 29:9-10; God hath left them to delusions, and poured upon them the spirit of deep sleep. How doth our Saviour give us warning against all excesses. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares," Lu 21:34.

9. Experience shows, that a sleepy company a man may be among, tends to cause him to fall asleep also. So loose, carnal, and sleepy professors, with whom a lively Christian may walk, and daily converse, is too subject to have ill effects upon him: with the froward we learn frowardness.

10. Long watching tends to produce inordinate sleeping. These virgins had watched long, looking and waiting for the Bridegroom, but he tarrying, or not coming when they expected he would, they all fell asleep, or into a slumbering frame of heart, to which I might add, the withdrawing of the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit; if the Spirit be grieved, and withholds his quickening operations, how soon do poor Christians fall asleep!

Secondly, I shall give you some signs of a sleepy and slumbering frame of heart.

1. When a man cannot hear, though one calls aloud unto him, it may be a sign he is asleep.

So when a Christian cannot hear the voice of the word, or not discern God's voice, or that it is Christ that calls him, it may be a sign that he is asleep, or in a sleepy frame. Thus it was with Samuel: "Samuel was laid down to sleep, and the Lord called, Samuel: and he ran to Eli, and said, here am I," 1Sa 3:3-4. The Lord called him again, but he knew not that it was the Lord that called him. So many do not know or discern the voice of God (when they hear the word) from the voice of the poor minister; certainly such who hear the word as if it was only the word of man, and not the word of God, are asleep; or if they cannot discern the word is spoken to them, but rather think it concerns such or such persons, and that they are not concerned in it, it may be a sign they are in a sleepy, or in an insensible frame of heart. Or if they cannot hear the voice of the Spirit, nor of their own consciences, nor the voice that is in the rod, slumber hath taken hold of them.

2. Dreaming is a sign a person is asleep. Some weep in their sleep who have cause to rejoice, and others laugh who have cause (perhaps) to cry; and some dream they eat, and dream they drink, when it is no such thing. So many professors think their state is very good, but alas they are asleep, and do but dream. Some mourn and are ready to conclude that their condition is very bad, when it may be very good: they do but dream, it is a sign they are in a sleepy or insensible condition. Also others doubt not but that they are believers; they presume Christ is theirs, having great confidence, and doubt not; sin troubles them not; they ask not for pardon, but it is but a dream: "He that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord," Jer 23:28. The doctrine some preach, and others believe, is but a dream, and

none of the word of God: it is “As when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but when he awaketh, his soul is empty,” &c., Isa 29:8.

3. Men who are asleep neither know their state or dangers, but are secure in a storm, as Jonas, who was fallen asleep when the ship was ready to sink to the bottom. So such professors who know not their present state and condition, know not whether Christ be theirs or not, or that Christ is in them or not, or whether they are true believers or not, certainly are asleep, or insensible; perhaps they are ready to drop down to hell, but doubt not but they are true believers; the foolish virgins who fell asleep, knew not the danger they were in.

4. Such that are asleep know not what is done to them, as Adam when he was in that, deep sleep, as also Sampson when he was asleep; many professors know not what God is doing in them, for them, with them, nor against them in the way of his providences; this argues they are asleep.

5. A person that is asleep forgets his business, or the work he was about, or ought to be exercised in; so a secure professor, or one spiritually asleep forgets the Lord, his works, his will, and what he ought to do also. Take a believer awake, and then he can remember the Lord, his covenant and his works, and what it is the Lord commands him to do.

6. A person asleep fears no evil, until it comes upon him; so a sleepy professor foresees no evil, fears no danger, like the old world in the days of Noah, and the people of Sodom, until the flood came upon one, and fire and brimstone from heaven upon the other. Job speaks of some that “their houses are free from fear,” Job 21:9.

7. In sleep the senses are not exercised, the eyes sees not, the ear hears not, the mouth tasteth not; so a person spiritually asleep is very insensible; his spiritual senses are stupified, and motion also ceaseth.

But spiritual slumber greatly differs from deep sleep.

1. Hypocrites are asleep, but a true Christian though he is said to sleep, yet it is but a slumber comparatively to the sleeping of the other; true Christians may lose the sense of God’s love, yet they dread to sin against him.

2. A wicked man lays himself down to sleep, but though a true Christian sleeps and slumbers, yet he strives against it, he loves not sleep, though it overcomes him, yet he strives to shake off his drowsy frame.

3. A true believer is soon awakened; that means will awaken him, that will not, cannot awaken a wicked man; for nothing less than almighty power can do it, (for they sleep the sleep of death); indeed the foolish virgins were never thoroughly awakened, but only so far as to be convinced that their state was bad, and that their lamps were gone out.

4. Such that are in a deep sleep, all their senses are bound up, or they are utterly insensible; and thus it is with hypocrites and wicked men, their hearts are asleep; but as I said, (and as the spouse said) though a true believer sleeps, yet his heart is awake.

5. Slumbering denotes an indisposition of the soul, or a short cessation of action; a godly man may be under deadness, and omit his duty for a short time, through the weakness of the flesh, and Satan's temptations; but an hypocrite is utterly destitute of any principle of activity, to perform any true spiritual acts of obedience unto God.

But to proceed.

Thirdly, I shall show you the danger of a sleepy state, or frame of heart.

1. Such cannot see how to escape danger, or are out of a present capacity to prevent the evils that may be near or just coming upon them.

2. They that are asleep lie open to the enemy; a weak person may destroy a strong man, a great champion, when he is asleep, as Jael slew Sisera when he was asleep, by driving a nail through his temples. O then what need have we to keep ourselves awake, who have powerful enemies, that watch an opportunity to destroy us. We may soon lose our strength (though not our lives) as Sampson did, if we once fall asleep, Jude 4:21.

3. Our sleeping time is that season Satan waits for, for if he can but catch us napping, he will fall upon us and wound us be sure. It is well he cannot murder our souls, it is not whom he would, but whom he may, that he devours.

4. It was while men slept the devil sowed his evil seed; great part of the wrong and mischief the churches and our souls sustain, is by means of our giving too much wat sleeping and slumbering.

5. Our danger is very great by means of our slumbering, by reason Satan never sleeps, he is always awake, and is a very vigilant enemy; nay, and know also, this world is full of devils, who go to and fro to see who they can find off their watch.

6. Such that are in a sleepy and slumbering condition are in danger to be sore amazed and dreadfully affrightened, when awakened, by a sudden outcry, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh!” How was the jailor amazed, when by an earthquake he was awakened out of sleep: and so the foolish virgins at the midnight cry will be greatly terrified.

7. They that sleep in harvest, lose their gathering time; and so are in danger of losing their souls for ever, besides the day of death, or the day of Christ’s coming, will come upon them unawares.

APPLICATION

I. Let us bewail and lament over the present generation of professors, and lament, mourn over ourselves. O into what a drowsy and sleepy age are we fallen! are not all the virgins now asleep, or in a slumbering frame of heart, and yet know not but the midnight cry is very near? Remember Christ’s words, “What, can ye not watch with me one hour?”

II. Yet this may inform us of a vast difference there is between the sleeping of the wise and foolish virgins.

1. The wise sleep and slumber in a good state; they are converted persons; they have oil in their vessels, though their lamps want trimming; but the foolish sleep in a fearful state; they have no grace, no oil in their vessels.

2. The wise made good use of their time, the proper season to provide themselves; but the foolish will not seek oil until it is too late.

3. The wise through Satan’s temptations fell into a sleepy and slumbering frame, but their great work was done; but the foolish fell asleep before any of their work was begun.

4. The sleeping of the wise is dishonourable unto Christ, and hurtful to themselves, it is the wounding of their souls; but the sleeping of the foolish will be to the utter and eternal undoing of their souls.

III. Exhort. O be exhorted to arouse, let us cast off sleep from our eyes; you that are believers, awake. For,

MOTIVES

1. Consider, what pains God took to awake you and I out of our former sleep, that sleep of spiritual death: did he not send his Son from heaven to awaken us, and sent his word and Spirit to this end also; was it not the effects of infinite love, wisdom, and power! O let us then strive to be in a wakeful frame.

2. Our enemy is upon us, as it was said to Sampson, so it may be said to every one of us.

3. Consider, Jesus Christ is come to visit us, to feed and feast us; lo, he is now at our doors and knocks, and shall any of us say, I sleep, as the spouse did, so may he withdraw and be gone, and we may perhaps seek him, but find him not.

4. You are the children of the day. "They that sleep, sleep in the night," 1Th 5:7. You profess yourselves to be awake, and freed from the gross ignorance of the children of darkness, you see the evil of the inordinate love of this world; are you overcome with surfeiting and drunkenness, and with the cares of this life?

5. What great things do we look for? Is not the thought of this enough to stir us up to watchfulness? And are we not also bid "to watch and pray always, that we may escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man?" Lu 21:36.

6. Consider, how many will be found asleep, and unprepared when the Lord comes; nay, how many foolish virgins there will be in those latter days, who fall asleep without oil in their lamps, and whose lamps also go out.

IV. *Admiration.* Let us wonder at the patience, forbearance, and long-suffering of God! O how good and gracious is he in that he comes not forth in his wrath, to take vengeance upon sinners, though he is, and hath been so longed provoked! see what sparing mercy he shows to the world for his elect's sake; had he not left us a very small remnant, we had been made as Sodom, before this day; there are also many yet not called, but when once all his elect are brought in, he will stay not one moment longer.

V. It may be of use also by way of caution; the Bridegroom seems to tarry after the time some have spoken of, for doing his great and wonderful works: let none prefix times any more, till the vision speaks more plainly, since all that have presumed so to do, have been mistaken. The time of the end of the wonders is not fully known; the time is set, but perhaps not yet revealed to any; though it is no doubt very near, and God may give to some more light into those things, than many others have at present; and let none condemn those who search into the sacred oracles, and say, when will be the end of wonders? For this very thing was prophesied of, (i.e.,) that one saint shall thus say unto another saint, but the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end," Da 12:9.

VI. We may take an encouragement in this, Christ will come, believe this doubt not of this; "Behold I come quickly," &c., Re 22:12. He comes, he comes, and that too suddenly, and will surprise the world, but that day shall not come upon believers as a thief, a blessed day it will be to them.

VII. *Terror;* but woe to the wicked, to all hypocrites and unbelievers, for he will "come in flaming fire to take vengeance on all that know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c., 2Th 1:8. And woe to such that say in their hearts, the Lord delays his coming, "he will cut them in sunder, and appoint them their portion with hypocrites, and unbelievers, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Mt 24:50-51.

VIII. Let us all make provision for Christ's coming.

1. Get oil in your vessels; let us see we have sincere love to Jesus Christ.
2. Let us trim our lamps, and awake out of sleep to do this.
3. Let our lights be clearly burning.

4. Every one be full of great expectation.

5. And beware of the evils of these latter days, in which dangerous principles and corrupt practices do abound; and many having their hearts set inordinately upon the things of the world.

SERMON XXII

And at midnight there was a cry made, behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.—Mt 25:6.

In these words we have these several parts.

1. An act done; there was a cry made.
2. The matter of the cry; “the bridegroom cometh.”
3. The time when, viz., “at midnight.”
4. Attendance and notice required; “Behold,” &c.
Take notice of it, it is a matter of the highest moment.
5. Counsel, or a call, “Go ye out to meet him.”
6. The subjects required thus to go forth [ye] ye wise and foolish virgins, or all that makes a profession of the gospel.

Doct. That a little before Christ’s second coming, notice will be given of it, or there shall be an alarm of his near approaching or glorious appearance.

In speaking to this proposition, I shall

1. By way of premise lay down two or three explanatory propositions.
2. Show what may be meant by this cry, and what a kind of cry it will be.
3. Why Christ will give warning of his coming.
4. Show why called a midnight cry.

Propos. 1. That though Christ by his word gives warning, and shows fully that he will come again the second time, yet he will some other way alarm his people, or give notice of his near approaching: then shall appear the sign of the Son of man.

Propos. 2. That there will be some short distance of time between the midnight cry, and our Lord’s visible personal appearance. And this city is the harbinger or forerunner of his coming, to give warning to the virgins to trim their lamps, and to be ready.

Propos. 3. That this cry will awaken all, both the wise and the foolish, or sincere Christians and hypocrites.

Secondly. Show what may be meant by this cry.

1. It may (as I conceive) refer to some mighty impression upon the hearts of all professors, especially upon the spirits of faithful ministers, of Christ's sudden coming; for who are capable at midnight to wake a city, or give warning, but the Watchman? Ministers are called watchmen: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman—If therefore thou givest warning," &c. Eze 3:17. "I have set watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem," Isa 62:6. And these watchmen tell what of the night it is: "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" &c. Isa 21:11.

2. Possibly it may be some amazing dispensation of God's providence to rouse all secure professors. Perhaps the earthquake mentioned, Re 11. It will doubtless be some remarkable event, that precedes the coming of our Lord.

3. Maybe it will be that providence that makes way for the fall of Babylon, and the universal preaching of the gospel: I presume none yet know directly what it will be.

Thirdly. Why Christ gives warning of his coming in some remarkable manner?

I. Because of the sublime majesty and glory of his person; shall an earthly king notice his near approaching or coming to his people from the awfulness of his person; and shall not Jesus Christ do it much more? The appearance of our Lord will be most glorious, and therefore long warning is given of it in the word and by his ministers, but at last more loud warning, signified by a cry.

II. Because such wonderful things depend, as the effect of his coming the second time; it is matter, my brethren, of the highest moment or concernment.

1. As the raising of the dead, for just at his personal appearance, all that sleep in Jesus shall be raised, and all believers that are alive, shall be changed in a moment, or twinkling of an eye, and their bodies shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body.

2. The passing away, dissolving or burning up the heavens and the earth that now are, so this will be one of the effects of his coming; but the day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass

away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the things that are therein shall be burned up," 2Pe 3:10.

3. The utter and final overthrow of Satan's kingdom, and the settling and establishment of the kingdom of our Lord in its highest glory.

4. The final cessation of the ministration of the gospel, or offers and means of grace to the world; then it will be said, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still, and he that is holy be holy still," Re 22:11. Such that are filthy and unjust shall even so remain, and they that are righteous shall arrive to no further degree of inherent holiness.

5. The glorious manifestation of the children of God, and the celebration of the marriage of the lamb—and many other amazing things.

III. Jesus Christ will give warning by such a cry, because of that slumbering and sleepy state of the virgins just before; but this cry will awaken them with a witness; it may be a voice of some Boanerges, or a son of thunder.

IV. To leave all formal and hypocritical professors without excuse; for should not the Lord give warning a little time before his coming, (since just at his appearance he will come as a thief very suddenly); the wicked might pretend that he dealt severely with them, they having not had warning of his coming, and it may be that his own elect ones may be every way actually fitted and prepared for that day.

Fourthly. Why it is called a midnight cry.

1. It may be so called, because midnight is a time of great darkness; so this cry will be in such an hour when the people will be in a cloud of thick darkness, and not know what time of the night it is until they hear this cry.

2. Midnight is a time when all generally are asleep, and very secure; and perhaps it may be called the midnight cry, because just at that time all the people of God will be in a secure state, or almost all asleep.

3. Because at midnight every thing seems to be still, and no noise in the street, neither doth fear possess the mind of people; they are in their beds, and seem to be in safety.

4. It may be called the midnight cry in respect of the effects of it, for like as a dismal cry at midnight is very amazing, people being (as it were) frightened out of their sleep; so this cry will have much like effects upon the sleepy virgins.

5. Christ may call it a cry at midnight, to excite and stir us all up to watch, and not to sleep or be secure in a night of darkness, or in a dark and gloomy season.

APPLICATION

1. See the great love and goodness of God to his saints; he will awaken them, that they may prepare themselves, and be ready for Christ's coming.

2. This may teach us who live in these latter days, to take heed that we fall not asleep, and to consider how much better it is to be awakened if we are fallen into a drowsy frame by a sweet still voice, than to stay till the midnight cry is heard; for is it not terrible to be awakened with the cry of fire, fire, fire? O what tremblings of heart doth attend such a cry in the street at midnight?

3. Consider also how near this cry may be, nay, is it not begun already? though it will rise higher, or be much louder; for no doubt but it will be a very loud cry, inasmuch as it does awaken the very foolish virgins, who no doubt will be fast asleep till then, and also it will be an amazing cry, though to wise and sincere professors a very gracious and merciful cry.

4. When you hear at any time a cry at midnight, think of this cry, and enquire also what time of the night it is now: I mean, observe well the signs of the times.

5. This no doubt is that time, when the sinners in Sion will be afraid, and fearfulness surprise the heart of the hypocrites; fear then will seize them.

“Go ye out to meet him.”

Note from hence, that the design of God in causing this cry, is to call professors up to prepare to meet the Bridegroom.

“Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.”

Observe, that as these words show they had been all asleep, so it shows that they were not awakened until this cry was heard; but this voice will quicken them. Believers may be drowsy, and their faith may be low, and their love be much decayed, and their lights burn also very dim, and ready to go out. O how apt and liable are the saints to lose their life, strength, and vigor, or that heat of zeal which sometime they had.

Note also, a child of God may have his lamp to trim, when he hath the greatest need of it; or that he may be under the greatest decay, when he should have obtained the greatest growth in grace, in faith, and holiness; he may have faith, but it is weak, and not in exercise, or though he believes, yet he may not have the joy of faith. Moreover, observe, that though believers' lamps may want trimming, yet they are not gone out; they do burn, though they give not a clear light.

Quest. What is meant by trimming of their lamps?

Answ. It may signify their supplying their lamps with oil; this expositors conclude is one thing which is hereby intended. In trimming the lamp (saith one) there is usually a supply of oil, if it want it, as when it hath burned long it must be supplied: the oil being spent, it will not live except it be supplied. So the wise virgins trimming their lamps, is their fetching more grace by fresh acts of faith and prayer to that fulness of grace that is in Jesus Christ, perceiving their oil almost all spent.

2. It may also denote the stirring up of the grace which remaineth in their lamps: “Stir up the gift that is in thee,” &c. 2Ti 1:6. That so their conversation may shine in grace and holiness.

3. The trimming the lamp is also the raising the wick, it being burned low. A poor believer may be in such a declining condition, that his graces and spirit also may be low, and therefore must be raised by a more lively exercise of faith in Jesus Christ.

4. Moreover, the trimming of the lamp denotes the cleansing of it, and the taking off the dead ashes that hinders the light, or prevents its burning so clearly as otherwise it would. Now what is this, but the putting away of all iniquity by faith and unfeigned repentance: our conversation or lamp of

profession is subject to gather filth, and the dead ashes of corruption hinders oft-times the shinings of our lives, to the glory of God. Unbelief, deadness, earthliness, and self-confidence, are like to a thief in the candle, or dead ashes in the wick of a lamp, and therefore must be snuffed by mortification, last the

Spirit of God be grieved and depart from us, as to his quickening and comforting influences.

APPLICATION

Let these things, this cry, stir us all up to this duty, i.e., to trim our lamps: are not we in a slumbering frame of heart, and do not our lamps need trimming? besides, is not the Bridegroom ready to appear?

MOTIVES

1. Consider, though the midnight cry may not yet be heard, yet God uses means to awaken you; he hath stirred me up to cry unto you, and call aloud to you to this end: O pray that God would restore your souls, quicken you in his ways, Ps 23:3.

2. Consider, that until our lamps are better trimmed, they will not burn clear, that others may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

3. Until then we may not enjoy the light of joy, peace, and comfort in our own souls, nor be of that use and benefit unto others, nor beautify our holy profession.

4. Until then we shall not be fit nor be prepared for death, nor for the coming of the Lord. Besides, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand, therefore we should "Cast off all the unfruitful works of darkness, and put on the armour of light," Ro 13:12-13.

But I shall proceed to another proposition.

Doct. That though a sincere Christian may fall into a sleepy frame of heart, yet he shall awake, and shall not sleep the sleep of death: or, the day of Christ shall not find them asleep. I shall

1. Premise one or two things touching the happiness of a true believer's state, though in a sleepy frame.

2. Show from whence it is (or comes to pass) that he shall awake.

A true believer's state is always good and safe.

1. Because he is a child of God, a son of God, and he cannot lose that relation, and from hence an heir of heaven. "If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

2. A true believer (it follows from hence) is always in a state of union with Christ, though he may not know it, and the bonds of this union cannot be broke; it is an indissolvable union.

3. He is ever in a justified state, and all his sins (as to vindictive justice) are forgiven for ever, there being "No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Ro 8:1; them that, he justifies he also glorifies.

II. From hence it also follows, that no true believer can finally and totally fall away; though the foolish virgins sleep and finally perish, yet the wise, whatsoever sleep or slumber they fall into, yet can never perish.

Yet believers may fall foully, and lose the sense of God's love, and be deserted, and be almost ready utterly to despair and give up their hope. For thus it was with Heman: also Job saith, that "His hope was perished," Ps 88. A godly man, my brethren, may sin away his joy, peace, and comfort; and all lively acts of faith may cease.

He may also for a short time through Satan's temptations falter in his profession, and neglect his duty, so that his lamp may grow very dim, hardly burn at all.

Nay, and when Christ comes to give them a gracious visit, they may be (as the spouse was) asleep: "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse," Song 5:1. But what an ill frame was she in! "I sleep, but my heart waketh, it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, open to me, my sister, my spouse," &c., nay, and gracious persons may let Christ wait long before they arise to open to him. "For my head is wet with dew, and my

locks with the drops of the night.” Christ waits long, knocks hard, and calls aloud at their door, and yet they arise not, no not until he is withdrawn and is gone. “I rose to open to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone; I sought him, but I found him not,” ver. 5.

They may, moreover, sleep and not awake, until some amazing providence comes upon them, which is here signified by the midnight cry.

Secondly, I shall show you from whence it is, or cometh to pass, that believers may, and sometimes do, fall into such a sleepy frame.

1. Certainly, it riseth from that corrupt part that is in them, I mean the body of sin.

2. From Satan’s temptations. “I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?” Song 5:3. They perceive their state is good, and their work is done, and so the devil gets advantages against them, to neglect their indispensable duties.

3. It may also be occasioned by means of the snares and allurements of this world. O how ready are we to have our hearts too much run out to earthly things. “All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ’s.”

4. It may likewise come upon them, as you heard, through the Bridegroom’s tarrying, or by reason of their long watching; but having spoken to this already, I shall say no more to it now.

Thirdly, why shall true believers awake out of their sleepy and slumbering frame?

Answ. 1. Because they have a principle of spiritual life in them; whilst life is in a man, though he be asleep, there is ground enough to believe he will awake; but if a man falls asleep and his life is gone, there is no hope of his being awakened. The Spirit of God remains in believers for ever, they have a principle of eternal life in them.

2. Because “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day,” Pr 4:18. Though their path may sometimes seem dark, yet that darkness shall vanish, his leaf shall not wither; he shall be

green, and flourishing in his profession; though it may seem to fade for a short time.

3. Because of the nature of that union they have with Jesus Christ; “Because I live, ye shall live also,” Joh 14:19. Union with Christ is as a spring that feeds or fills their vessels and lamps with fresh oil, as the branches receive sap from the root, by which means they grow, flourish, and bring forth fruit.

4. Because of that great love of God to them, the love God hath to them will not suffer them to sleep long before he in a gracious manner awakens them; besides his promise is, that he will return again and revive them: “They shall revive as the corn,” Ho 14:7. “He will revive the hearts of the humble, and the spirits of the contrite ones,” Isa 57:15. Such that we love, we will not suffer to sleep in a dangerous hour, to their utter ruin, if we can awake them; now the love of God to his saints, exceeds our love to any dear friend, and he is able to awaken and quicken his people.

5. Because their Head never sleeps; “He that keepeth Israel doth neither sleep nor slumber.” In this consisteth the safety of believers, and from hence the soul shall be awakened both from a dead frame in respect of spirits and their bodies also at the last day.

APPLICATION

1. This discovers the great difference that there is between the state of the wise and foolish virgins.

2. Let believers be exhorted to holy watchfulness.

1. Because otherwise the word of God and the means of grace may be ineffectual to you, and you may lose much sweet comfort by Christ’s gracious visits, and be brought under many fears and doubts about your state.

2. Though your state is good, yet you may not be actually ready to meet the Bridegroom.

3. Consider what love you had to Christ when you first believed. “I remember the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the

wilderness,” Jer 2:2, &c. Nothing is more offensive and grievous to Jesus Christ, than to see his people cool in their love to him. “Yet nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works,” Re 2:4-5, &c. Take holy Paul’s advice: “But call to remembrance the former days, in which after you were illuminated, you suffered a great fight of afflictions,” Heb 10:32.

4. Consider that Christ’s love is ever the same; he never grows cold in his affections to his spouse, and dear saints, nor hath he given to us any cause to decline in our love to him: “Have I been a barren wilderness to Israel, or a land of darkness?” Jer 2:31.

Take two or three directions.

1. Strengthen that which remains that is ready to die; do not lose the little faith, love, zeal, and resolution you have, but labour after an addition of every grace.

2. Be restless in your spirits until you find Christ again, if he be withdrawn: tell him you are sick of love; let it appear that you are troubled and do mourn in his absence. Thus it was with David; “Thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled;” labour after poverty of spirit.

3. Labour to die to the things of this life; take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness, get loose in your affections to all perishing things; beware of the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches; know ye not that ye are pilgrims on earth, and are travelling to another country?

4. Be much in prayer, and watch therein. “Pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man,” Lu 21:36. Let us watch our hearts, watch our tongues, watch our eyes, and watch our whole conversation; our lamps also must be watched, lest they grow dim, or oil fails. “Let your loins be girt, and your lamps burning.” Strive to be much in secret prayer, closet prayer, and see how your hearts are affected to that.

5. Think much upon another world, contemplate on death, and on the day of judgment, and the coming of Christ: consider how short and uncertain life is; our days are but as a shadow, or as a vapour that flies away.

6. Improve all those providences of God under which you are exercised; observe God in all his dispensations, Satan in all his temptations, and your own hearts in all their inclinations; strive to discern the voice of God from the voice of Satan, and know that God tries us for approbation, but Satan for our destruction; God sets our sins before us to humble us, but Satan to ruin us by slavish fear and unbelief.

7. Delight in the company of the wise, and wakeful Christians, and avoid conversing or keeping company with loose and carnal professors, much more with the profane and ungodly, who contemn all religion and godliness.

8. Receive reproof kindly, especially from your minister, who is commanded to rebuke some (as occasion may be) sharply. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall not break my head," saith David. If you hate him that reproves in the gate, it is a sign your hearts are not right with God; "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee," Pr 9:8.

9. Look every day to your lamps; the lamps of the sanctuary were to be dressed every day; "He dressed them, and made them ready every morning," Ex 30:7. The care of trimming our lamps, must be our business morning and evening.

10. Take heed ye do not grieve the Holy Spirit by slighting his motions, nor by undervaluing his work and operations (which I fear they do, who affirm the state of the elect is as good before grace, before effectual calling as after); do not grieve the Spirit by adhering to Satan, and by siding in with unbelieving thoughts, nor by yielding to any sin, nor by ascribing that to yourselves which belongs to the blessed Spirit.

"Then all those virgins arose," &c.

Quest. What is meant by the foolish virgins arising, and trimming their lamps?

Answ. Their arising denotes, that they were more apprehensive of their danger than they were before; they were altogether so senseless as formerly they were; also it may signify that they reformed their lives, and became more seemingly devout and pious, and were oftener in their duties; may be now

they pray, and hear the word with greater diligence; their consciences being awakened: note from hence,

Doct. An awakened conscience will put wicked men and hypocrites upon doing somewhat in reforming their ways.

But alas, they think by this means to get into a good state, as well as into a good frame. The foolish virgins do it, to get a title to heaven, the wise to get a meetness for heaven; the foolish think by repentance and reformation of life to be saved.

“And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out,” ver. 8.

Observe, Doct. Foolish virgins, or hypocrites, may see their want of grace.

Quest. From whence is it that hypocrites may see the want of grace?

Ans. Their sense of want of grace ariseth from the inward horror of their heart, or sight and sense of their woful condition; it is not from the sense of the evil of sin, but of the misery which they fear is near.

2. It is not from the sense of the worth of grace in itself, in respect of the sanctifying virtue of it, but thinking thereby they may be saved; hypocrites may desire grace as a bridge to carry them to heaven, but it is not that they may glorify God, and render the name of Christ as sweet odour; it is indeed for their own sakes, not from love to God, but love to themselves.

3. It is rather a passive sense than an active inquiry of their hearts; when distress and want comes, fools will see their folly; like as some careless traders, who cast not up their books, but when want and poverty comes upon them, are perplexed; an arrest of conscience terrifies these foolish ones.

4. These see their wretched state, but not the sinfulness of their former neglect and remissness; it is a natural sense, not a spiritual grace, makes a man spiritually poor; but they that never had it, cannot be affected for the simple want of it; it is only from the light of common convictions, and not from saving illuminations, it flows not from those shining beams of the Sun of righteousness.

5. It is from a sense only of the want of oil in their lamps, not for the want of it in their vessels. They see the want of a holy life, but not of Christ, and a changed heart; they are more troubled for the guilt of sin than for the filth and pollution thereof; oil in the lamp commends us to men, but oil in our vessels, (i.e.) in our hearts, commends us to God. David wanted a new heart; "Create in me a clean heart," Ps 51:5; and Paul cries out of the body of sin and death. An hypocrite may have an awakened conscience, but not a renewed mind.

6. It is a sense of the want of oil at last, nay, when it was too late, and now they mourn, as Solomon saith, Pr 5:11-14, "And thou mourn at last, when thy flesh and thy body is consumed, and say how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me; I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation," No doubt but Esau might at last see his folly in selling his birthright for a mess of pottage, but could not then obtain the blessing, though he sought it with tears, Heb 12:16-17.

Quest. From whence is it that the foolish virgins came no sooner to see their want and woful condition?

1. Answ. They a long time deceived themselves. Saul held out pretty well until Samuel died, and may be thought his state good, but afterwards he saw God was departed from him: self love is a great deceiver.

2. The good opinions the wise virgins had of them, might partly deceive them; the approbation of godly Christians go a great way with some persons; they indeed prefer that above the approbation of God.

3. It may be from the evil and depths of deceit that is in their own hearts; that hath the quickest sight, the most piercing eye, may not soon penetrate into the dark corners of his own heart: "Who (saith David) knows his errors?" Ps 19:12.

4. They might see it no sooner from their great remissness, in not searching and proving themselves. That which lies deep, or is hid, must be searched; this wisdom the foolish virgins wanted. A true child of God thinks he can never thoroughly or sufficiently search his own heart and life, and therefore cries out, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and

know my thoughts, and see if there be any evil way in me,” Ps 139:23; though he himself was not an idle searcher: “I communed with mine own heart, and my spirit made a diligent search,” Ps 77:6. But this he saw was not sufficient, therefore desired the Lord also to search him, but this wisdom the foolish virgins had not.

5. No doubt it was also partly from the subtilty of Satan, all the devil’s endeavours are to keep sinners ignorant of their state and condition; one while he persuades the poor deluded wretch his state is good, but when he sees the sinner’s eyes are a little opened, he persuades them it is too late, or there is no cure, or else directs them to false and indirect ways to obtain it. And as the devil strives to keep an unsound professor ignorant, that he may not be saved, so he endeavours to keep a sincere person ignorant of his condition, that he may hinder him of the joy of salvation, or spoil all his peace and comfort.

6. It may arise from that similitude or seeming likeness there is between a form of godliness and the power thereof, or between convictions of natural conscience and true evangelical illuminations; or between true faith and counterfeit faith, and betwixt reformation and regeneration. Similitude (saith one) is the mother of mistakes. Bristol stones seem like true pearl, and steel cut like diamonds appear like true diamonds. A limner can draw very much like the life, or him whose face it represents.

7. It may be occasioned through the ignorance and blindness of some teachers, whose ministry they may sometimes attend to lead men out to rest upon a presumptuous faith, and will not allow their hearers to try themselves by signs or characters of true grace; such that descry all evidences of grace, or a reflex act of faith, to know how it is with them, I look upon to be preachers of pernicious doctrine; we can never be pressed too much to sanctification, and to show our faith by our works.

8. Perhaps it may be a just and righteous judgment of God upon them, that they see not their state no sooner, they are paid off in their own coin; since they deceived others, and were not willing to try themselves, God leaves them to spiritual blindness, and to the deceit of their own heart. “Jerusalem would not see the things that belonged to their peace,” Lu 19:42; therefore our blessed Lord said, “Now are they hid from your eyes.”

Quest. Why are the foolish virgins said to ask oil of the wise?

1. Answ. It may be partly to discover they are fools; for who that are wise would go to men, to saints, or to ministers for grace?

2. It may signify that hypocrites in their distress, know not what course to take; they catch hold of any thing, though it be most unlikely to relieve them.

3. It may be to convince all that God will make it appear, that though some seem to be wise and knowing persons, and can perhaps dispute and argue excellently about principles of religion, yet at last that they are mere fools; is he not a great fool that will go to his fellow-creature for the true grace of God? or that a saint can give grace to another, or hath any to spare?

4. Perhaps it implies this, viz., they fly to, and depend upon the prayers of the wise; "Give us of your oil," that is, improve your interest with God, your faith in prayer to God for us; but certainly there is more than this meant by the wise virgins' answer, "Not so," they would not deny them of their prayers, but they denied them what they asked. "Go to them that sell;" pray yourselves to God, we cannot help you. Sirs, such who depend upon the prayers of others, and pray not themselves, are certainly foolish persons.

5. It denotes God leaves them to themselves, and to horrid blindness.

Quest. When will the hypocrite's hope and profession fail him?

Answ. When conscience is awake and terrifies him, and when he is in the greatest need; moreover, be sure it will fail him at death, and in the day of judgment. O see the woeful state of hypocrites!

SERMON XXIII

And the foolish said, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out,—Mt 25:8.

Doct. Lamps of hypocrites will first or last go out.

1. I shall show you the cause why the lamps of these professors go out.

2. Apply it.

1. One reason why the lamps of the foolish virgins go out, because they took no oil in their vessels; the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps: but hypocrites go forth into a visible profession without true faith, or the saving grace of the Spirit in their hearts. It is positively said that the “foolish virgins took their lamps, but took no oil with them,” ver. 3. A profession of religion without grace, and the saving knowledge of Christ, will come to nothing.

2. Because the oil they had in their lamps (as I told you) was only common grace, by the virtue of which they made a visible profession of religion; their consciences might be enlightened, and their affections moved with some seeming heat and zeal, but never were thoroughly converted; and thus it was with Judas and many others, who were called Christ’s disciples, and followed him for a time.

3. No doubt but that they had some taste of the good word of God, and arrived to some kind of faith, but were without the indwelling of the Spirit, being neither united to Christ, nor having sincere love to him; but some sin or another was allowed and lived in, and had power over them; they were counted saints, but were not thoroughly sanctified; and though they escaped outward profaneness, yet were not inwardly purged; and from hence their lamps went out.

USE

1. From hence we may infer, that God will at some time or another constrain foolish professors to confess their own folly, and be self-condemned. “Our lamps are gone out.” 1Sa 24:17, Saul was brought to confess that “David was more righteous than he.” God will make the

stoutest heart to yield and give judgment against itself, and so “cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease,” Isa 13:11.

2. We also infer that there are several sorts of hypocrites; some will not own that their lamps are without oil, but conclude their state is good, and that their lamps burn as clear as any.

Quest. By what signs or characters may such whose lamps are going out, be known?

1. Answ. When a person can hardly keep up a bare outward profession, or his outward conversation from some scandalous sin or another; some (whose hearts are not upright) may walk in appearance before men without blame, or in a holy conversation; but if a professor falters here, and his life is observed to be scandalous, he being loose, earthly, and carnal, or lives in some way of sin or another, it shows that his lamp is gone, or is going out.

2. When temptations are too strong, and given way unto, and indispensable duties are neglected, and they will not be reclaimed, though often sent to and admonished, yet, neglect of prayer, attendance upon God’s public worship is persisted in, and yet they seem little concerned, but will have one excuse or another.

3. When some notions of religion are more affected than real godliness, love, and unity, and a person seems proud and conceited, and on every small occasion he is ready to throw off his communion with the church.

4. When convictions of sin, either of sins of omission or commission are not cherished, or a person grows weary of duty, or very cold and remiss in them, or resteth upon the bare performance of them, though very dully performed, and though they grow earthly and lukewarm, yet are insensible of it, and think they are “increased in goods, and have need of nothing,” Re 3:17.

5. When comfort is more sought and desired than strength against sin, and purity of heart; some pretend they cannot profit under any ministry that presses practical holiness; no, but only that doctrine pleaseth them, that raiseth their affections, and fills them with joy and consolation; they eye more what Christ hath (as they think) done for them, than what by his Spirit he hath wrought in them.

“But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you,” &c., ver. 9.

Here are three things to be observed.

1. The request of the foolish virgins, what it was, and also that it was denied by the wise.

2. The reason why they denied their request, “Lest there be not enough for us, and you.

3. The advice and counsel which the wise virgins gave to the foolish, “But go rather to them that sell,” &c.

Some expositors think the answer of the wise doth not contain serious advice to go to Jesus Christ, but rather that they spoke upbraidingly or ironically, according as God speaks, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee, and walk in the ways of thine own heart,” &c. Ec 11:9. Or, as Elijah said to Baal’s priests, “He is a god, cry aloud,” &c., 1Ki 18:27.

If it be thus taken, then it follows that hypocrites in their distress meet with no pity, either from God or his people; God mocketh them when their fear cometh, nay, the Lord “laugheth at them, and he shall have them in derision,” Pr 1:26; Ps 2:4. This is spoken after the manner of men, to show how God will aggravate the sinner’s misery on him at the last. Moreover, it is said, that “the righteous also shall see and fear and laugh at him,” Ps 52:5.

They that take the answer thus, intimate as if the wise virgins should say, Go to your workmongers, your meritmongers, go to your dry bottles, go to your empty duties; as saith God, “Go to your idols, or to the fat of your sacrifices;” you have made lies your refuge, now go and shelter yourselves under them.

But I rather think that the wise virgins gave them serious and sober advice, and spake not ironically to them.

Quest. But why do not the wise rather reprove them (seeing their lamps were gone out) than so calmly advise them?

Answ. Because it becomes their modesty to deal gently and mildly with them,* also they would not provoke them; we are commanded to follow peace with all men, also a gentle answer turns away wrath.

2. May be the wise might perceive, that they were not capable to bear rebuke, or perhaps they might express to the wise a great sense of their folly in sleeping so long, and to let their lamps go out, and so needed no sharp reproof.

3. Besides the wise virgins might not know their state, and would not censoriously judge, nor charge them.

4. Or (as one notes) may be the foolish virgins might be persons of higher rank, (in respect of their outward state or interest and esteem in the church); and this might put the wise upon a temptation not to be too tart with them, (for the soundest professors are not always the richest, nor had in the highest esteem) or the foolish might be, (saith he) men of greater parts, or seem like stars of the first magnitude.

Quest. What is the meaning of the denial the wise gave them?

1. Ans. Negatively, they did not deny them any civil kindness, nor help of their prayers, nor any seasonably advice and instruction.

2. In the affirmative, 1. Their denial might be a sober and just reprehension for their coming unto them for oil, without taking any further pains, or be at any cost for it; perhaps they would have grace, but not part with their sins. Wisdom is to be sought with the utmost diligence, nor can a man be a disciple of Christ, but he must deny himself, and he that bought the pearl of great price, sold all he had to purchase it; but these foolish persons might not like the price on which Christ offers himself; for though oil and wine is had without money and without price; yet a right-eye sin, and a right-hand sin must be parted with, and the creature's old rags must be cast off.

2. Their denial may denote (as indeed it is partly expressed) that no sincere Christians can part with any of their oil, their faith or grace, to give it unto others; no, they can give no faith, no grace, to a wife or dear children; they cannot believe for them, nor repent for them, nor will the parents being in the covenant of grace, be any saving benefit to one child; they must

believe themselves, others cannot (I say) believe for them, though we may instruct poor relations and neighbours, yet we cannot give to any the saving knowledge of Christ; no, though a saint be filled with the Spirit, or is full of grace, yet he can impart none of it to any other. God only is the giver of grace; faith, as it is not of ourselves, so it is the gift of God.

3. It denotes, that sincere Christians have grace little enough for themselves, and none to spare, (as they have no power to give to others) for he that hath the most, sees he hath but a little, he never thinks he hath enough for himself, and therefore is always desiring more; nay, all true believers see a great want of more grace, more faith, more love, more humility; though he be humble, yet he would be more humble, and therefore he cries for more grace. (1.) Because of the sense he hath of the corruptions of his own heart, and of the strength of Satan's temptations. (2.) Moreover, he knows not what times of need may come. (3.) Also the means of grace may fail, a famine of the word may overtake him, and times of greater expense, when he may be forced to live partly upon the old stock. (4.) Or he may be called to harder work, though the grace he hath may serve his present turn, or to discharge his present duties, yet he may meet with harder duties, he may be called to suffer for Christ, or to offer up his Isaac, (as Abraham was) which calls for a strong faith.

4. Their answer signifies that believers are humble persons, they are not so rich as to help their neighbours; the wise see they have nothing to spare.

5. It may denote the high regard they have for the honour of Jesus, or will not eclipse his glory, who only hath grace to give to sinners. Go to them that sell, to the fountain of grace, and not to the creature, nor to your duties; none can help you but Jesus Christ alone.

6. It may signify that the wise virgins would have the foolish see with their own eyes, and believe with their own hearts.

Some people live upon borrowing; so would the foolish virgins. Some leave it to their ministers to believe for them, they pin their faith on their sleeves; my minister is a learned man, I believe as he believes. Some also would have their parents' faith serve their turn, and give a right to them, both to the promises and to ordinances. This is indeed like going to the wise for oil.

7. Their answer may signify that great love the wise had to the souls of the foolish, they send them to Jesus Christ; and who also says to them, “Buy of me,” Re 3:18.

Lastly, perhaps the wise were weary of their company, and willing to be rid of them, since their lamps were gone out, and with a loathsome stink, they being of ill and unholy lives might bring a reproach upon religion and a dishonour upon Jesus Christ, being professors and church members.

“But go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves,” ver. 9.

We have no oil for you; go to the Father, and to Jesus Christ the Mediator.

Quest. Why must they go to God, and to Christ Jesus, or to God in him?

1. Answ. Because no grace is to be had of any others, or anywhere else; “Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights,” Jas 1:17. And the light of knowledge, grace, and all spiritual gifts in a peculiar manner are from God.

2. Because Jesus Christ hath bought or purchased the oil of gladness, and all spiritual blessings, for all who see the want of these things, and come to him believingly for them.

3. Because Jesus Christ the Mediator is the great repository of all grace, though all truth and grace is essentially in God, yet it is all communicated to the person of Christ, considered as Mediator, it is laid up in him; “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Col 2:3; hid from the world, lodged in him, to be secured for believers, and not exposed to view of every eye, but are given forth as he sees good to whom, and in what measure he pleaseth; it is from his fulness that all grace is received, and as Jesus Christ is the repository of all grace, so also the outlet or conduit-pipe of it also. “Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,” Joh 1:16. And this is to exalt Jesus Christ, to magnify the person of Christ, and set forth his glory, and therefore all that see a want of grace must go to him; for as Pharaoh put all the corn of the land of Egypt into the possession or hands of Joseph, and all that wanted corn, (who came to him) he sent them to Joseph. So all that need grace, wisdom, knowledge, or any spiritual good things, must go to Jesus Christ.

4. Because Jesus Christ is said to sell all things which sinners need. “Ho, every one that thirsteth come to the waters, and he that hath no money, come buy wine and milk,” &c. Isa 55:1; compared with Re 3:18. “Buy of me gold tried in the fire,” &c.

Quest. But what is meant by buying oil, and why do they bid them go and buy?

Answ. For the clearing of this part of the parable, which may seem to some difficult, and opposite to the doctrine of free grace, I shall lay down for the opening of it, one or two explanatory propositions.

1. Proposition. Nothing is or can be more freely given than the grace of God, (i.e.) the spirit and graces thereof; I need not cite Scriptures to confirm this.

2. Proposition. That the buying and selling mentioned here must therefore be quite different from buying in the common acceptance, as among men.

1. This appears,* because in buying something is commonly laid down or given which is of intrinsic worth and value with that which is bought. But no man hath anything to give in worth or value with the graces of the Spirit; besides we have nothing that we call our own, but all we have is the Lord's. Moreover, what is in value with this blessed oil? “Who knoweth the price of wisdom? her price is far above rubies, no man knoweth the price thereof,” Job 28:13.

2. Because this is a buying without money, and without price, that is, without money or money's worth. This shows it is a quite different sort of buying from what is among men. Moreover, that which is had or bought without money, or price, is given freely.

3. Because he that buys anything in the common acceptance of the word, deserveth what he so buys; he giving its full worth either in money, or goods, and he may demand as his just due what he hath so bought; but no man dare say that he deserveth the least morsel of bread at the hands of God, much less the saving grace of God, nor can any man demand it of God as his due, upon the account of what he hath paid for it.

4. Because, in common buying of any commodity, the buyer who hath given a full price for it is not looked upon beholding to the seller, I have given you your full demands, saith he, I am not obliged to you, but you rather to me for my kindness in buying of you.

But O how are sinners obliged unto God for all those good things they receive of him, especially for grace and all spiritual blessing, and this indeed, because all is given freely to them as undeserving; nay, to ill-deserving creatures, also. “What do we give to God, or what receiveth he at our hands?” Job 35:7.

Quest. These things being so, why are they bid to go and buy?

I. Answ. It may be to show us the worth of these things, for those things that are very precious, as jewels, &c., are commonly bought, though the paper and pack-thread, with which a jewel may be bound up, is given freely, but the jewel was bought and paid for, so Christ and saving grace is of infinite worth.

II. And more directly,* because in buying something is parted with by the sinner, he must part with all he hath (as I have showed the merchantman did for the pearl of great price,) but alas they are things of no worth, but contrariwise are hurtful to his soul; yet there is a necessity of parting with them.

1. By virtue of God’s command, he requires all poor sinners so to do.

2. By reason of the sinner’s unfitness, or moral incapacity of enjoying these spiritual things, unless he so do; for he must deny himself, that is, sinful self, religious self, and natural self also. For,

3. A dart that sticks in the flesh must be pulled out; if a man wounded therewith could be cured, if a member be corrupted and rotten, it must be cut off, and old filthy rags must be cast off, if a man would be clothed with a rich robe; sin and grace cannot reign in one and the same heart at one and the same time; a man cannot truly seek the honour of Christ, that chiefly seeks the honour of men. “How can you believe that seek honour from one another, and not that honour that comes from God only?” Joh 5:44.

Lot must leave Sodom, if he will escape the consuming flames; and Moses must forsake Pharaoh's court, if he will be a servant of God, and a deliverer of Israel.

III. It may be called a buying, because men commonly high prize such things, that they have bought and parted with all they had to be possessed of for it. Paul set an inestimable value upon Jesus, for the sake of whom he parted with all things that were before counted gain to him; he that will not part with his sins or unrighteousness, will not part with his own righteousness to be possessed with grace, and clothed with the righteousness of Christ;* which shows he little values Christ or the graces of Christ.

IV. Because that which a man buys he hath a proper right to, and propriety in, and is sure of; we call it our own, though we gave never so small a matter to have it, and also they know the time when they came to be possessed of it; no man can have Christ who is not brought for his sake to deny himself, take up his cross and follow him; if we do not forsake our old lovers, Christ will not espouse us.

V. Moreover, that which a man parts withal he hath to enjoy it, he will not soon part with; we are bid to "buy the truth, and sell it not," Pr 23:23; get it whatsoever the cost be, but never part with it; get Christ, the fear of God or true wisdom, let the terms be what they will, you will have a good bargain, and if you could have all the world, yet sell it not, part not with what you have obtained.

3. Profit. That buying which is here meant, is not a purchasing or a procuring condition, or a previous qualification for grace, or to obtain Christ and his saving benefits (as some speak of) I mean it is no federal condition on our part to be performed, viz., such a condition which a sinner must answer, and the blessing will be withheld until he has on his part answered it, for this is a plain buying with money.

No, all federal or covenant conditions in this sense were performed by Jesus Christ our covenanting Head—yet we will, if you please, grant it a condition by way of connection; as thus, if you will have union with Christ, you must receive the Holy Spirit, or if you will put on the new man, you must put off the old man; and if you will be justified, you must believe in Christ, or if you would be saved, you must be regenerated; so if you will have the pearl, or oil in your vessels, you must part with all you have to enjoy it: but pray

remember, faith to believe in Christ is as much the gift of God's grace, and Christ is his gift, whom faith receives. Moreover, we need the same power of God in a way of free grace, to cast off the old man; as we do to put on the new man; we can as soon remove a mountain, as regenerate or change our own hearts; yet this is required of all that will be saved, Lazarus must rise up out of the grave, if he lives again; sinners are commanded to arise from the dead, as Christ commanded Lazarus to come out of the grave; but yet a sinner has no more power to do it of himself, than Lazarus had to raise himself after he had been dead four days. My brethren, a new heart, faith, and regeneration are a part of the covenant, or contained in the free promise of God to poor sinners, as much as the Spirit and Jesus Christ is part of it, as promised to be given freely, and therefore a new heart, faith, and repentance, cannot be federal conditions of the said covenant of grace.

VI. In a word, this buying denotes God's infinite love and grace to all such who timely come and do buy, as any thing else whatsoever; for no man can or will part with all he hath for Christ, until the Spirit doth convince him of the infinite worth that is in him, and of that necessity of union with him, and also not until almighty power works faith, by infusing a principle of life in the soul. These poor wretches might go and ask the price of oil, but never came to God's terms; many would be saved who like not the terms contained in the gospel, and as they have no power to come up to those terms, so they seek not to God, nor improve the means (or at least wise not timely) which God directs them to.

APPLICATION

I. From hence we infer, that that which is said to be bought by us, is freely of God's own sovereign grace given to us. And this will further appear, if we consider these things following.

1. Because what the Father, or the Son are said to sell to us, the Son bought for us, and paid a full price for it, it was purchased for all God's elect by Christ with his own money; divine justice having received full payment; but to us Christ, "his righteousness and all things are freely given," Ro 5:19, who were unworthy of the least favour, being guilty criminals; we merited not, bought nothing with our money, but Christ bought and paid for all with his own money only; Christ purchased, and we possess, and thus buying and free given are consistent with each other. Doth the Father sell the same things twice, or require double federal conditions! and though Christ's money

went for part of payment, our money doth procure the actual possession of the bargain or inheritance? God forbid any should argue after such a manner.

2. Because God freely also gives grace though he be said to sell it, and we to buy it.

(1.) This must be granted, because our buying is no gain to him. "What dost thou give to him, or what receiveth he at thy hands?" he empties our vessels, and then with his own rich and precious oil he fills them.

(2.) Because a heart and power to buy, or to receive Jesus Christ, the Spirit, and graces of the Spirit, are as much an act of Christ's love, and his free gifts to us, as grace itself, and all those blessings received; it is of his working in us that we are made willing, "for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Php 2:13.

(3.) Consider, (though God is said to sell, and we to buy) what a vast difference there is between the worth of what we part with, and that which we receive of him; see what he saith, "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," Isa 61:3. The oil of joy, this is the oil the foolish virgins went to buy; and see what God saith to humble souls, he hath appointed the oil of joy for mourning; but he knowing the hardness of a sinner's heart, and that they cannot mourn for sin, until he breaks them into pieces, "he pours upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication," Zec 12:10; and by means they are helped to look up to him whom they pierced, and then they mourn, and not till then.

2. Exhort. Be exhorted, you poor sinners, who have no grace, no oil, to go to Jesus Christ; go you that have no money, he offers it freely, whatsoever Christ saith, be sure that do, bring your empty vessels; before him, go as sinners, as having nothing, no money, resolve to to give up all as lost for Christ, and count whatsoever you have valued formerly, as dung; this is the way to buy; and are not these easy terms? confess your ignorance, and cast off your false confidence. What fools are they who refuse to buy of one that sells on such terms, what, without money and without price, and yet will any refuse to buy of him?

III. Here is comfort and encouragement to believers. Ye doubting and drooping saints, though you have oil, yet you may need wine, O buy wine

and milk, wine to cheer you; you may have whole flagons in the covenant promises, to revive your sinking and fainting spirits; and you, babes in Christ, who want milk, Christ sells milk as well as wine; attend upon the word, lay aside all earthly business, and draw at the breasts of the promises and ordinances, you may boldly come, be supplied with whatsoever you need; if any thirst, Christ hath water of life. “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,” Re 22:17.

SERMON XXIV

But rather go to them that sell and buy for yourselves.—Mt 25:9.

I have opened the nature of this buying, and answered several questions; there is yet one or two more, which I purpose to resolve.

Quest. What directions are further necessary about gospel buying?

The answer shall be twofold.

1. By way of parity.
2. By way of disparity.

1. By way of parity; you that would buy of Christ, must see or be convinced of the need of that you would buy; (thus it is among men that go to the market,) those in Laodicea did not know the want of anything; they thought they were “increased in goods, and had need of nothing,” Re 3:17.

2. Nay, such that would buy of Christ, ought to be convinced in the highest degree of their need, or see the necessity they have of oil, wine, and milk. People may want many things, but they may do well enough without them; but some things men want, they must have, or they cannot live. So sinners must have grace, they must have Christ, the bread of life, or else they will perish for ever. Thirsty persons must have water, and something to drink, and naked people must have clothes to cover them. So sinners must have water of life, and Christ’s white raiment to clothe them; they must believe. “He that believeth not shall be damned,” Mr 16:16. It was mere necessity that moved Jacob to send his sons down to Egypt to buy corn, “that we may live (saith he,) and not die.” You sinners that see no necessity of Christ, and of the Spirit and graces of Christ, will not buy upon gospel terms. The foolish virgins for want of oil were shut out of the marriage-chamber, and they not seeing the necessity of their want of it sooner, was the cause they went to buy when it was too late. There is a necessity of grace.

(1.) Because there is no man can be converted or regenerated without it.

(2.) None can believe, until they receive the Spirit, which is the seed of faith.

(3.) They cannot see until they have Christ's eye-salve to open their understandings; faith is the eye by which we see Christ, the feet by which we go to Christ, the hand by which we receive Christ, the mouth by which we taste how good he is.

II. He that would buy, considers as he hath not the things he wants, and as there is a necessity of them; so also he must know whither to go, to be supplied with them. So sinners must know that they have nothing of their own to supply their wants; and also must go to him that sells: they must not look within for light and righteousness, they have within no evangelical light, nor justifying righteousness. What good will natural, moral, or legal light, or righteousness do them? Even none at all, as to justification and eternal life; and this they will see at last, whatsoever their confidence may be now, through blindness and delusions of sin and Satan, and deceivers.

“Go to them that sell.”

This denotes they must go out of themselves; their hearts and vessels are empty, and not one dram of oil in them naturally, but are wholly in darkness. “And if that light which is in thee, be darkness, how great is that darkness!” Lu 11:34-35. Grace is only in Christ, and life also. “Whither shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life,” Joh 6:68.

III. You must also know the worth of grace, and how to use it, and not make a Saviour of faith, or think faith as a habit or as an act, is that which is your righteousness, or the matter that justifies your persons; no, though thereby you receive Christ and righteousness with him; yet you must know you cannot have Christ nor righteousness without faith, and therefore ought to know the worth of it, or that it is more precious than gold that perishes, nay, than gold tried in the fire. Who will buy the pearl that knows not it is a pearl of great price? Will he sell all for it unless he is convinced of the infinite worth that is in it?

IV. Such that would buy, must know the market-place, or where what he wants are sold, (as well as who sells them:) so sinners must know the spiritual market-place and market-days; they must go to the assemblies of God's people, and attend upon the word of God on those days where and when it is truly preached. Merchants resort to the exchange, and attend exchange-times. So must sinners know God's exchange-time, and get among the people of God, and learn experiences of them who are old traders, and not

go where counterfeit goods are sold, or they may soon be undone by being cheated, and think they have got Christ and true faith, when they have not, but it is a false Christ, and counterfeit faith, or nothing but a common, a temporary, or a presumptuous faith.

V. They must come to the market timely, or not delay until the market is over, or the summer is ended. The foolish virgins were ruined by their folly in this case, they went not to buy until it was too late. "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation," 2Co 6:2. "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Heb 3:7-8.

VI. Such that would buy, would do well to go before the price of what they need be raised. My brethren, Jesus Christ seeing sinners slight and abuse his favours, contemn and make light of his word and heavenly manna, or refuse his calls and gracious tenders of grace, sometimes withholds, and keeps back the precious things of the gospel; so that they grow scarce, and are hard to come at, and he raises the price of his blessed commodities this way; nay, he threatens a famine, "Not of bread, nor of thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord," Am 8:11. You may not have hereafter those precious things your souls need, but it may cost you dear, even the loss of your liberties, goods, nay, perhaps the loss of your lives, or the word of God may be "so precious, that there may be no open vision," 1Sa 3:1.

VII. You that would buy, must not come to cheapen only, but resolve to buy whatsoever it cost you; for Christ will not abate you anything of the old price, *i.e.*, of "denying yourselves, taking up your cross, and following him," Mt 16:24-25; and if you think the price too hard, and that it may cost you your lives; know "He that seeks to save his life, shall lose it."

VIII. You that would buy, must not consult with your friends, no, not with father or mother, son or daughter, husband nor wife; you must not ask them whether you shall buy or not, become a disciple of Christ or not, and refuse so to do unless they consent; you must not say with the man in the gospel, "Suffer me first to bid them farewell that are at my house, or suffer first to bury my father." No, or you must not consult with flesh and blood; proud flesh thinks scorn to receive all freely; no, he will pay for what he hath, he will buy with his money, or have no Christ, something (he thinks,) he must do; others consult their carnal ease, their outward honour among men, but you must do as Paul did, "Not consult with flesh and blood."

Secondly, By way of disparity.

1. You must carry no money to the market with you; this perhaps some will say, is a strange way to buy.

2. You must buy, and yet you cannot, unless you die; I mean die to sin, to self, and to this world.

3. Believers, you must buy, though you see not, feel not, “believe in hope against hope,” though everything seems to lie against your sense, and above your carnal reason, yet believe; though you are sinners in yourselves, yet believe in Christ you are perfect, and without spot or blemish. And sinners, though you are never so vile, yet believe in Christ for righteousness; and you saints that are in darkness, and have no light, “Yet stay yourselves upon your God,” Isa 1:10. Some could buy, if they could but find all sin dead in them, and they were more spiritual and holy or lively, and what is this but to buy when you have got some money, or something of your own?

4. Think not that you shall have oil or any spiritual blessing for the sake of anything you must, and are commanded to part with, or that the terms of the gospel are a purchasing condition. But having spoken to that already, I shall say no more to it now.

USE

1. You may learn from hence the mystery of gospel buying.

2. This may inform poor sinners of the danger they are in, by following the dark principles of human reason, and the natural and legal light that is in them.

3. Moreover, by what means many are deceived, and perish for ever; and may learn hereby to know whether they have yet bought or not, those things their souls need.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him into the marriage-chamber,” ver. 10.

In these words are four parts.

1. An account of what the foolish virgins did.—They went to buy.
2. Their disappointment.—While they went to buy, the bridegroom came.
3. The happiness of the wise.—They were ready.
4. The woeful state of the foolish.—The door was shut.

Doct. Some persons go to buy or provide oil for Christ's coming, when it is too late.

In speaking to this, I shall show you,

1. What their going to buy may denote.
2. Show you at what time or times it will be too late.
3. Show why Christ will come before some are ready.

1. Their going to buy, may signify some thoughts or inclinations they had, to lay hold of Christ by faith. Some say, we go sir, but go not, they have a faint resolution, but never prosecute it; the foolish virgins made a show of going to buy.

2. It may denote their going to the market, I mean to hear the word of God, which perhaps they before had much neglected; they went to the assemblies of God's people, with some kind of resolution to get ready, or prepare for another world, above what they had done before or in former times, being awakened by the cry that was heard.

3. Their going to buy, may also denote their cheapening or asking the price of those things they wanted; like those people the prophet speaks of. "And they come to thee as the people cometh, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them," Eze 33:31. The love of the world, or of some beloved lusts, hindered them from buying.

4. And it may denote also their crying to God, or their calling upon him more than they had done by prayer, for this is one way of going to buy; but perhaps they rested upon the bare performance of this and other duties.

Many think hearing and praying is buying; but, my brethren, asking is one thing, and receiving is another, or else they asked amiss, or continued not, without fainting in their prayers and cries to God; for hypocrites will not always call upon God.

5. Some are always going, but never go, and may be this is signified here by these words.

Secondly, I shall show you what time, or times will it be too late to go to buy.

I. When the market-day is over, or when the summer is ended; “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved,” Jer 8:20; Pr 10:5. Some sleep in harvest, so too many sleep away that time which God allows them to provide for their souls, which is their spiritual harvest-time. Our fathers sowed the seed of the gospel by their prayers and tears about sixty years ago, and we have had a plentiful harvest, and our harvest is at present great, but I fear we by our sins are like to lose what they procured as the answer of their prayers. Our harvest may soon be ended, and the market-day of buying is gone.

The wise,* like the ant, gather their food in the harvest, whilst the foolish, like the sluggard, is asleep; this is the sinner’s day, the day of his visitation. “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thy eyes,” Lu 19:42. The old world had their day, and the Jews had their day, in which the gospel was preached to them; God allows men a day or season of grace, but they know not how long it may last, and when that day is gone, it will be too late, and the sinner’s case then is desperate.

II. When the Spirit of God hath done striving, or will strive no more with sinners; then it will be too late, the door will then be shut. “My Spirit shall not always strive with men,” Ge 6:3. The Spirit strove to convince the foolish virgins of their sin and danger, and showed them their need of Christ, and of true faith in Christ, or of having oil in their vessels: but they regarded not the strivings of the Holy Ghost, but resisted his motions and operations, and the reproofs of their own consciences, and when the Spirit is grieved, and withdraws from poor sinners, and all its influences cease, then it is too late to get oil, and all endeavours then will be in vain and fruitless.

III. When God gives men up to their own hearts' lusts, or in judgment hardens their hearts, and gives them up to blindness of mind, it will be too late to repent, or to seek oil: "But my people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would have none of me, so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsel," Ps 81:12. What blindness of mind, unbelief, and hardness of heart were the Jews left unto, and abide under the power of unto this day, for their rejecting of Christ and the gospel.

IV. When death comes and cuts the sinner off in his sins, then it is too late; such that die in their sins are lost for ever; and O how often doth death come suddenly upon many persons! they think of many days on earth, and that it is time enough, they boast themselves of to-morrow, though "they know not what a day may bring forth," Pr 27:1. Many are well to day and dead to-morrow; nothing is more uncertain than natural life, death comes upon some when they little think of it. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," and such fools were the foolish virgins.

V. When the Bridegroom comes, if men are not ready, it will be too late, for then the door will be shut. O how many will the day of Christ's coming find unprovided! He will come "as a thief in the night," i.e., very suddenly, unexpectedly, and very surprisingly upon the world, and upon many professors also.

Thirdly, Why will our Lord come upon some before they are ready?

I. Answ. The exact time, my brethren, of Christ's coming is determined, and when that time is come, he will stay not one moment longer, whether men be prepared or not. "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry," Will the Lord put off the time of his coming (which is fixed by an unalterable decree) because some slothful servants are not ready? No sure.

II. Because when Christ comes, all his elect will be gathered in, and no sooner is that done, will he stay one day? no, not one hour; all his patience and forbearance with the world, is for his elect's sake; therefore such who are not prepared in that time, or are not converted or provided with grace, before the whole number of the elect are brought home, Christ will come upon though they are wholly unprepared, or unprovided for his coming; for all means of grace then will cease for ever.

III. Because when Christ comes the harvest will be fully ripe, all men will either be ripe for salvation or for damnation, all the wheat will be then ripe for Christ's garner, and the tares will be also ripe to be cast into the fire.

IV. Christ will come upon some who are not ready, because all had warning given, sufficient warning, and great means God used with them, and gave time enough also to get ready, which they neither regarded nor improved. But,

Consider a little further, the warning Christ gave to, and the means he used with the foolish virgins.

(1.) They had the word preached to them, and other ordinances as well as the wise. (2.) They had the beauty, glory, and excellencies of the person of the Bridegroom displayed before their eyes, and also the need they had of him. (3.) They had the Spirit to strive with them; and their consciences also awakened to discover their folly, in that they took their lamps, but no oil in their vessels. (4.) They conversed with the wise, and their advantages were not small upon that account, they might have learned more wisdom of them; and by their telling them their experiences, their foolish hearts might have received instruction. (5.) They were told of the woful state and end of all hypocritical professors. (6.) They saw how long Christ waited before he came.

V. Christ will come upon the foolish virgins before they are ready, and will yet leave them without excuse, because they heard that the Bridegroom was coming; they heard, nay, were told of his near approaching and glorious appearance, but took not timely warning to get ready. In God's ordinary providence in coming upon a people in a way of judgment, he commonly gives them warning. "Now thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do thus unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel," Am 4:12. This being so, we may be sure Christ will give warning before he comes at the last day. And thus he will leave not only the foolish virgins but all the world without any excuse.

VI. Because should our Lord wait longer, or stay longer before he comes, he knows that these professors would be the same, and not take warning, but adhere to the devil and to their own deceitful hearts. He foresees that no further means will make them better. "Why should ye be stricken any more, ye will revolt more and more?" Isa 1:5. "Let favour be shown to the wicked,

yet will he not learn righteousness, in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord,” Isa 26:10. This being so, it would be vain for him to wait longer upon them.

VII. Because God will glorify his justice on such who have abused his mercy, and slighted all the offers of his grace, goodness, long-suffering, patience, and forbearance; as well as glorify his grace, love, and mercy on such who are the vessels of mercy. God will be as much glorified in the destruction of the wicked, as in the salvation of the righteous. And hence his “Ministers are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish,” 2Co 2:15.

VIII. Because the wedding-day will then come, even the set time; for though none know of the day nor hour of Christ’s personal coming, yet that day is fixed, and when it is fully come he will wait no longer (as I showed you before). Will an earthly prince, that hath determined and set the very day of his marriage, and provided all things for that solemnity, and his princely bride hath made herself ready, put off the marriage-day because some slothful servants are not prepared for that day? No certainly, all will say he will never do that, much less will the Lord Jesus, since his coming is prefixed by the eternal and irrevocable decree of his Father.

APPLICATION

Exhort. Be exhorted whoever you are that be not yet ready, to buy oil, and be prepared to part with all (and that timely too) you have, for the “Pearl of great price;” do not delay to get true faith, and a holy and sanctified heart, lay hold upon the present time, fall in with the motions of the Holy Spirit, and with the convictions of your own consciences; and you that are professors and church-members, do not rest satisfied with your lamps, having no oil in your vessels.

For Motives

1. You hear of the great and wonderful favour and goodness of God, in giving you such repeated warnings of the danger you are in, and how inexcusable he will leave all men, and you especially at the great day.

2. That the Lord Jesus hath tarried long, and hath “spread out his hands all the day long,” is there any thing of such moment as this? doth it not

concern the eternal happiness of your precious souls; O how will many cry out when it is too late, and wish they had been so wise to have considered their latter end, and not spent that time on earth about eating and drinking, and living well for a moment in the world, when there was one thing ten thousand times more needful which was neglected, by their being encumbered with many things not worth regard comparably.

3. Consider the fearful state of such whom that day, or the day of death finds Christless, and graceless. O how will they wish they could but live over those years and days again which God gave them when on earth, so as to enjoy the favour of God, and means of grace they then had! But alas! all will be in vain, such wishes will be fruitless, for perish then for ever they must; therefore “because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke, when a great ransom cannot deliver thee,” Job 36:18. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven,” Ro 1:18, against all wicked and graceless sinners; nay, such who believe not in Christ are under wrath; all in the first Adam are “children of wrath,” Eph 2:3; and until they have an interest in Christ that “wrath abideth on them,” Joh 3:36. But no wrath will be more dreadful than that wrath that hath been long a kindling in the heart of God, some are said to heap up wrath against the day of wrath, and the blood of Christ cannot then deliver them.

4. Consider the happiness of those who are truly wise, who shall then be received into the marriage chamber. As the sorrows of the wicked will be inconceivable, so will the joys and consolation of the godly.

SERMON XXV

And the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage chamber, &c.—Mt 25:10.

From hence note,

Doct. The Lord Jesus Christ will come again, or appear the second time.

In speaking to this proposition,

1. I shall prove that Christ shall or will come again.
2. Give some reasons why the Lord Christ will come again, or appear the second time.
3. Show how he shall appear.
4. Lay down a few of the signs of his coming.
5. Show how we may be said to be ready.
6. Who they are that will not be ready.
7. Show what may be meant by shutting the door.

I. First, to prove he will come again.

1. Because he hath himself assured his saints, or all his people, of this very thing, he hath promised us that he will come again. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am ye may be also," Joh 14:3. The particle if, in this place (as our annotators observe) denoteth no uncertainty of the thing whereof he had before assured them, but the certainty of it. As sure (as if he should say) as I go away, or to my Father, so sure know that I will come again. Now they after this saw him go away, or ascend up into heaven, so that this is a full proof of his second coming. I might add many other promises which our Saviour himself made of his coming again, before he ascended; in the 18th verse, "I will come to you."

2. We have the promise of God the Father also; the Father hath promised that he will send Jesus Christ again. "And he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached to you, whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things," &c., Ac 3:20-21. Thus we have the promise both of the Father and the Son for the coming of the Lord Jesus the second time. But because this will be further confirmed in the reasons I

purpose to give to show why he will come, I shall proceed to speak to the next thing.

Secondly, why will the Lord Jesus come again?

1. Answ. Because he will answer the prayers of his people; the prayers of his people will not let him rest until he comes as (I may so say.) “I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, give him no rest,” Isa 62:7. And (if you look back to the verse going before) he shows the Bridegroom would come and marry, and rejoice over his Bride, as he hath promised. The prayer of the saints is continually, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,” Re 22:20. Their prayers must be answered. “Shall not God hear his own elect, that cry unto him both day and night?”

2. Our blessed Lord will come again, because his people look for him, or wait for his appearance, they expect his coming; and “the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever,” Ps 9:18. The virgins waited for his coming, nay, went forth to meet him, and the wise with the greatest expectation imaginable, and shall they be ashamed of their hope? no sure.

(1.) Their expectation is well grounded, they build their hope and expectation upon the truth or veracity of God.

(2.) They earnestly expect Christ’s coming; nay, the creatures are said thus to do. “The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, and not only they, but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,” Ro 8:19. The whole creation waits and expects virtually this day, but God’s people actually and believingly expect it. How the creation waits with earnest expectation, “and shall he delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God,” I think this is one of these things very hard to be understood. Though some think the apostle refers to the state of the whole creation in the time of the thousand years reign, which commenceth from the first appearance of Christ when he comes the second time, then the curse shall be taken off from all creatures, which are made slaves of by man.

(3.) The saints have long expected the coming of Christ.

(4.) His coming is and hath been the expectation of all the children of God, or the members of the whole universal church.

(5.) It is the expectation of the souls of believers who are dead; as they died in full expectation of it, so their souls cry under the altar, “How long, Lord, holy and true, ere thou avenge our blood?” Re 6:10. That will not fully and for ever be until Christ comes.

3. Christ will come to perform or make good his own most gracious promise, and the promise of the Father, for such scriptures as well as others cannot be broken. Our Lord did not only when he was upon the earth, and before he died, promise that he would come again, but also after he went to heaven. “He that testifieth these things, saith, surely, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give unto every one as his works shall be,” Re 22:12. Observe it well, they are some of the last words of the holy Bible; as the Old Testament ended in Malachi with the promise of Christ’s first coming, so the new ends with Christ’s own promises of his second coming. The apostle Peter saith, “That in the latter days many scoffers will say, where is the promise of his coming?” 2Pe 3:4. We can show such scoffers; multitudes of clear promises is the true and faithful witness, and he hath commanded these promises to be written. “And he said write, for these words are true and faithful, I am Alpha, and Omega, the beginning and the end,” &c., Re 21:5-6.

4. Because of that general testimony that is borne to this truth, viz., to the second coming of the Lord Christ. The Father and the Son have not only borne witness to it, but also.

(1.) All the holy prophets since the world began. Before the flood Enoch. “And Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied of these, saying, behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all,” &c. Ac 3:21. This must refer to our Lord’s second coming, for when he first came, he came to execute judgment upon none.

(2.) All the holy apostles also have borne witness hereunto. Peter in two or three places, both in the Acts, and in his Epistles. Paul in several of his Epistles. “Waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ,” 2Pe 3:10. “He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry,” 1Co 1:7. John also beareth witness to Christ’s second coming. “Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him,” &c. 1Th 2:19. James doth the same; “Be patient brethren to the coming of the Lord,” Re 1:7. “Be patient, establish your

hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth near,” Jas 5:7-8. And Jude bears witness to it in citing Enoch (mentioned before); many truths are fully confirmed, but certainly but few like this. The Holy Spirit hath it appears also borne witness to this glorious truth, because both the prophets and apostles in these things (as well as in all others) spake as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit spoke in them, and by them; and as the Spirit beareth witness hereunto, so both the Spirit and the Bride desire Christ to come. “And the Spirit and the Bride saith, come,” Re 22:17.

Lastly, the holy angels also witness to Christ’s second coming, as they bore witness that our Lord was risen from the dead. “And while they looked steadfastly towards heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven, this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall in like manner come as ye have seen him go up into heaven,” Ac 1:10-11.

5. The Lord Jesus, the blessed Bridegroom, shall come again, because the Bride makes herself ready for that day, and then, and not until then, expects her marriage with him will be solemnized.

6. Christ will come that his glory may be revealed. Christ’s glory is veiled now, and is not seen to men, nor saints on earth, as it will in that day. “Thine eyes shall see the long in his beauty. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory,” Col 3:3.

7. He will come to take vengeance on all his and his peoples’ enemies; this is one reason wherefore he will come again. He will then execute his wrath on them, for he will appear in that day like a lion, and come upon princes as upon mortar.

8. The Lord Jesus will come, because all the kingdoms of the world are given unto him, and he shall reign a thousand years upon the earth with his saints,” Re 20:4. I see no room for any to doubt of this, though some take it for a mystical reign. A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes decree judgment. These princes are the saints no doubt; the time then will come when the saints shall fully and quietly possess the kingdom, “Yea, all the kingdoms under the whole heavens. Blessed are the poor, for they shall inherit the earth,” Da 7:27.

9. He will come to judge the world, they that deny Christ's second coming, may as well deny the eternal judgment, or the day of judgments. "Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearance and his kingdom," 2Ti 4:1. The judgment cannot be in heaven, for no unholy persons can enter into heaven; it must therefore be either in the air or on the earth, but it is said, "his feet shall stand in that day on the mount of Olives;" the saints also, "when raised, and those that shall be changed shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air," 1Th 4:16-17; which clearly shows, he designs to come hither, besides all those places and promises that relate to Christ's coming, must be understood of his coming upon the earth, where he once was and suffered shame, from whence our Lord ascended; from whence he will ascend, he will descend, but he ascended from the earth, therefore he shall descend to the earth; and to deny this, is to deny his second coming.

Lastly, Christ will come again, because all shadows must fly away, he comes to put an end to shadows; "until the day break, and the shadows fly away. Turn my beloved, and be like a roe or young hart upon the mountains of Bether," Song 2:17.

1. All shadowy ordinances, (1.) Baptism and the Lord's supper will cease then: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye show the Lord's death until he come," 1Co 11:26; these ordinances shall abide till then, and no longer. The apostle refers not to his extraordinary coming in Spirit, in pouring out of the Spirit, because he received a charge from Christ to administer this ordinance, and to leave it in the church to abide after Christ came in that extraordinary manner. Paul was not converted for some time after the day of Pentecost, when Christ came to his saints in Spirit, according to his promise, so in the case of baptism such were commanded in the name or authority of Christ to be baptized in water, that were baptized before with the Holy Ghost, see Ac 10:47-48. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?— and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

2. Christ appears to vanquish all shadows and clouds of God's dark providences, then we shall see and behold things clearly, that now are not discerned by us.

3. To expel all clouds and shadows that interpose between himself and his church, and that obscure his own glorious beauty.—And

4. The shadows of death, sadness and darkness, when Christ comes shall fly away; they shall obtain “Joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing shall fly away.” So much as to this.

Thirdly, “I shall hint how he shall appear, (but because I have before, and in opening another parable spoken to this,) I shall be very brief on it here.

1. He shall appear personally, it is his personal appearance I speak of here: “The same Jesus that you have seen taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,” Ac 1:10-11. The very body, though glorified, that died, rose again, and ascended, not another body but the same.

2. He shall appear very glorious. (1.) “He shall come in the glory of the Father, and the holy angels,” Mt 16:27. What glory of the Father will shine forth we know not. (2.) In his own glory: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him,” &c. There will be a glorious manifestation of the glory of his own Person. (3.) He shall then sit upon the throne of his glory: “that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy,” 1Pe 4:13. Again it is said that “he shall appear in power and great glory,” Matt, 24:30. But this will be to the comfort and joy of all believers. For, (4.) To sinners he will appear terrible, even in “flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God,” 2Th 1:8.

Fourthly, I shall give you a few of the signs of Christ’s second coming.

1. The world abounding with false teachers, and the rising of false Christs, is laid down to be one sign of his coming. “There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect,” Mt 24:24. No days certainly like to these we see upon this respect.

2. Strange “signs in the sun, moon, and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity,” &c., Lu 21:25. See what our Saviour further saith, “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth near, even at the door.

3. Pestilence, amazing earthquakes, wars and famine in several places.

4. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of man be, eating, drinking, building, and planting, marrying, and being given in marriage; all generally will be very secure, and act as if the world was but just begun,

5. The slumbering state of the virgins is also laid down by our Lord as one sign of his coming, which certainly is upon us in these nations, and in all other nations, where Christ hath a people professing his gospel and blessed truth.

6. The passing away of the second woe, and sounding of the seventh angel, and the pouring forth of the seven vials, or the seven last plagues, and utter overthrow of Babylon will precede the coming of Christ, and be a presage thereof.

7. The preaching of the gospel to all nations: “The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the world for a witness unto them, and then cometh the end,” Mt 24:14. The heathen or Pagan nations and Mahometans, must have the gospel preached to them before the coming of our Lord, and so shall the Antichristian nations also, which cannot be till the fall of mystical Babylon: and this will be the bringing in the fullness of the Gentiles.

8. The calling of the Jews will be another sign of Christ’s coming; though some think they shall not be called until Christ appears.

They that were ready went in with him into, the marriage chamber, &c., this brings me to the next thing.

Fifthly, I shall show, who they are that may be said to be ready, or what the bride being ready may denote or signify.

1. To be ready doth denote our having not only lamps, and oil in our vessels, and so habitually ready; but our lamps being lighted and burning clearly, and so being actually ready also.

2. It may denote our being every way rightly prepared, clothed, and adorned as a bride for the Bridegroom’s coming, or for the marriage-day, having on all our glorious attire, “The bride hath made herself ready, and it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints,” Re 19:7,

8. This certainly signifies the exercises of all our graces, and our shining forth in faith and holiness: "Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding," Lu 12:35-36. To have our loins girded, is to be established in the truth, and sincere and upright in heart; "Having your loins girt about with truth," Eph 6:14.

3. To be ready is to have all our sins mortified, or in a good measure (by the power of the Spirit) subdued, every lust having received its death wound, or having in some considerable degree overcome all the enemies of their souls; such have doubtless mourned over their former sins, deadness, lukewarmness, earthliness, and so do labour to do their first works, for they are such that overcome, "that shall sit down with Christ in his throne," Re 3:21.

4. To be ready, is to have done the whole will of God, or to have with Paul "fought the good fight, to have finished our course, and kept the faith," 2Ti 4:7-8; he having done this, saith he was ready to be offered, or ready to die, and to go to receive the crown of life. "David, when he had done the will of God fell asleep." Our Lord himself until he had finished his whole work, was not ready to go to his Father; "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day," Joh 9:4. A man that hath any work to do (that appertains to such a precise day) is not ready to go to bed, until he hath done it.

5. To be ready denotes a waiting posture; a person cannot be said to wait for the coming of his friend to go out with him, who is not ready.

6. For the bride to be ready may denote the whole body of the elect being called, and so the mystical body of Christ complete; for until every one is renewed and united by the Spirit to the Head, the bride is not ready.

1. The bringing in or calling of the Gentiles.

2. The calling of the Jews, therefore they must be called before the marriage-day.

3. The uniting both the Jews and Gentiles in one body.

4. The raising of the bodies of all the saints; for until the bodies of all saints be raised or changed, and their souls and bodies are united together, the bride is not ready.

APPLICATION

1. From hence we may further learn, what the reason is why Christ seems to tarry. (1.) That the wicked may fill up their measure of sinning, and so be ripe for the harvest. (2.) That the godly may “fill up their measure of suffering, that are behind for his body’s sake, which is the church,” Col 1:24. (3.) That the whole church may be complete and every way ready. (4.) That all the promises and prophecies contained in the scriptures, relating to the latter days, may be fully accomplished.

2. Exhort. Take heed you do not say in your heart, My Lord delays his coming, and so lay yourself down to sleep, “or eat and drink with the drunken,” Mt 24:49.

3. Let us awake out of sleep, and stir up ourselves, and speedily hasten to attend upon Christ in the wedding chamber, or to be ready for eternity for Christ’s coming, and for the judgment day. Let us see that we are like a bride dressed and everyway adorned for the marriage-day. (1) The earth (as one observes) is our trimming-place for heaven. (2) It is the property of virgins to be adorned, (their greatest care is to see to that) who know the set day of their marriage, and that is very near: “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?” Jer 32:1. (3) Christ hath provided changeable raiment, and divers sorts of rich and precious ornaments for his bride, and shall she not get them on? we must not think it is enough in order to be meet for Christ’s coming, to have only on the robe of justification, but also the garment of sanctification: “Take away (saith the Lord) his filthy garments, and put upon him change of raiment,” Zec 3:4; would you have only a title to heaven, and not a meetness for it also? (4.) Consider, that believers are the King’s daughters, and ordinary garments and ornaments will not become them: “The King’s daughter is all glorious within,” Ps 45:13. (5.) Would you not be a shame to your Father, and to the whole heavenly family? O then get completely ready. (6.) Consider, what a long time Christ hath given us, and how long he hath waited to have us ready. (7.) The Lord also hath given us all a strict charge to be ready; “And be ye also ready,” &c., Mt 24:44. (8.) It is his expectation, he looks to see us all ready on the marriage-day, and such who are not, he will not admit to enter into the wedding-chamber. (9.) God

hereby will be honoured, and it will also tend to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to our own honour likewise, since he hath been at so great charge to provide such noble and rich ornaments for us, to have them all on upon the marriage-day, that his riches and glory in his saints may shine forth. (10.) And by this means we need not fear any evil that may come upon the world, no judgments, nor be afraid to die. (11.) This also will hasten (to speak after the manner of men) the Bridegroom's coming; he only waits to have all his elect ready. (12.) Moreover, by this means we shall be put upon an earnest desire and longing for his appearance, such that are ready, may say, "come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. (13.) Consider, in what glory the Bridegroom will appear, how richly and gloriously he will be clothed and adorned, ought not there to be in some degree a proportion or suitableness between the grandeur of the queen with that of the King. (14.) Sinners hasten to be ready for hell, or to be damned, and shall not we be ready for heaven and salvation? It may be feared that we are not yet ready, and perhaps know it not; therefore be exhorted to look in the glass: you virgins look in the glass, see whether you are every way completely dressed, and all things on in a right manner; our dressing-glass is God's word, and by looking into that, and then viewing ourselves, we may see whether we are ready or not. But let us be sure to take a full sight, and not only a cast, and be gone.

Terror. This may be cause of great terror to all the foolish virgins, though Christ tarries so long, yet when he comes they will not be ready.

Comfort. You believers, never fear if you are sincere Christians, Christ will not come before you are ready.

All God's elect shall be ready,

1. Because they were all chosen to salvation.* First to believe, and through faith to eternal life, and not ordained to salvation without holiness, but chosen to believe: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed," Ac 13:48. And as they are chosen to believe, so to be holy also: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," Eph 1:4. None (saith Mr. Loveday) are chosen but such that are ready, our being ready is not the cause of our being chosen, but our being chosen is the cause of our being ready.

2. Because all God's elect have a place prepared for them in heaven, Joh 14:2; shall a place be prepared for them, and they not be prepared for that, or shall there be one empty place in heaven? Certainly, God hath not prepared places for such that he never designed to prepare for those places.

3. Because all the elect are bought or purchased with a dear price; "To be redeemed from all iniquity," Tit 2:14. Redemption is from sin as well as from wrath, and shall Christ die to redeem one soul from sin that shall never be actually redeemed? his Spirit was as well purchased to sanctify us, as his righteousness to justify us, and shall the Holy Ghost fail in his work and office? doth the love of the Father in electing, the love of the Son in dying, exceed the love of the Spirit in renewing and sanctifying, and yet all one and the same God in essence? This cannot be.

4. Because Christ hath prayed and desired of the Father that all he gave him,* may be with him where he is, and behold his glory.

5. Because Christ shall not have an imperfect body; now all the elect are members of his mystical body, and therefore the weakest or smallest member shall not be wanting.

6. Because the covenant and promises of God are sure, and eternal life is promised to every one that believeth; nay, "He that believeth on him hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation," Joh 5:24; Heb 6:18-20. Of this they have a sure and certain hope; "And hope maketh not ashamed," &c., Ro 5:5.

7. Because God will perform that good work he hath begun; Paul was confident of this, and what cause have any in our days to doubt of it, Php 1:6. He that laid the first stone, will lay the top-stone, crying, grace, grace unto it.

8. Come, my brethren, our Lord's design in his death shall not be frustrated; no, no; see what Paul saith: "As Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it—that he might sanctify, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word—that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish," Eph 5:25-27. Every believer shall be thus presented by our Lord when he comes; shall the promises of God fail? God forbid; well, what of them? hath he not said, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we

shall also appear with him in glory—and that we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,” Col 3:4; 1Jo 3:1-2.

Lamentation. Alas! poor sinners,* how unprepared and unready are you for Christ’s coming! what will you do, that know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? how will you stand when he appears in flames of fire, for so he will come upon all ungodly sinners and unbelievers.

SERMON XXVI

And the door was shut.—Mt 25:10.

From hence note,

Doct. The door of heaven will be shut against all formal professors, as well as against all profane sinners.

I shall briefly do two things.

1. Show you what may be denoted by shutting the door.
2. Show you against whom the door shall be shut.

1. It is said Jesus Christ will rise up and shut the door; “When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door,” &c., Lu 13:25. This no doubt signifies the wrath of the Son of God, the wrath of the Lamb will then come, he will show his displeasure against all foolish professors in that day, by rising up himself to shut the door against persons that knock. What! O then be sure he is offended, and is enraged against such persons; and this certainly denotes, I say, the great wrath of the Lord Jesus Christ against those sinners.

2. It signifies that the day and kingdom of Christ’s patience is expired and then ended for ever; the day of grace will last till all the elect are called, but then there will not be one of them wanting, and so no offers of grace to sinners any more for ever at that day. Now a great door is opened, (the Lord grant it may be an effectual one), but then it will be shut.

3. It signifies that no false professor, or no unrenewed or unsanctified person, or that no unclean thing shall or can enter into that holy place, or have an entrance into the presence of Christ and his glorified saints; though they may remain or be among them in the church militant, yet they shall have no place among them in the church triumphant.

4. My brethren, this refers to that general shutting the door; there is a particular and a general shutting the door: God oftentimes shuts the door of grace against some sinners, after they have abused his patience here in this world; (as he shut the door against the unbelieving Jews, and wrath came upon them to the uttermost): but the door here may be opened to some,

though it may be shut against others: but at that day it will universally be shut, and never be opened again.

5. It denotes that after death there is no means of grace, no gospel to be preached, and that it is impossible then for any to believe or to repent, because the night is come upon sinners, in which no man can work, the Spirit being utterly withdrawn for ever, it shall Strive no more with any man, Joh 9:4.

Secondly. Who shall the door be shut against?

Answ. Against all profane persons, or notorious sinners: “Without are dogs, whoremongers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie; that is, without the gate of heaven, such shall not be let into the holy city, for another gate will be opened for all such who lived and died in open profaneness, for they shall “have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,” Re 21:8.

2. All unbelievers and misbelievers,* or whosoever do not truly or savingly believe in Jesus Christ. For, my brethren, though some are not openly wicked, but seem to hate gross and abominable profaneness, yet being unbelieving, and making light of Christ out of love to this world, or have not a right faith in him, the door will be shut against them also: “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,” Re 21:8. The fearful and the unbelieving are by the Holy Ghost put together, as such that the door of heaven shall be shut against, and the door of hell be opened unto; and against all carnal worldlings and covetous persons, or such who have made the world or their belly their god.

3. All hypocrites, or loose, proud, foolish, and vain professors. This sort are particularly here mentioned, to warn such that are members of churches in the latter days (especially) to take heed of their state and condition, lest they have the door shut against them at the great day.

4. All apostates or backsliders, who die in apostacy, together with all impostors, who have cast off the true faith, either in respect had to Christ (the immediate object of worship) or any essential principle of the gospel, or of the worship of God itself; embracing most abominable errors and heresies; for such “bring upon themselves swift destruction,” 2Pe 2:1.

5. Even all that die without union with Christ and regeneration. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” Joh 3:5.

Lastly, the door will be shut against all that have not got on a wedding-garment; this is signified in another parable, “Friend, how camest thou hither, not having a wedding garment? and he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness,” Mt 22:12. And such in the church that have no true faith in Christ, have not the wedding-garment, and so the door will be shut upon them.

“Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.”

These words close this parable; it appears the foolish virgins came too late.

Afterwards, that is when the door was shut.

Note from hence,

Doct. That though the foolish virgins cry Lord, Lord, yet in that day all will be to no purpose, they shall be repulsed, because Christ knows them not; prayers nor tears avail not any thing in that day.

In the explanation of this proposition,

1. I shall show the purport of these words; “Lord, Lord.”
2. Show what those words do denote, “Open to us.”
3. Show why the foolish virgins are so importunate to have the door opened.
4. Show in what respect Christ may be said not to know them.
5. Apply it, and so conclude with this parable.

1. Their saying, Lord, Lord, may signify that hypocrites shall confess to their shame, and to the glory of God, that Jesus Christ is Lord; they call him Lord, but cry not Abba, Father, but their confidence no doubt will then be much abated: before they did not only call Christ Lord, but also called God Father, but we hear nothing of that in their prayer now.

2. This title they give to Christ, may signify that knowledge they had of the person of Christ, the glory that then our Lord will appear in, will convince all the wicked that Christ is Lord; he may be known by the crowns on his head.

3. It may also signify that they know, and shall in that day know, it is Christ's prerogative to open the door of heaven, none but he hath the power and right to let men into heaven; they cry not to Paul, nor to Peter, nor to the virgin Mary to open the door, but to Christ himself, who opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens. The blind papists then will no more invoke the saints, they will see their abominable idolatry then, and be ashamed and confounded for ever, and must suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, for giving that divine adoration to saints, that belongs to God alone.

4. They perhaps called him Lord, because they thought they were his servants and disciples; and indeed they were looked upon as such, and called the servants of Christ, though in that day they will appear to be wicked and slothful, or deceitful servants; yet it is common for disobedient servants to say to their master, Lord, Lord: besides, they were not brought upon their trial yet, were not judged and condemned.

5. Our Lord no doubt by these words discovers how sad the state of all false professors will be in that day; O what bitter cries and doleful lamentations will they make, when they see the door of salvation, the door of heaven shut against them; Lord, open to us! ah Lord open to us! O what, wilt thou shut us out of thy presence? Lord have pity! But Christ shows all such prayers and tears will signify nothing to such who come too late, or delay the great work of preparation for death or to meet Jesus Christ.

6. It may signify that some shall pray to him then, and own him to be God, who would not pray to him, but denied his Deity before; they shall then cry, O thou art Jehovah, thou art God blessed for ever, now we believe, we were blasphemers, and have degraded thy glorious person; we are convinced of our sin now, and therefore on thy name blessed Jesus we call,

and to thee we cry, Lord, Lord; but then it will be too late; they who have denied his godhead, and contemned his power, and defaced his glory, must perish for ever.

7. These words may denote the agony they will be in, and the earnestness of their desires for admittance; Lord, Lord, open presently; Lord save us, O shut us not out, we perish, we begin to sink, hell is ready to open her mouth and to swallow us up; O quickly open Lord, or we are lost and undone for ever.

Secondly, What do these words denote, “Open to us?” what would they have?

1. Answ. They desire that Christ would own them to be his; as the wise virgins had looked upon them to be saints or true believers, so they beg that the Lord Jesus would acknowledge them to be also, they having professed themselves to be his servants, and had obeyed his precepts, having been baptized in his name, and received into his visible church, and had often broke bread with his people, and having tasted of the heavenly gift, and borne shame and reproach for his name’s sake; but alas none of this will do, their hearts not being right with God, pride, vain-glory, or self love, being at the bottom of all.

2. That they might be entertained in the marriage chamber, and have the sweet smiles of the blessed Bridegroom, and be embraced in his princely arms, and not behold his frowns and angry countenance, and be happy in heaven for ever.

3. It may denote that great sense they had of the dismal consequences of an utter denial of his favour at that day: Lord, open now, or we are eternally ruined; now before the door of grace is shut: if Christ opens not to them now to-day, there may be hope he may to-morrow, but then they will see that it is the last time of any hopes being left them for ever; if no door be opened then, it will be shut to all eternity.

4. It may denote how unwilling the wicked will be to go to hell,* or what fearful horror will seize upon them, fearfulness with a witness then shall surprise the hearts of hypocrites, such who fly not now to Christ, who hath borne God’s wrath for poor sinners, must then for ever bear it themselves,

and this they then shall have the full apprehension of upon their hearts, and therefore they cry, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Thirdly, What should be the reason the foolish virgins should be so bold and importunate with the Lord Jesus Christ?

Answ. It may be occasioned through that ignorance and blindness that had taken hold of them, and which abode with them to the last; they were deceived, and saw not fully their desperate state, though by finding the door shut they might have great cause to conclude they were none of Christ's approved servants.

2. Perhaps their being virgins, or not being defiled with idolatry, nor guilty of gross sins, or of open profaneness, might make them somewhat bold and confident, having had fellowship with the visible church, and often (as I hinted) eat and drank in Christ's presence, and may be some of them had prophesied or preached in his name, (as some we find will say in that day.)

3. Or perhaps they may know some were admitted in, who they might think were more unlikely than themselves: Lord, hast not thou received into the wedding chamber such and such, why we know they were men of as many great infirmities as we, they grieved thy ministers as well as we, and exposed thy name to reproach as well as we. My brethren, a sincere believer may be guilty of as many human frailties, or of unbecoming practices (in their outward lives) as some hypocrites, but their hearts are right with God in the main. David was a man that was guilty of very great enormities, but he being a "man after God's own heart," none of his sins were cast in his tace, but those foul and abominable acts of wickedness in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite. Where there is sincerity of heart, God overlooks many great and grievous sins, though not without his bringing them to repentance for them, and helping them by faith to plead the blood of the cross for the pardon of them.

4. Consider and well observe the matter of their request: Lord, we beg no outward mercy of thee, nor to be indulged in any sin; but yet we find not they desired grace to change their hearts, but would enter in without a proper meetness. Alas, without a true right and title to heaven, and a suitable meetness, there will be no entering into that holy place; all that they desire now at last is but to be saved.

5. May be their melting frame might make them hope to find mercy; they pleading with sighs, tears, and bitter cries, may think that might move the heart of a tender and bleeding Jesus, they knowing what bowels and pity he had showed to undone sinners; but they came not to him until the day of grace and his patience was gone. Christ may say, you seek me now early, but it is the hour of your calamity, “when I called, you refused;” and were you not told that you should in the day of your distress “call upon me, but I would give you no answer, and that then you should seek me, but not find me,” Pr 1:18. The Lamb-like nature or carriage of the blessed Jesus in that day towards sinners will be gone, and he will appear like a lion.

6. Consider the manner of their department, they make supplication; they do not seem to press in, or offer to force an entrance, but only stand and knock, and entreat for admittance, and plead not their deserts, but beg for mercy.—But may not our blessed Lord say, The day of your visitation you did not improve, the merits of my blood you did not apply; you desired grace to be saved, but not to glorify me, and to have communion with me. You only sought and now seek self-preservation, now you cannot sin any more as you have done, nor enjoy the things of the world you cannot longer, or have your riches and your earthly pleasures, and now you would be saved; “Go ye cursed, I know ye not.”

See how reverent they seem to be, “Lord, Lord, open to us;” we confess thy authority, thy sovereignty, it lies in thy own power, if thou please thou canst save us, and deliver us from God’s terrible wrath, that begins to take hold of us; but nothing will avail any sinner then, it is vain to plead for mercy when the day of mercy is gone and for ever ended.

Fourthly, What doth the Lord mean when he says, “I know ye not?”

1. I answer first negatively, it doth not signify that Christ knew not who they were, or was ignorant of them; no, he is God, and knows all men, all things, all hearts, there is nothing that he knows not. “I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me,” Ho 5:3. Christ knows the hypocrisy of their hearts, their states, their thoughts and their fears.

Secondly, In the affirmative. (1.) The Lord Jesus did not know them to be his sheep, “I know my sheep, and they follow me:—The Lord knows who are his,” &c., Joh 10:27. (2.) He knows them not so as to approve of them;

he will say, "I never knew you," Mt 7:23, that is, I never approved of you. (3.) Knowledge sometimes refers to love and affections; it is all one as if Christ should say, I love you not, you are not the objects of my affections, you are none of them that were given to me; "he that loveth God, is known of God," that is, beloved of God. (4.) Knowledge is sometimes taken for intimate communion, and they are such that never had this knowledge of Christ, nor Christ of them.

APPLICATION

1. See the end and woeful state of all formal and unsound professors, they will at the last day be all disowned by the Lord Jesus Christ. O what signifieth the approbation of men, if we have not the approbation of God, or are not known or approved of by Jesus Christ? Many go for saints on earth, who will not be found saints in the great day.

2. We may infer from hence the dismal state of all profane sinners; for if many professors who escaped the gross pollution of sin and open wickedness, and performed many duties of religion, shall be shut out of heaven at the last day, what will become of notorious and abominable transgressors, as swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, thieves, idolaters, and all carnal worldlings?

Obj. But perhaps some may say, doth not this place show the soul is mortal? for if the soul was immortal, these persons knew they were damned, the judgment of God being passed upon them; and how is it then that they at that day are said to plead for mercy?

Ans. (1.) These persons may be such that shall be found in the visible church alive in the body at the time when Christ comes, and doth not refer to such that were raised from the dead.

(2.) For such that are dead, that died not in Christ, shall not be raised when our Lord first appears, or with those that sleep in Jesus.

(3.) The state of the body in which the wicked shall be raised, having not their bodies changed and made like Christ's glorious body, will discover their state to them, besides the horrid guilt they will find in their consciences, which will lie heavy upon them.

(4.) All that die in their sins pass a particular judgment when they die, and that makes a clear discrimination of their future state.

(5.) Some think this may refer to Christ's coming at the sounding of the "seventh trumpet," and not to his personal appearance. For the day of grace to some may then end, though to others it may then begin.

(6.) But in the last place, pray (once again) remember that parables run not always on all four, but have their disparities. The scope and main design therefore of our Saviour in these words ought chiefly to be observed, which is to show that when he comes, all grief, tears, and prayers of unbelievers, and hypocrites, will be fruitless, the door will be shut against them for ever in that day, and they shall be utterly disowned; and this is to excite all the members of the visible church not to neglect the present time, but prepare for the coming of our Lord.

3. I infer it is a very dangerous thing for professors or ungodly sinners to delay to provide grace for themselves before the door is shut; some it is to be feared will not regard what is laid before them, and thus pressed upon their consciences, until they cry out when it is too late, Lord, Lord, open to us. Alas, Christ now says, Open to me, and you will not, and how just will it be in him not to open to them in that day.

4. I infer, that the Lord Jesus is not so made up of mercy, but that he is just as well as merciful, he being God, all the perfections of the Godhead are in him, and when mercy is turned into fury, who can stand before him? We read of the great day of the "Wrath of God and of the Lamb."

5. We may also infer, that the false professors, or foolish virgins are in as bad a condition as profane sinners, if not worse. Certainly, their condemnation will be very great, they "must dwell with devouring fire, and with everlasting burning," Isa 33:14.

6. We infer likewise, that some awakenings will not profit many persons, because they sleep in a secure graceless state too long; the foolish virgins were awakened, but Christ came upon them before they were provided with oil. Moreover, that some preparations and endeavours after grace are in vain, and that many will meet with sad disappointments at the last day who thought themselves in a good condition.

7. Also we may infer, that such that come to Christ too late for grace, will come too late to him for glory; and many will come to have the life of glory, that refused to come to have the life of grace.

“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh,” ver. 13.

That is, neither the day nor hour of Christ’s coming to us by death, nor his coming to judgment at the last day, and therefore we ought to watch and be ready.

The uncertainty of the precious day of the Lord’s coming is mentioned by himself, as a motive to be ready, also the nearness of it: this was pressed by the apostles also as an argument to watchfulness, and if that was a motive to them, much more to us, to watch and be ready since we have so many of the signs of the last days upon us; and sad it is no more enquiry is made by ministers, who are watchmen, into the prophecies relating to the fall of Babylon, and the sounding of the “seventh trumpet,” and the signs of the times; because all have been mistaken in many things touching this matter, who have written of them, some despair of ever attaining to the certain knowledge of the time of the end of the wonders, and therefore will not search; as if Christ had left those mystical numbers on record for no other reason but to amuse the hearts of his people: no, certain it is that such who have wisdom, might understand and give warning to his people to be ready.

But at present I shall say no more, but thus close with this parable.

4. IV. Parable, Matthew 25:19 The Parable Of The Talents Opened

SERMON XXVII

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them all his goods.—Mt 25:14-15, &c.

1. I shall open the design of our Lord Christ in this parable (as I have endeavoured to do in speaking unto all other already opened.)
2. Consider and explain all the parts thereof.
3. Raise several propositions or points of doctrine from the principal matter contained therein, and distinctly prosecute them.

First, Open the scope and design of our Lord herein.

I. It is no doubt to stir up all his servants and disciples to watchfulness.

II. to provoke them to the uttermost of their power, to improve all sorts of gifts, grace, and endowments they have received.

III. To take his disciples off from an expectation of a present, visible, glorious kingdom; for they no doubt did (for some time) expect a different kingdom at the coming of the Messiah than that which they found to be the purpose of his first coming. I must go (as if our Lord had said) a long journey into a far country to receive my kingdom, and it will be a great while before I return in all my glory, and set crowns upon your heads.

IV. His design also herein is to show that we have nothing of our own, but what we and all men have, is given unto us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. To show that as all men have received some talent or another from God, so he expecteth, and requires the careful and due improvement of them to his own glory, and that according to our improvements shall our rewards of grace be.

VI. To show that the non-improvement of the least talent God hath given us, will be the final cause of the condemnation of the sons of men. So much to the scope.

The chief parts of this parable are,

1. To show what is meant by the kingdom of heaven.
2. Who this man is that is said to go into a far country.
3. What may be meant by his servants.
4. What by his journey.
5. What may be meant by the talents.
6. What by his returning again.
7. And what by his calling them unto account.

First, "The kingdom of heaven is like," &c., here (as our late annotators observe) the kingdom of heaven is the economy of God's providence in the gospel dispensation.

"Is as a man travelling into a far country."

By the man travelling into a far country, is meant our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Lord Treasurer, and Dispenser of all the Father hath, or doth bestow upon the children of men.

"Who called his own servants."

By his servants some think are only meant the members of the visible church: but I see no reason to restrain the sense so, but that more generally all men may be hereby comprehended, both the godly and ungodly, or those in, and those out of the pale of the visible church.

1. For all men may be called the servants of Christ, he is Lord of all, though most of the sons of men are unfaithful servants to him.

2. All men receive all things whatsoever they have, or do possess from Jesus Christ; and every thing is the fruit or effect of his purchase, or of his mediation, and they are either given in a way of mercy, or judgment: he gave all men their beings, their souls, and the faculties of their souls, their riches, their possessions, their time, their strength, and their days upon the earth.

3. Moreover all men must be accountable unto our Lord Jesus Christ; for all they have or do enjoy at the last day.

Secondly, yet more especially by the servants here may be meant, the members of the visible church, or such who are called into his house.

1. For these in an especial manner may be called his servants, they being called by his word and ministers into his service, to labour in his vineyard.

2. Because such do in an especial manner profess that he is their Lord and Master, or that they are his, and no more their own.

3. They are his by the Father's free donation, (though not all) "The Father gave them me," Joh 17:2.

4. His by purchase, "Ye are bought with a price, be ye not the servants of men," 1Co 7:23. Do not serve your lusts to please wicked men, or serve men in disobeying your great Master, who purchased you with his own blood.

5. They may be said to be his servants as being hired by him, which hiring denotes his winning their hearts over to him in love to serve him, though may be some had an eye to something else, viz., they pretend to serve him, but it is out of byends; it is more to serve themselves than to serve Jesus Christ.

6. They that are sincere, may be called his servants by way of resignation of themselves to him, and to his service.

"Travelling into a far country."

By the journey into a far country is meant no doubt Christ's going to heaven, or being absent as to his bodily presence from his people on earth, until he comes again at the last day.

"And delivered to them his goods," &c.

1. Some would have these talents intend only common gifts, exclusive of Christ's special saving grace, but for what reason they so take them I know not.

2. Some men have had strange apprehensions about these talents; one thinks the ten commandments are meant hereby; others the five books of Moses, others the five senses.

(1.) But doubtless the talents may be considered more generally, (as the servants may intend all men.) 1. The soul and all his faculties, judgment, wit, conscience, the affections, memory, and all the powers and passions of the soul, with all natural habits, human endowments, and acquired parts, learning, knowledge, and means of knowledge, together with riches, honour, and dignity, &c., for these may all be called Christ's goods, and are as talents given by him to be improved to his glory and their own good.

(2.) Also by some of these talents may be meant those spiritual gifts, which when Christ "ascended up on high, he gave to men," Eph 4:8. For evident it is, the great Lord divideth his goods to his servants (as our annotators note) unequally, according to his own good pleasure and sovereignty; and that not only natural light, knowledge and abilities, but also riches and honours, &c., and spiritual gifts also: and some have more, and some less than others.

(3.) And shall we think that the chiefest of all Christ's goods are not here at all meant, I mean that great gift and talent of special and saving grace; for doth not these servants among others comprehend Christ's own beloved domestic servants, and did he not give to them this choice part of his goods, which they are to improve with all faithfulness? Why should any once suppose this gift or talent not to be here comprehended?

(4.) The holy gospel and the sacred doctrine thereof, with all seasons and gracious opportunities, spiritual illuminations, convictions and operations of the Spirit, may be also comprehended by these talents, or by some of them.

(5.) Spiritual privileges, dignities, and prerogatives, which some men in the church receive from Christ above others, may also be hereby intended; some are pastors, teachers, deacons, and are made rulers in the house of God, and are not these talents given to them to improve to the glory of Jesus Christ, and profit of his church?

(6.) The holy sacraments, and all the ordinances and discipline of the house of God are also glorious talents, with an able and painful ministry,

“Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all are yours,” 1Co 3:22, all as rich and glorious talents are given unto you.

Quest. “Are not all the talents of the same kind and species, though some had more, and some less, they are called pounds, also the Lord’s goods and his money,” Lu 19:12-13.

Ans. The Arminians, (who seem to make great use of this parable, to confirm their corrupt notions) would have all the talents of the same nature or quality; viz., that they comprehend such grace as is sufficient, being improved to save every man and woman in the world, and that eternal life is entailed to the improvement of these talents; which error I shall detect before I close with this parable.

For though the non-improvement of the one talent is the cause of his damnation, who had it given to him, yet the improvement of it could not, cannot save him.

These talents certainly are not all of the same species and kind, neither can they be supposed so to be; provided by the servants are meant all mankind, for,

1. Have the Heathens, the Indians, or Pagans, the same talents as to species, with those talents Christ hath given to true Christians? Are the sun, moon, and stars, and works of creation and providence, or the natural light that is in their consciences, (or law of God in their hearts) of the same nature or kind with the gospel and glorious ministration thereof.

2. Is common grace of the same kind with special and saving grace?

3. If all the talents which are given unto all men, were of one and the same quality, it would follow then that God hath no special love to some men more than unto others, which is directly contrary to his blessed word.

Did not God love Jacob more and better than he loved Esau,* and gave him talents that were of a far more excellent nature than those which he gave to Esau? And did not God love the offspring of Abraham, or the children of Israel better than all the people that then lived on the earth: and also give to them quite different, and more choice talents than he gave unto any other people under that dispensation?

4. Doth not Paul say, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,” Ro 12:6. Grace differs from other spiritual gifts, and though some gifts may not differ in their quality in one respect, yet true and saving grace is a more excellent way, or far exceeds all gifts, howsoever different they may seem to be in themselves.

5. If all men have received the same talents with true believers; then all mankind have received the Holy Spirit, which our Lord Jesus Christ says “the world cannot receive,” Joh 14:17. And Paul saith, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them,” 1Co 2:14.

6. If the talents which Christ hath given to all men, are of one and the same nature or kind, then all men have received true grace, as well as true believers; and if so, then it will follow all people shall be saved, for I challenge all men in the world to give an instance of any one person that received true grace, who hid it, or totally neglected the improvement thereof, and so perished eternally; and if a man may receive saving grace, and yet be damned, let it not be called saving grace any more.

7. If all the talents are of one and the same kind, and salvation depends upon the improvement of these talents, then eternal life is not of the free-grace of God, nor the gift of God, but it is of man’s free-will, or wrought out as the reward of man’s own labour, pains, and improvements, and so he who is saved hath wherewith to glory or boast, but in our salvation all boasting is utterly excluded, Ro 3:27.

I must needs confess (could I believe with some men) that none of these talents do consist of saving grace, or comprehend the Holy Spirit and graces thereof, then they may be all one kind, namely natural, acquired, or common gifts, which I call one and the same as to quality, though they may differ in some respects) because carnal men and hypocrites, or such that perish, may receive them; for howsoever gifts or talents may differ, yet I distinguish them under these two heads, viz., common and special, or spiritual gifts and saving grace.

But as I have newly hinted, it may seem strange that our Lord at this time, when he speaks of giving forth his treasure, his goods, his money to the sons of men, upon his ascension or going to heaven, should not mean or refer in the least to his chiefest goods or treasure in these talents, which he is

said to give, and promised to give when he went away; therefore I am of the same judgment or opinion in respect to these talents, with our late annotators: Take what they say, “I see no reason (saith he) to restrain these gifts to such that flow from Christ as Mediator, but rather choose to interpret it generally of all the gifts of God, whether of providence or grace, whereas ver. 15, it is said this man divided his goods to his servants unequally, to one five, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability. It signifies only God’s unequal distribution of his gifts to the children of men, according to his own good pleasure, which is true both concerning natural parts, as wit, understanding, judgment, memory, as concerning those the Heathen call good things, as riches, honours, and dignities, under which notion also come all acquired habits or endowments, such as learning, knowledge, moral habits, &c., which though acquired are gifts, because it is the same God who gives us power to get wealth, as Moses speaks, who gives men power also to get knowledge, De 8:18, and upon study and meditation to comprehend the nature and causes of things—or the gifts of more special Providence, or distinguishing grace,” &c. They bring in special divine and distinguishing grace are here comprehended, &c.

“And after a long time the Lord of those servants comes to reckon with them,” ver. 19.

By this great man’s coming again to reckon with his servants, is meant our Lord’s coming at the end of the world to judge all mankind, both the quick and the dead. Christ, my brethren, will come again, he will return, though the time seems long; this denotes his descension, as his going a long journey into a far country, denoted his ascension up into heaven: “This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,” Ac 1:11. That is,

1. Visibly: “Every eye shall see him,” Re 1:7.
2. In a cloud.
3. By his own power.
4. With the like majesty.
5. With the same body, though more glorious, for he shall come in the glory of the Father with all the holy angels.

And then he will reckon with these servants, (i.e.,) he will call them all to an account about the improvement, or the non-improvement of those talents given to them. Now, since the scripture saith, all men shall be brought before

the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account unto him! and here is no mention made of any that he will reckon with, but these servants; I conclude, these servants include, or comprehend all mankind.

APPLICATION

1. We infer from hence, that all good gifts, or whatsoever any have received or do possess, they received it from the Lord Jesus Christ; “What hast thou which thou hast not received?” 1Co 4:7, what of natural or spiritual abilities? it is applicable to all good things, and it is according to Christ’s gift, or his giving, that one man differs from another; if one hath saving grace, saving knowledge, or understands the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, it is because that grace, that light and knowledge is given to him, which may not be given to another: “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given,” Mt 13:11. Many have the gospel in the notion, or history of it, and they can preach it to others; talk and discourse about it, but have no saving or experimental knowledge of the mysterious power and efficacy of it upon their own hearts: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it seems good in thy sight,” Mt 11:25-26. How absurd is it for any to affirm, all receive like talents, as to their nature or quality, or that men may by improvement of common light, and the means of grace God affords them, gain saving or special grace; no no, “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy,” Ro 9:16. God gives to every one according unto his own sovereign will and pleasure.

True, God directeth men to improve all means of light, grace, and knowledge, but an heart and power to do it is as much the gift of God as the means itself, or else it is not God that makes the difference which is in one from another; nor is it of God’s free grace, but of man’s free will: “God opened Lydia’s heart, that she attended upon what Paul preached,” Ac 16:14.

2. We infer, that some men receive not only more than others, but also that which is far better as to its kind or quality; some have more riches, more honours, greater dignity; some receive more common light and knowledge, have larger souls, or greater capacities than others, and some have more spiritual knowledge, greater spiritual gifts, and some have more divine and special grace; it is as God is pleased to give to every man.

3. We may also infer from hence, that such who do receive not only common gifts, common light and knowledge, but also the special grace of God, they do carefully improve those talents, though not all with like care and faithfulness; for though he that received the five, and he that received the two, are said proportionably to make improvement, yet we are not to think thereby, that all that are faithful servants, or that are true Christians, do with like diligence, care, and faithfulness acquit themselves! parables thus run not on all four, yet it cannot be denied, that any person who receives the talent of saving grace, utterly and finally neglecteth the improvement thereof, so as to be found at the last day a wicked and slothful servant; for then it would follow, that true believers may totally and finally fall away from grace, which is a grand error for any to affirm.

Neither are we to conclude from this parable, that always such who have most given to them, do make the best improvement of them; for as common experience proves the contrary, so our Saviour shows that some are faithful in the least, and others in the most.

4. We may also learn from hence, that according to the nature and quantity of those talents, Jesus Christ is pleased to bestow upon all persons, he expecteth their utmost improvement of them, where he gives much, the improvement of much.

They that have store of earthly riches, small improvement of them is not sufficient, perhaps a man of small parts, knowledge, and ability, may be more useful, or do more good than he which hath received far greater parts, or more knowledge, and abilities, and so may he that hath received but a small portion of earthly riches, he may give more to the poor saints, or to support the ministry and common interest of Christ, than some who are very rich, or that have much of the world; and this indeed to our sorrow on the one hand we have often seen, which as it is a high commendation in the one sort, so it is a great shame to the other. How did our Lord praise or commend the poor widow, who cast into the treasure two mites, even all her substance, he declared that she had done more than them all, though some of them might cast in great sums out of their vast stocks.

5. Moreover, we infer, that he (or such) that received but one talent, who did not improve that one, that one talent could not be a talent of saving grace; because no man that ever did receive a talent of saving grace, ever proved a wicked and slothful servant, and so perished for ever.

6. Object. Did not the Lord design good to him to whom he gave but one talent? and was he not capable to improve that one? if neither of these be granted, it will follow that he designed the greatest evil unto him?

1. Answ. I answer, No doubt but his Lord did design good to him, for God is good to all, he out of his common goodness imparts his blessings and good things to all men; the sun and showers that fall from heaven, and fruitful seasons, are blessings God bestows upon all mankind, and this for their good, his tender mercy is over all his works.

But there is not like good things given to all, nor are all good things that God gives designed to the same end, nor do they proceed from him as the effects of the same love; certainly there was in God a more special and peculiar love to some from everlasting than to others; and so his design in giving his Spirit, his grace, his special grace to some, was for a higher good to them, than ever he designed in giving to others; the great Turk hath vast dominions, grandeur, and riches, and God gives men of the world their portion in this life. Besides, who can frustrate God in his designs and purposes? but if God in giving the gospel to many thousands, designed absolutely to effect the salvation of them all, but the wills of some complying not, his design is frustrated, as if the will of men may contradict God's will in his absolute designs and purposes.

2. We readily grant, that he who receives but one talent, may and ought to improve it, and shall be condemned for the non improvement thereof, he not being faithful in that which was least.

6. Yet this ought always to be granted, viz., that a heart to improve each talent, which God is pleased to give to any, is wholly from God, it is given to us by him as much as the talent itself: "For he worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Php 2:13. God worketh not only by suasions to gain our assent, but by a special energy effecting what he would have us to do, in a victorious and efficacious manner, or powerfully inclining the wills of his elect; for otherwise they would resist all the motions of his

Spirit, and all arguments or suasions would be as ineffectual, as a man may use to persuade a dead man to rise out of the grave. God taketh away the "heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh," Eze 11:19; 36:26, causing light, to shine out of darkness, and so renewing the will, and destroying the

enmity that is therein; by which it comes to pass we choose that which is good, and attend upon the word of God, and are helped to improve those talents God hath given to us. It is not (as one observes) that man may only be able to will, and able to do, but God worketh in us both to will and to do, which connotes the very act itself: though to will is our act, as to live is our life. Lazarus lived (after he was dead) and the life he had was his life, but Christ gave it to him in a supernatural and miraculous manner; so we will, act, and do by virtue of the same almighty Power in all things that are truly and spiritually good.

SERMON XXVIII

Who called his servants, and delivered to them his goods, &c.—Mt 25:14-15.

WE have opened divers parts of the beginning of this parable, and have showed that the talents are not all of one kind, or of the same species; what though talents given out by a lord to his servants are all of one species, all that ever wrote on parables, confess they run not always so on all four, that in every thing there must be an exact parity; for such who affirm that, will run into great errors and absurdities.

But to proceed, from the exposition I have given you of the last day, I shall now proceed to note one or two points of doctrine, as necessarily rising therefrom.

Doct. That God doth not give to all men talents alike, neither in respect of the quality nor quantity of them.

He that shall be so bold as to deny the truth of this proposition, shows no small ignorance, because the truth thereof (as to matter of fact) the whole world may daily see most evident before their eyes, yet to put it out of doubt.

1. I shall endeavour clearly to prove this great truth.
2. Give some reasons why the Lord doth this.

I shall prove it. Pray did not God give more and better talents unto Abraham, than he gave to multitudes in his days? also,

God doth give to some men greater and more distinguishing gifts, and such that differ in kind from what others have

Did not the Lord give him more light and knowledge in divine things, than to thousands; the generality of the world in his days had no more knowledge of God, so far as we can gather, but what the light of natural conscience by the help of the things of the visible creation, and common providences of God discovered to them. But God called him out of the idolatrous world, and in a supernatural manner revealed himself unto him, and gave himself to him to be his God, and entered into covenant with him and all his true spiritual seed, giving by free promise an assurance of Jesus Christ, who should be born of his seed, and eternal life through the same

blessed Jesus; was not this a different talent in specie, better in quality, and more in quantity, than he gave to the rest of mankind? For

1. Had not Abraham special grace given to him, or the faith of God's elect, which is a most precious thing in respect of the nature thereof?

Did not God give him a special interest in himself: "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," Ge 15:11. Did God give himself to all the people of the world in that sense in Abraham's days? No, none dare affirm, that he did give that talent, that promise, that covenant, that grace, nor that special interest in himself, but to a few of his natural seed, even to none of them, but the elect that were among them only.

2. Did God give Christ or the knowledge of Christ, (to come and to suffer death for his elect seed) to all people then. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it (saith the Lord) and was glad," Joh 8:56. He saw my coming in the flesh, and my dying for his sins on the cross, and the publication of the gospel in all nations, that in me all that believe may be blessed.

3. Did not God also give greater talents, yea, better in kind, and more in quantity, to all his natural seed, than he gave to all other nations and people of the earth. For

1. Did not God enter into a legal, external and relative covenant with Abraham's natural seed, as such, and gave them the promise of the land of Canaan, and the rite of circumcision to all his male children that sprang from his loins by Isaac, as a sign or token of that covenant upon their performance of the federal conditions proposed to them, unto which they subscribed or restipulated, and engaged to perform on their parts: for evident it is that the covenant God made with his natural or fleshly seed as such, was upon mutual restipulation, they being obliged to discharge the federal conditions, on pain of being cut off; which shows that covenant made with them, as so considered, was not the covenant of grace, for that was only by free promise, and only made to the true seed who were heirs of the special promise, and could not be disinherited without God's violation of his word and oath to Abraham, and to all them in him who were ordained unto eternal life, as the apostle proves.

2. Did not God give to the natural seed of Abraham his holy and visible worship, and constituted them his own visible church, and gave them his laws and ordinances? Were not these things the Lord's goods, or talents given to them his servants, and were not they different in nature, kind, or quality to all whatsoever he gave to any other people of the world at that time?

III. Did not God give to Isaac more, and better talents, and quite different, or of a contrary species to those he gave to Ishmael! Did God give and confirm the covenant of grace to Ishmael, or give him his saving grace, and the promise of himself, which precious talents he gave to Isaac? or did God give to Esau the same talents in kind or specie which he gave to Jacob? the one had the blessings of the fat things of the earth, the other he gave the fat things of the covenant of grace, and of eternal glory in heaven.

IV. And when we come to Moses' days, did not God give to the whole people of Israel, talents different in kind to any he gave to the Gentile nations? or doth not the true church state and visible worship of God, and all the laws and ordinances of God under that dispensation, differ in kind from what the Heathen world received for near two thousand years? "What people have laws and statutes so righteous as this law is?" De 4:8. "Or what nation is so great, who hath God so nigh unto him, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" ver. 7. Were these talents, given to God's servants, or no talents? and if talents, and the Lord's goods, how different were they from what any other people had! "He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments to Israel,—he hath not dealt so with any nation, as for his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord," Ps 147:19-20.

Moreover, doth not Paul say upon this very account the Jews had the advantage of the Gentiles, viz., "Because unto them were committed the oracles of God," Ro 3:2.—And not only so (for we will admit the ten commandments do not differ in kind to the law or light within, or law of God written in the hearts of all mankind.) "But unto them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises," Ro 9:4. Sure many of these were different talents, or of another kind to those the Gentiles had.

IV. Let us come unto the New Testament times. Pray did not our Lord give talents of a quite different nature to his disciples, than any he gave to

others? and were they not quite of another kind, and of a far more excellent quality than what Christ gave to such who refused to be his disciples? “It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” And yet will any affirm the talents to all men are of the same species, or kind?

2. Did not the Lord Jesus give the Holy Spirit unto those servants? or is the Holy Ghost in its blessed saving operations and influences thereof given to all men? have all a spiritual vital principle in them, or union with Christ? are all renewed and sanctified? The Spirit and the graces of the Spirit certainly are talents given to some of Christ’s servants, even to all that are his faithful servants, and are these the same in nature or quality with what is given in common to all men?

V. To come to matter of fact in our days.

1. Hath not God given quite different talents to some nations than what he hath at this present, time given to others, or to the Pagan, Mahometan, and antichristian world? Have they the gospel given to them as England hath? or is the gospel no talent given to some of God’s servants? if a talent, a great talent, doth it not differ in specie to those talents God hath given to the Heathen world? O what nation hath such light of the gospel, such clear knowledge of Christ, and of gospel truths and mysteries? as also sweet and peaceable seasons of worship, as well as the gospel church, and true gospel worship and holy ordinances.

2. Moreover, doth not God give better talents (excelling in their nature or quality) to some people in England and other nations, than he gives to many who dwell here? All perhaps have the gospel, but all have it not (in many parts and corners of this nation) in that clear revelation of it, as some cities and towns have of it. Besides, where the gospel is clearly and powerfully preached, yet many have it but in word only; and indeed none but the elect have it in the power of it; for if it is by the power of the gospel coming upon men’s souls, the elect are known from others; then what I say clearly follows. And that this is a great truth, see what the apostle saith. “Knowing brethren beloved, your election of God, for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in much assurance,” &c., 1Th 1:4-5. By this Paul knew they were elected. Now is not that divine power God puts forth upon the souls of men a quite different thing, and a far greater blessing, than to have the gospel in word only? Multitudes have the outward word, but few

have the inward power. Though many have the gospel of grace, yet but a few have the grace of the gospel as a talent given unto them.

VI. To sum up the whole, to prove all men have not talents of the same species, consider, God gives not himself, his Son, his Spirit, his saving grace, light and knowledge unto all; God gives not a new heart, pardon and justification, adoption, communion, peace, true consolation unto all: now since these are our master's goods or talents given to some which so vastly differ from all other talents whatsoever, I infer the talents are not all of one species or kind. But to proceed,

Secondly, I shall give you the reasons of this, or show you why God gives talents that differ in specie or quality to others, to some servants only.

1. Because God loves some persons better than others, shall one dare to say that God loved from eternity all men alike, or that it is only for some men's doing well that causeth him to love them better than others; the consequences of such an error all men may see are abominable.

But to prove this, that it is from his love to some that he gives better things, and blessings unto them. Pray what was the cause that Joseph gave to Benjamin a double mess? was it not because he loved him better than his other brethren? Even so God loves some with an everlasting, with a special and peculiar love. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn thee," Jer 31:3. If God loved all nations, or all persons in all nations alike, no doubt but he would bestow like talents of peculiar and special blessings upon them, or if not the same in quantity, yet the same kind or quality; why had Jacob different blessings from Esau? is it not positively said, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated?" And was it because Jacob had done something to procure the love of God? No, "For the children being not yet born, neither had done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." Not of works, that is, not for any works foreseen in Jacob, but merely because God loved him. And also why did God give those peculiar talents to the people of Israel? The Lord showeth,* it was not from anything he saw in them, but because he loved them. "He loves and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," Ro 9:18.

2ndly. Because as God loved some with a special love, so them he also elected, or choose to be a holy people, or "ordained to eternal life," Ac 13:48;

this is the prime and efficient cause of all special favours and spiritual blessings any receive. "Whom he foreknew or approved of, or loved, he predestinated to be conformable to the image of his Son, and whom he predestinated them he also called," &c. Ro 8:26,30. These he gives the choicest and richest treasure and talents unto.

3rdly. Because Jesus Christ died only to save some, and not all people in the world. "His name shall be called Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins," Mt 1:21. His people, that is God's elect. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me," Joh 17:6; and it was for these he died: "I lay down my life for my sheep," Joh 10:15. "He purchased the church with his own blood," Ac 20:28. If God gave Christ, which is the greater gift for all men, then he would give the lesser gifts to all men; all should then have equal talents in kind or quality, even all things tending to make them truly happy; this is the apostle's argument. "For if when we were sinners we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life," Ro 5:10. That is, through his intercession, who obtains all grace, strength, and whatsoever his elect want, and this he will give much more. What God give Christ to die in the stead of all! what a gift is that! and will he not give the gospel to multitudes of them, nor give his Spirit nor faith to apply the atonement! Sirs, according to Arminian notions, Paul was out, he was mistaken; God may be reconciled to all mankind by the death of his Son, he doth give the greater, but withholds the lesser. But see how our apostle again confutes their notion, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Ro 8:32. That is, all things "that pertain to life and godliness," 2Pe 1:3.

If all spiritual gifts and peculiar talents were purchased at so dear a rate for all, all shall have them, because God is just and faithful; and will Christ give his life to save such that he will not give his Spirit unto to renew them: what, give a million for an estate, and not part with ten pounds to take it up?

4. If Christ paid every sinner's debts, and bore the wrath of God for them, or in their stead and room, it would not be just and righteous in God to let them perish in hell to satisfy (if that could do it) divine justice, and yet justice fully satisfied before for all their sins, this is strange. I hope they do not deny the satisfaction Christ made, was God only reconcilable by the death of his Son, who is it then, or what is it that reconciles him? is it the creature's repentance, faith and obedience? if so, the creature hath great part

of the glory of his own salvation, nor is sin so great an evil as the word of God declares, if imperfect repentance, faith and obedience can satisfy divine justice, or reconcile sinners to God; but pray is not the making the atonement one thing, and the application of it another. We do not say any sinner is actually discharged without faith or the work of the Spirit in the application of Christ's blood; but to say faith satisfies or reconciles us unto God, is very absurd, and tends to degrade or lessen the merits or satisfaction of Christ.

5. Would not the Holy Spirit work grace in all, if Christ died for all, with an intention to save all; the love of the Father in election, the love of the Son in redemption, and the love of the Holy Spirit in application and renovation, are of equal extent, being but one and the same God.

The Spirit would apply Christ's blood to all if Christ died to save all

4thly All have not talents alike,* but some have not only more but better in kind or quality, because God acts only in a way of sovereignty in the distribution of his talents, even according to the good pleasure of his will. "May I not do what I will with my own?" &c., Mt 20:14. Shall God have less power to dispose of his favours and rich treasure than men have to distribute their favours and bounty? Must he because he will redeem mankind, redeem the fallen angels also? or because Christ died for some, must he die for all Adam's offspring? or because some have the gospel preached to them, must all have it preached to them? must a rich man because he gives five pounds a piece to a hundred widows, give as much to all widows in the whole kingdom, or else be counted unjust?

But because I have more largely opened the nature of God's sovereignty in speaking to that parable, Mt 20:12, &c., I shall say no more to it here.

APPLICATION

1. How doth this reprove them that foolishly affirm the talents are all of one kind that God gives to men, because they may be so that a lord may give to his earthly servants, as if there were no disparities in parables; besides, to argue from a parable remote especially from the scope of it, shows great weakness.

Obj. But doth not this parable say, the Lord gave to every man according to his ability?

Answ. And what of this? doth it follow from thence, that every man hath like spiritual talents, as men may have to improve external talents; this is to strain the parable beyond the scope of it also.

2. God gives to the heathen talents according to their abilities to improve; are not they able to improve their natural light and knowledge? (Some of them formerly seemed thus to do) and to such to whom God gives the ministration of the Gospel, he requires improvements according to their light and advantages. So to them that God gives special grace, he gives assistance or ability unto, to improve that grace.

Every one hath talents according to their abilities to improve them, but I know no man that is dead is able to improve any talent; and such who are spiritually dead in sins, are not able to improve any spiritual talent to God's glory, nor to his own profit, until he is quickened by Jesus Christ. Men may act like men, and improve natural and external powers, and shine in morality, but no man can improve grace nor gracious habits before grace is implanted in his heart, and let no man say that God is obliged to give all men those divine habits, or bestow his Spirit upon all, that all may have equal abilities; as Christians, as they may in some sense be said to have considered as men. But more to this hereafter, when we come to that part of the parable.

3. How doth this also tend to reprove such that attribute all to the will of man, and that all men may have eternal life by improving those talents God hath given to them though they never believe in Christ, nor know him, nor are born again; and that affirm, grace depends upon the improvement of nature, and that God will never bestow the greater gift on such that improve not lesser gifts.

4. We may also infer, that all improvements of the talents of special grace, is as much of grace as the talent or stock itself, or that what we do, or will to do, is as much from God (or by his immediate assistance) as grace itself.

Obj. But how can God be just if he act in a way of sovereignty, and gives not to all alike?

1. Ans. Can any man be charged for bestowing his favours, his gifts, and bounty as he pleaseth!

2. God is just, because he is no man's debtor, to whom is God obliged? Moreover, to deny his sovereignty is to eclipse his glory, and cast contempt upon his holy majesty; is not his word true? and doth not that say, "He hath mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," Ro 9:8.

3. There was no constraint laid upon God, to save any man, and do not all deserve his wrath for ever? Why will God save man, and not fallen angels? or, why us and not others.

4. All men naturally are undeserving creatures, and therefore if God should cast off all mankind, and not show mercy unto any, he would be righteous, and no man could charge him with injustice, or with doing him any wrong; suppose that thousands of men should rise in rebellion against their lawful sovereign, and conspire to dethrone, nay, murder him, and yet he should pardon some of them, and execute the rest, is he unjust in saving of a few, because he did not extend his favour and compassion unto them all.

5. God is just in his distributions of his favours to some only, and manifesting his displeasure on the rest, because there are none who perish in their sins, that improved according to their abilities the talents God gave unto them; for where is the person that ever did to the uttermost of his power live up to that light, knowledge, and abilities they received from the Lord.

6. God's doing more for some than for others, makes not the state of such he passeth by worse than it was, (they were condemned before) though it makes the state of those he shows favour unto better; for did not God out of sovereign grace pluck some out of the fire by his almighty power, every soul of man would have perished for ever.

Secondly, How should the consideration of this raise our hearts in praises unto God, for casting our lot in England, or in a land where the blessed gospel is preached; we might have been born in India or in Turkey, and trained up either in Paganism or Mahometism, or in some popish country where nothing but idolatry and hellish darkness predominates, and where the

wretched people think it is their duty to give divine adoration to idols, even to a wafer cake.

But much more cause have believers to bless the Lord, who hath given them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, Mt 13:11. And to work grace in their hearts, or in giving his Spirit unto them, which he hath not given to many others, though they have the gospel preached unto them; therefore I may say as our Saviour did to his disciples in the like case: “Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear,” Mt 13:16. All the spiritual good we receive is alone an act of God’s sovereign love and favour to us; we cannot say it is because we did more than others, or deserve more than others, that God gives to us two talents, or five, and to others but one, it is as the great Lord pleaseth.

Thirdly, This therefore may reprove them, that say, God loves all men alike; nay, that he loved Judas as much as Peter, until by his sin he incurred his displeasure. Was not Peter’s sin very great in denying his master, and in swearing he did not know him? did he not deserve to be cast off for ever, as well as Judas? and was it not because of that special love God bore to the one above the other, that one hath repentance given to him, and the other had not, but died in his sin, that he might go to his own place? If Peter was upright hearted, and not the other, who gave him that heart? Is not a new, a sincere and an upright heart given of God? The hearts of all men naturally are only evil and full of hypocrisy, and did not God restrain Satan, would he not enter into every man’s heart, and stir them up to commit the highest acts of wickedness?

4thly, Therefore in the last place, let us take heed who differ from others, to ascribe it wholly to the free grace of God: “for what have we which we have not received,” 1Co 4:7. And if we have received it from God, let us not glory as if we had not received it of him, but as the fruits and effects of our own power and improvements, or for doing more and better than others.

SERMON XXIX

And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one.—And then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.—Mt 25:15-16.

From hence note,

Doct. That the children of men, who are called Christ's servants, are traders, and they ought with their utmost diligence to improve their talents, or their Lord's money.

As I hinted, I shall—

1. Lay down one or two explanatory propositions, the better to open this truth.
2. Show that all are traders, and ought to improve their talents.
3. Show that Christ's own household servants are entrusted with his most choicest treasure.

I shall begin with the first of these general heads.

Proposit. That all mankind may be said to be Christ's servants, and are entrusted with some of his goods, or with one or more talents.

Some restrain the servants here only to the special servants of Christ, namely to church members.

But this I think ought not to be done, for the reasons following.

1. Because Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and all men ought to acknowledge his dominion and sovereignty over them, and to submit to his authority: "as thou hast given him power over all flesh," Joh 17:2. Even over unbelievers, as well as over believers, to judge and to condemn them that believe not, as well as to justify them that do believe in his name. All things, all persons are put under his feet, and all shall "bow the knees to him, and confess Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Php 2:10-11. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him," Ro 10:12.

What talent the pagan world hath received

2ndly, Because all receive (or have received) one or more talents from the Lord Jesus Christ, if not as he is Mediator, yet as he is considered Creator: will any say the heathen have not so much as received one talent, though as I hinted one talent may be in quantity either more or less; for parables are not to be strained, as some suppose, or that a talent must be so much and no more, and all talents of the same quality also.

The Gentiles have the law written in their hearts, the very same as to the substance of it as the Jews had in tables of stone, and afterwards in a book. Christ as Creator is the “true light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world,” Joh 1:9. What reason, understanding, knowledge or light any have, they receive it from the Word, “who was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by him,” ver. 2, 3.

Is not rain, fruitful seasons, and all other good things of this world, a talent given to mankind by the blessed God: he gives the poor heathen his gold, silver, and rich gums, and precious spices, with vast kingdoms to possess? And do not all these things amount so much as unto one talent? or are not these things given to men to be improved to their Master’s use? Moreover he gives this sort the talent of trade and outward commerce and traffic with Christians.

3dly, All have received one or more talents from Christ, because they shall all be called to an account by him: at the last day when he comes to judgment, will he only call professors or church members to give an account to him? “He shall judge the secrets of all men,” Ro 2:16.

4thly, And for the non-improvement of those talents, gift or gifts men have received, he will condemn them, as this parable and other scriptures clearly show.

2. Proposition. That according to the nature or quality of that talent or talents men have received, such is and will be the nature of the improvement thereof; it cannot be improved to things of a higher or different nature to the principle stock itself.

To open what I mean, consider—1. That he that hath no more than the light of nature, by the highest improvement thereof, he can arrive but to

mere natural knowledge, or to simple morality, he cannot attain thereby to the supernatural knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, though he may excel many in mere natural religion, or moral virtue, as some of the heathens of old did.

2. So he to whom God gives the riches of this world, and not spiritual riches or the talents of grace and spiritual gifts, by the improvement of their outward riches (to the benefit of the commonwealth; or to the profit and comfort of the poor) though they cannot obtain to true grace and eternal life, yet they may gain thereby the character of good and charitable men, and excel others in morality and human honour, and attain and keep a good conscience towards men.

3. So they that have natural gifts, and attain acquired parts, cannot arrive to true and saving grace by the improvement of such gifts and parts, though they may thereby increase in further knowledge of those things: as such that study any art or science, by improvement may grow more acute, and excel others in those arts or sciences. But, my brethren, the knowledge of the tongues, of logic, &c., or philosophical learning, cannot bring men to the saving knowledge of God and Jesus Christ: "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man that is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit," 1Co 2:11.

That which I drive at (1) is this, viz., that the seed of true grace must be first given as a talent; nay, every grace of the Spirit must be infused into the souls of such that are truly gracious, before they can improve true grace (or any one of the graces of the Spirit.)

(2) And that no improvements of any common talents or gifts can procure the special grace of God, or be improved to any other talent differing from their own species or qualities. And this brings me to the next thing.

4thly. That such that God hath given special gifts and saving grace unto, can only improve those gifts and precious graces to that high and most noble end for which they were given, viz., the glory of God; and to an increase of more true spiritual knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and growth in grace, and so to a further meetness for eternal life: in a word, according to the quality or nature of the principal stock or talents received at first, such is the nature or quality of the improvement made of them. Such as is the one

talent, (as to its nature or kind, such is the nature of the improvement thereof, and so of the two talents, &c.

And that this is so, it clearly appears, 1. Because the effect cannot exceed the cause; thorns cannot produce grapes, nor thistles figs: do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Every kind begets its own nature or kind.

2. Because special grace is God's special gift; the seed and habit of all grace is first given as a stock to trade with, and to improve, and is not obtained by man's natural industry or improvement of common gifts; the Holy Spirit must be first received as seed sown in our hearts, before grace can grow in us: a man may plow and plow again, and manure his land long enough (if he sows it not) before any corn grow up: "The fruit of the Spirit is love,* joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These things are not the fruits of nature, nor the product of man's natural improvements, or any thing he can do.

Object. Do not men obtain these graces by improving the gospel, or the means of grace, &c.

1. Answ. The outward means ought to be improved; God having appointed it in order to our obtaining grace; but no man by the best industry he can use in the improvement of the outward means, or the preaching of the gospel can obtain saving grace; no, that is the gift of God alone, and peculiar to himself, or his own prerogative to bestow upon whom he pleaseth; it is only to them the gospel comes in power unto, (by the mighty working of the Spirit) that grace is wrought in the hearts of some.

Do any think God is obliged to give special grace to them that improve common grace; or to give the greater, because they improve the lesser? God is a free agent, and though he will, and sometimes doth bless the means, and also ties us to the improvement of it, yet he works how he pleaseth, he is not tied to it; if grace be the simple product of our improvement with God's common blessings; or as he blesseth the labour of the industrious husbandman, then we have somewhat to boast of or glory in; but we have nothing to boast of or glory in, we cannot say grace is the product of our labour and industry, but simply the free gift of God.

2. Because the saving knowledge of Christ is not, cannot be revealed or attained to, but in a supernatural way by the Holy Ghost; it is not had by the

improvement of man's reason, or man's-wisdom, industry, or what outward means soever God hath or doth afford to men in common: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father that is in heaven," Mt 16:1. By flesh and blood our Lord meaneth the reason, wisdom, learning, and industry of man, he attains not the true knowledge of Christ by learning or by tradition, or any dictates from man and improvements he himself can make, through the help of all his natural powers or common influences of the Spirit, but by the immediate and special operations and illuminations of the Spirit; it is God who this way begets a full assent and consent and persuasion of the truth made known to us. Yet is not the word preached useless, because God makes use of it as an instrument of his power, by which ordinarily he works faith and all grace in our souls.

3. Because grace in our hearts is called the image of God, and also the forming of Christ in our souls, and a creation work, and therefore peculiar unto God himself; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them," Eph 2:10. Can we by our industry and any power of our own, form Christ in our souls, and create the image of God therein, who cannot form a fly or a worm? and from hence it appears it is the free gift of God, and his peculiar workmanship, let him work how he pleaseth.

And how absurd then is it for any to assert this is the product of man's own improvements of common light and means of grace.

Obj. How can these things be as you say, (i.e.,) that all improvements of talents are of the same species or nature of the principle and original stock? do not some merchants trade in toys, and get by trading gold, pearl, &c., or things of a different species?

Answ. It is a mistake, those things merchants venture to sea with, though in one respect they are, it is true, of different species to the things they gain by trading, yet in the sense I speak of, they are all of one and the same species, viz., all earthly and corruptible things, for here are generally but two sorts of talents, or things that differ in specie, (i.e.,) all are either earthly, or heavenly, common or special.

Obj. To what purpose then is it for men to attend upon the means with the greatest care and diligence, as praying, hearing? &c.,

1. Answ. I told you before, because this is the way God hath ordained, and commanded us to wait upon him in, and which commonly he powerfully blesseth to that great end I speak of; shall not we hear the word when required so to do? we are to “fill the water-pots full of water,” Joh 2:7. But that contributes nothing to the turning of that water into wine; no, that is the work of Christ alone, shall not we pray for that grace or talent, which is the gift of God; indeed could it be obtained or procured by our industry or improvements, there was not altogether that need and reason that we should cry unto God for it.

2. When God gives us his Spirit he gives us himself; we can do nothing which either can deserve or procure such a gift, or oblige God to bestow it upon us; besides a new heart, the Spirit, grace, and God to be our God, are all contained in God’s absolute promises, not made upon any federal conditions or previous improvements made by us, or qualifications in us, so much as to prepare us for them. What did the thief on the cross, or Paul for the obtaining the grace they received? who can oblige God, or plead for such a talent as saving grace is, or plead for it, for the sake of any thing wretched sinners can do.

3. Is it not said, that “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy?” Ro 9:16. It is not of our good desires, good inclinations, nor our diligent hearing, praying, nor of our highest improvements, or from any foresight God had of any of these things; no, but of the mere love and mercy, and good pleasure of God. This text, as our late annotators note, wounds Pelagians under the fifth rib: God is a debtor to no man, what are all our poor, lame and imperfect endeavours?

USE

1. By way of reprehension to such who hold Arminian and Pelagian errors, who affirm that men by their improvements of common grace, common light, and knowledge may obtain to the true and saving grace of God; nay, that God is obliged to give that grace to them that so do, even Christ and all the blessings of Christ, and charge God with injustice if he doth not bestow him and his Son on such industrious persons.

2. It may also serve to reprove them that assert, that all the talents are of one species or kind, because the talents which an earthly Lord gives out to

his servants, are or may be all of one and the same kind, as if in a parable there could be no disparity.

3. It may also tend to humble sorry mankind, and cast contempt upon him, and bring down the pride and vain glory of man's will, or cast free-will into the dust, and wholly exalt free grace.

4. It may also teach poor sinners to cry to God for an original or beginning stock of special grace from God to trade withal, who would bring glory unto God, and enjoy peace in their own souls, and also stir them up to a thankful improvement of the means God directs them unto, in order to their obtaining it; and may likewise serve to excite all true believers to improve that blessed stock they have, and so add other two or five talents more unto those which they first received when they began to trade.

Secondly, all men are traders, and ought to trade and improve the talents they have received.

I shall open this parallel-wise.

1. A trader either trades with his own, or with another man's stock, whose servant he is. Now, my brethren, no man hath any stock or talent of his own, but all their talents which they are required to improve and trade withal, are the Lord's, "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" 1Co 4:7.

1. Hast thou a rational soul, wisdom, knowledge, and great understanding? it was given unto thee by the Lord, and that soul thou oughtest to take care of, and that wisdom, knowledge and understanding, to improve to the great end he gave them to thee, and thou must be accountable unto him in this matter.

2. Hast thou riches or much wealth? it is the Lord's money, "The silver, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord," Hag 2:8. And again he saith, "I will take away my corn, and my flax;" Ho 2:9. If these things are not improved to the end they are given, the Lord will either take them away, and blast all your endeavours, or else cut the possessors of them off, only with having their portion in this world.

3. Hast thou acquired parts, great learning? this is also thy master's goods, he gave thee those faculties by which means thou wast capable to attain to such learning, and also time to arrive at it.

4. Have you the gospel, and the ministration of the word? this is also the Lord's goods, and must be improved.

5. Have you faithful ministers still continued to you, to dispense the word of life, and open the sacred mysteries of the gospel, and to feed you with knowledge and understanding and lead you into the way of truth? why ministers are the Lord's, and you should make the best improvement of them, and put them into the best capacity you are able, to minister unto you, and submit to them, and obey them in all things in the Lord.

6. Or have you the precious talent of time, and the opportunities of time? this you are entrusted with by the Lord.

7. Or have you health, strength, and advantages to attend upon the word and means of grace above many? all this is from the Lord, and ought to be improved as he commandeth.

8. And have you spiritual gifts and saving grace? those talents you also received of the Lord, and what better talents have any servants of Christ? he doth not give these to all, no but a very few have these rich and precious talents?

9. Are you fathers or masters, and so have authority over, and entrusted with families, children, and servants? these are talents received of the Lord. Or are some of you ministers or magistrates? Certainly you are entrusted with a great talent, and the Lord looks for a due improvement of those places of trust and dignity, for we are but stewards of whatsoever we have or are entrusted with.

Secondly. Traders ought to know the worth of those commodities put into their hands, and entrusted to trade with. So every man ought to know the worth of his own soul, the worth and preciousness of their time, the worth and preciousness of the word of God, and of the worth of grace, and of all other spiritual blessings and good things; and as we should know the great worth and excellencies of spiritual things, that are traders, so likewise we should know the little worth and value of all earthly things when

compared to spirituals. Or whatsoever we call our own, the little worth of earthly riches, pleasures and honours, human learning, and all acquired parts; as also the little worth of our own duties, external privileges, and inherent righteousness, in comparison of the righteousness of Christ. If we know not this, we may soon overvalue the one, and undervalue the other; and so in our dealing through ignorance be cheated and run out of all, even esteem of earthly things and riches above the riches of heaven, or human learning above the Spirit's teaching, and the gifts and graces thereof; or your own righteousness (which Paul esteemed but as dung) above "the righteousness of God which is by faith," Php 3:8-9.

Some are unskilful traders, they have not wisdom to know how some commodities excel others; and so some spiritual traders through ignorance know not the worth of the truth, and other things they trade in, the worth of reconciliation, union, justification, pardon of sin, peace with God, and communion with the Father and the Son, and of that free access we have to God, or to trade with the Father in and through Jesus; they know not the worth of ordinances, nor the worth and preciousness of the promises, and from hence refuse to trade with Jesus Christ for them. Should not merchants, jewellers, or goldsmiths know precious stones, gold and pearls? they else may be cheated, or refuse to buy when they might be greatly enriched, and so may poor mortals here also through ignorance be cheated, or refuse to buy of Christ "Gold tried in the fire," &c., Re 3:18.

Thirdly. Traders must not be timorous or fearful in laying out their money; no more should such that are traders in a spiritual sense, they should lay their strength out, spend their time freely in God's service, and part with all they have to gain the pearl of great price.

Fourthly. Traders should know where to buy, or of whom, and who to trade with; so should spiritual traders; they must know it is of Christ they must buy, "buy of me, &c."

1. Consider, that Jesus Christ is never without all sorts of goods, and also hath great plenty of them, he hath all things we need or can need.

2. He will cheat no man, and being faithful, never sells counterfeit goods, and so just, that he never fails, or breaks his word, or promises. "All the promises of God are yea, and amen in Christ Jesus," 2Co 1:20.

3. Christ is also very rich; it is dangerous to trade with some persons, and bad to trust them, because they may break; but no fear of that here, for all the riches of grace and glory are his; the Father hath put all things into his hands. Do you trade for gifts? "Christ hath received gifts for men," Eph 4:8. Or do you trade or seek to him for grace? "He is full of grace and truth," Joh 1:14. Do you trade for pardon? "He will abundantly pardon," Isa 55:7. Do you trade for strength? He is our strength, "He is mighty, nay, almighty to save," Isa 63:1. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," Isa 40:29. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Do you want counsel? He is the mighty Counsellor; "Counsel is mine," &c., Pr 8:14. Do you want wisdom? "In him are hid ail the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col 2:3. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," Jas 1:5; or do you want purity and holiness, he is the fountain to wash in, and cleanseth us from all filthiness, "He loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Re 1:5. Are you sinners, and want peace with God? He hath made our peace and full reconciliation; peace is in him, though it is given to none but to such that apply themselves to God in and by faith in him. Or do you need righteousness? "He is the Jehovah our righteousness; he is the Sun of righteousness," Mal 4:2. The sun is not fuller of light than Christ is full of righteousness. O who would not trade with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Traders must know the terms how to buy goods

Fifthly, Traders must know the terms upon which they are to trade, or how to buy: some trades call for ready money, others exchange one sort of goods for others; so poor sinners that would trade with Jesus Christ, must know on what terms they may have what they need.

(1.) It is not with money; "Buy wine and milk without money," Isa 55:1-2. Justification without any previous qualifications, or any righteousness of your own; also it is without price, that is without money worth, you are to give nothing that hath any value or worth in it for what you receive of him, yet it is upon exchange, and therefore called a buying, but what must we exchange, or what do we receive thereupon? even "beauty for ashes, and the oil of gladness for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," Isa 61:3. Not that you can mourn for sin until he gives you the spirit of grace to help you to look unto him: you must part with your filthy rags,* if you would be clothed with this robe of righteousness, and so will you be clothed with the garment of praise, or with joy and singing also;

though these things purchase not what we receive of him, yet we must part with all these, sell all we have, to win Christ.

(2.) Indeed all things we need, are freely given of God through Jesus Christ:—"Let him that thirsteth take the water of life freely," Re 22:17. Justification freely, pardon of sin freely, for his own namesake; for the whole design of this trade is to advance the riches of God's free grace.

Sixthly, Traders must know in whose name they must trade, and come for what they want, whether in their own or in their master's name; it is not allowed for servants to trade in their own names; neither perhaps should they so do would they be trusted; so sinners and all that would trade for another world, must know whether they must come to God in their own names, or in the name of another. (1.) Not in our own names, for if we do, we shall receive nothing of God, our credit being gone, he will not trust us. (2.) We must trade in our great Master's name, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Whatsoever you ask in my name, that will I do for you," Joh 14:13. That is, upon the account of his merits, for his sake, and by means of his worth, and by the virtue of his intercession, and also by his authority, he having impowered us, or given boldness and free access unto us to come to the Father: and also in his name denotes, that we should do all to his glory, and assume none of it to ourselves, but that we should wholly labour to glorify the Son, and the Father in him.

Seventhly, Traders trust, or else perhaps they will have little or no trade at all, and great traders are acquainted therewith; they trust sometimes six or twelve months, so such that trade with Christ, or with God in Christ's name, and improve their talents, must trust the Lord Jesus; if you cannot trust him, and rest by faith upon him, and take his word and promises, you will receive nothing of him, neither righteousness, pardon, peace, strength, and comfort, nor salvation. What is, my brethren, believing in Christ, but trusting him, or depending upon his word and faithful promises, relying upon the sufficiency, merits, power, and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. "In him all that believe are justified from all things," Ac 13:39, &c. They are poor traders that must have all in hand presently paid down: some poor weak Christians, who are not rich in faith, they cannot trust God, or wait for the accomplishment of his promises. How long did the Father trust the Son, or take his word that he would come and pay him all our vast debts! and how long did Abraham trust God for the performance of his promise of giving him a son, or before the child of the promise was given. "He believed in hope against hope," Ro

4:18. And saith David, "In the Lord have I put my trust." "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is," Jer 17:7. "Trust in him at all times, ye people," Ps 62:8. Though the providences of God seem to cross his promises, or God seem long before we have the promise made good to us, or to his Sion; yet we must trust in him, and not doubt but in due time he will perform whatsoever he hath promised. Now there are two or three things to strengthen our trusting in God.

1. That though we deserve nothing, can merit nothing, yet Christ hath merited all things that are needful for us, and he is deserving, God will not deny us the merits of his Son's blood.

2. God who hath promised is immutable, he changes not; he never changes his mind, nor his absolute purposes and decrees. "He will not lie to David, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips," Ps 89:34-35.

3. We have not only his promise, but his oath; this denotes that the Lord foresaw how hard it would be for us to trust or believe in him; and also it shows the wonderful condescension of God to his poor creatures. Moreover, it discovers the greatest ground for us to believe in him imaginable. Shall God not only promise but oblige himself by oath! Stand and wonder O ye heavens! See what the Psalmist saith, "once have I sworn by my holiness," &c. Again it is said, "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself," Heb 6:13. An oath among men is to put matters out of all doubt, and so put an end to all strife. "Wherein God willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us," ver. 17, 18. That man must needs see cause strangely to reflect upon himself, that cannot trust in God, in the true God, especially when his oath is passed in the case. O what horrid unbelief is there in our hearts!

4. Because no soul whoever that trusted in the Lord missed of help and succour in the proper season, when he saw it would do them the most good. "God shall help her, and that right early." No man ever trusted in God through Jesus Christ, and waited patiently upon him, but received most sure and seasonable returns from him. Shall God lose his credit, and not be believed by his creatures? Nay, shall his own children not trust in him, and rely upon his faithfulness?

5. If God seems to delay the performance of his promises, it is to try and put our graces into exercise, to try our faith in him, and our love to him, and the grace of patience also; or else he sees we are not ready to receive what he promised, or the time is not yet come when the mercy will do us the most good, and bring the greatest honour and glory to his own name.

6. That mercy which we have long waited for, will be very sweet and consolatory unto us, when it comes. If men are sure of safe and great returns, they wait with much patience, content, and satisfaction. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when it cometh it is a tree of life," Pr 13:12.

Ninthly. Traders or merchants (as I showed you in opening another parable,) must keep their books well, and see that their accounts stand fair, and know whether they thrive or go behind-hand. So every Christian or spiritual trader, should see how things stand between God and his own soul, that he may know whether he grows in faith, in love, in zeal, in humility, and in holiness, or not; and if he finds he is grown more cold, more earthly, proud, and unbelieving, it is a sad sign of breaking, or that his heart is not right with God, or at least that he is under some sore temptation, and also under the withdrawings of the quickening presence of Christ, nor can such tell where their partial apostasy may end. However, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger," Job 17:9.

Tenthly. Some traders do not improve their Lord's money, and though entrusted but with one talent, yet improve not that, but mind more their own private business, than the concerns of their Lord. And this as our Saviour shows in this parable, many to whom he hath given but one talent do not improve it, but hide it in the earth.

Eleventhly. Some traders break, and expose such that are faithful dealers to loss and shame. Even so also some professors backslide or revolt from God, and turn spiritual bankrupts, to the great dishonour of God, the reproach of religion and faithful Christians; and these are exposed and in great danger every day to fall into the hands of divine justice, into the hands of the living God, and to be cast into prison; where under eternal wrath they must abide, until they have paid the uttermost farthing.

SERMON XXX

Then he that had received the five talents, went and traded with the same. And likewise he that had received the two, &c.—Mt 25:16-17.

Doct. That the children of men who are called Christ's servants, are traders.

I have opened this, and showed how fitly they may be compared to traders, which closed with the second general head of discourse.

Thirdly, I shall shew, That Christ's own domestic servants are entrusted with his most choice treasure.

I have before proved, that these talents are not all alike in quality, as the text shows they are not in quantity.

1. Some, nay, multitudes in the world (that Christ will call to reckon with when he comes to judgment,) have only natural or external talents given to them, as natural light, knowledge, riches, and other common endowments; but true believers, who are Christ's domestic servants, have special, spiritual and heavenly talents given to them, true spiritual light, knowledge, grace, riches, and righteousness.

And now all must acknowledge these in their nature and quality, as they differ from the other, so they far excel or are much better than those the Pagan world or mere earthly men and reprobates have, or are entrusted with. "The merchandize of wisdom is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold," Pr 3:14. By wisdom here, most conclude, is meant Jesus Christ, who is called the wisdom of God; and also takes in true grace, or the true fear and saving knowledge of God. "They shall die without wisdom," (or instruction) speaking of wicked men, Pr 5:23. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." O how few have this talent.

2. They must be the best talents, if we consider further more particularly the matter of them, or what is contained in these talents, even as was hinted, the blessed God himself, and Jesus Christ himself; he gives himself to some, though but to a few, and this is the great covenant promise, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people." O what a talent is the gift of the Spirit and true grace, and all those things that accompany it!

3. That they are the best talents, or far excel them that are given to others, appears, because they that have them are by the Lord pronounced happy. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding," Pr 3:13. Such are truly happy here, happy while they live, and shall be happy at death, and also eternally happy. Their riches are the best riches, their honours are the best honours, and their delights and pleasures far excel all the sensual delights and pleasures of wicked men.

4. Who can count up, or compute the riches and infinite worth that is in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the believer's portion. "Their lot is fallen in pleasant places, they have a goodly heritage," Ps 16:6. Who can reckon up all the blessings of the covenant of grace, or what is contained in the promises of the gospel? They are, my brethren, of an incomparable nature, far exceeding the onyx, the sapphire, the crystal, or the chiefest pearl.

5. Their nature and excellency may be known, if we consider the spring or rise of them, and that also they are a certain token or pledge of the special love of God. The Father's love is the spring or fountain from whence they come. God loves all his creatures with a common love, and he gives them his common favours. But he loves his elect with a special and peculiar love, and therefore he bestows on them his special and peculiar blessings, or talents that far excel all such he gives to others. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," Jer 31:3. Moreover, these special talents or choice treasure God hath given to his people, are as a certain pledge to them that they were comprehended in his eternal love, and are some of his own elect. When God gives his Spirit to any man, saving grace to any man, it is also a pledge to them of their being justified and pardoned, and that they shall be eternally saved; therefore the talents these have, far exceed in worth and excellencies, all others whatsoever; these are soul enriching, soul-raising, soul-exalting, and soul-satisfying treasures; they that God gives these talents to, may say with Jacob, "They have all."

6. Their great worth also appears, by that wonderful price that was laid down by the Lord Jesus Christ to purchase them. These talents were the special purchase of the blood of Jesus Christ. True grace is the special fruit of Christ's merits, or glorious purchase. True, we have them cheap enough, being given to us freely, yet we part with our all for them, and so did every one that ever was possessed with them; had an enlightened sinner kingdoms

and crowns, rather than he would not have or should be denied of these things, he would part with them presently, and condemn all earthly crowns and kingdoms, as Moses did the glory of Egypt, in comparison of these things.

O costly wares, (saith one) God's all goes, Christ's all goes, and the sinner's all goes also, to enjoy them.

The magazine and treasures of heaven are emptied, yet do not mistake, the sinner finds the flesh must be crucified, the old man must die, if he possess the talent of grace and the new birth. O, the woundings, the lancings, the bleedings, the heart-pricking pangs that often attend the new birth, these lead the van to this banner of love; these are like storms and tempests to the flesh, to the old man, or body of sin and death; self is wounded, the life of sin, and the love of this world is at once let out.

7. The gain by trading in these commodities is great, and hath the best increase or incomes.

“Thou deliveredst to me five talents, behold I have gained besides them five talents more,” Ver. 20.

They may be improved to double increase, to as much more in respect of the quantity; but this is not all, he that improved his two talents, is made a ruler over two cities, and he that improved his five talents, is made a ruler over five cities; besides, what a believer may arrive to here in improving of his special talents of grace and saving knowledge. As to a further likeness to God, or communion with him, or in comfort and consolation, there are great rewards of grace attends the improvement of grace, and all other spiritual and peculiar gifts of God.

8. The duration of these things shows forth the excellent nature of them, they are eternal things, love to God, peace of conscience, and a likeness to God, we shall carry out of the world with us. The Lord that gives grace, gives also glory to his faithful servants.

Lastly, The returns that these traders meet with, shows it is the best trade and the choicest treasure.

1. Great things for that which is of very little value; what is a cup of cold water to a crown of glory? what are ashes, or mourning, or a spirit of heaviness, in comparison of that glorious beauty, spiritual joy and eternal praises, which Christ returns for those small things.

2. Quick returns, see what the Lord says: “Before they call I will answer,” though it is not thus always, Isa 65:24.

3. They are always certain returns, none miscarry; no ship is cast away that is well freighted with grace.

4. Seasonable returns, just when the Lord sees we need the mercy, and it will do us most good, then we shall have it.

USE

1. Be exhorted to choose this trade, the trade of godliness; you that are willing to be hired and become some of Christ’s special and domestic servants, shall receive of these talents to trade with.

2. O begin early, you young men, enter upon this trade in your youth, it is best and soonest learned then, and then you will have the longer experience, and the more time to grow rich and increase in heavenly treasure.

3. Take heed you do not begin in this trade without a stock of saving grace, or think you can manage this calling with a stock of simple morality, or only with common light and knowledge, or by improving your natural abilities for procuring the Spirit and grace of Christ. And you that are true Christians, mind well, and be sure follow this your general calling, and labour you do not go back. But to proceed.

“And so he that received the five talents came and brought with him other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, behold I have gained besides them five talents more,” ver. 20.

“He also that had received two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst to me two talents, behold I have gained two other talents besides them,” ver. 22.

“Then he which received the one talent, came and said, Lord, I knew thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed,” ver. 24.

“And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth, lo, there is that is thine,” ver. 25.

Note from hence.

Doct. That such who have received five talents, and two talents, do improve them, but he that received the one talent, improved it not.

I do not mean by this proposition (that lies clear to me in the text) that all true believers who have received most from God, or the greatest talents, do always improve them, proportionably above such who have received less light, knowledge, parts, &c., but that all who do receive the true and saving grace of God, light, and knowledge, do more or less improve those talents, or gain more, but that he that receives but one talent, never improves that one as he ought and might do. No man certainly hath received less than one talent.

1. I shall lay down several propositions, the better to open the nature of the talents.

2. I shall show what may be meant by five, and by two talents, and what by the one talent.

3. What may be meant by hiding of the one talent.

4. Why such may be said to hide that one talent.

1. Proposition. All talents, as I hinted, are of two sorts, earthly or heavenly, temporal or spiritual, common or special.

2. Proposition. That the two talents, and the five, though they differ in quantity, yet I conceive they do not in quality; for both these servants, or all signified by him that had the five, and him that had the two, were faithful servants, and were saved; now the same grace, the same faith, the same knowledge, as to kind that one true believer hath, all have; hence the apostle Peter speaking of the faith of God’s elect, calls it like faith. “To them who

have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," 2Pe 1:1. It is not like in respect of the degree or measure of it, but in respect to the kind or nature of it, and the object of it. All have true faith, unfeigned faith, faith that works by love, the faith of God's elect, and the faith of the operation of God; by all these and other names is faith called, but some have but a weak faith, others a strong faith, some a little, and others a great faith; so some good Christians have small knowledge, gifts and parts, in comparison of what some other good Christians and ministers have. Now these things being matter of fact, and well known to all God's people, as well as confirmed by his holy word, none need to doubt the truth thereof.

Moreover, will any dare to say, that a man to whom God never gave a stock or talent of saving faith, can by any power or improvement of the talent he hath, arrive unto eternal life?

3. Proposition. That no man living, or ever lived upon the earth (to whom God gave talents) ever improved them to the utmost they might have done.

All the godly ever confessed how they have failed therein. Moreover, they that received the one talent, it is evident, did not improve it to the end it was given; and as many saints are signified by him that had the five talents, and many by him that had the two talents. So a multitude no doubt are signified by him that had the one talent, even all that eternally perish, and they are those who never received (nor may be never desired) the saving grace of God.

4. Proposition. That God gives more to them that are saved, than he gives to them that perish, and this I think is as fully intimated by our blessed Lord in this parable, as any thing whatsoever; if it is not partly one grand design of our Lord therein, and did he not indeed give more to, and do more for them that are saved (or for his elect) than for others, they would certainly perish with the rest of mankind; for such that are saved, who had the least given to them, had more than one single talent, or that talent which all men generally receive from God.

If therefore these talents do comprehend all mankind, and take in the special grace of God also, as our annotators declare they do, and other worthy expositors; then what I say, I am sure, cannot be denied, but that the

things I have hinted in these previous propositions may be safely drawn from what is signified by the five, by the two, and by the one talent.

1. I conceive by these talents are comprehended, even in the two and five, all things whatsoever that is the Lord's goods, or that grace, light, and saving knowledge, &c., given to all God's elect. Though some of the saints receive more of those precious things than others.

1. Some have greater grace, greater measures of knowledge, greater gifts both temporal and spiritual; some have much of the riches of this world, which they as good stewards improve from a principle of love to Christ, to the glory of God, and support of the gospel, the church and ministry of the gospel in the world, which will in the life to come be remembered and redound to their account, as an act of God's free grace to them who will not "forget their work of faith, and labour of love," Heb 6:10.

2. Some of the saints are in greater places of trust, and in higher stations in the world and church also, as well as endowed with greater parts, gifts, and learning, and so are capacitated to do more for God, and bring greater glory to him, and profit to the souls of men, and good to the church of God. How useful have some ministers been in their day, what pains and labour did they take, and how have they been a blessing to the world and people of God!

3. He that received the one talent, (and all those signified in him) may be such that only received outward favours or temporal good things, together with common and external gifts, knowledge, parts and attainments of the like nature whatsoever, and which in respect of that different and peculiar talent of special grace, it may be partly called one talent. He having not talents of differing species, as all the true children of God have, viz., both common favours and saving grace also.

4. Therefore I conceive the one talent may in quantity be more or less; as for example, the Heathen (none will deny) have one talent, but they have not so great a one talent as such who have the outward ministration of the gospel, and all other advantages in a land of vision, besides the great natural and acquired parts, and learning some of them, may and do attain unto. Yet I say this may nevertheless be called but the one talent, being all but common endowments, common grace, gifts and knowledge, and not any of them having received the holy sanctifying Spirit of God, nor so much as one dram of saving grace.

5. And as I said, it appears that he that received the one talent, did not faithfully according to his ability improve his talent; so it may signify that no mere natural men (that have received that which is the least) do improve it as they might (or are able), and so may be condemned for not doing what they were empowered to do, or for wasting, hiding, and slighting the light and means of grace that was afforded them, under idle and frivolous pretensions, though the fullest improvement of one talent cannot bring any person into a state of grace or save him, because the seed of grace, (or the prime and original stock) must be first given, before there can be an exercise or an improvement made of it; and all know that without true faith in Christ and regeneration no man can be saved; and as evident it is that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither indeed industry of his own, but it must be given to him immediately from the Lord.

Object. It will then follow that no Heathen or Pagan can be saved?

1. Ans. That may be a great mistake, for some of the Heathen might hear of Jesus Christ, and have faith in him; by some means or another it might be revealed to them (though the light of nature cannot do it) and so receive more than the one talent.

2. Some that lived before Christ came, might converse with the Jews, or have knowledge of Moses’ writings, as history makes appear many of them had, as well as the word of God shows the same thing.

3. It is said that there was among the Gentiles, women that prophesied of Christ’s coming, and of his bloody passion, &c., that were called Sybils, (though some think what is said of them is fabulous [mythical]).

4. Or might not God in some supernatural way (when he spoke in divers ways and manners unto the fathers) make Christ known unto them?

To conclude with this, certainly God will condemn men for not doing those things which he requires of them; and where the gospel comes, how do many slight it! and though “Light is come into the world, men love darkness rather than light,” Joh 3:19. And this our Saviour saith is the condemnation.

“And hid thy talent in the earth,” &c., ver. 25.

In ver. 18 it is said, "He digged in the earth and hid his lord's money."

Quest. What may be meant by his digging in the earth, and hiding his lord's money?

Ans. Digging in the earth may signify his labouring "for the meat that perishes more than that meat which endureth to everlasting life," Joh 6:27; or his minding earthly things, being more busy in pursuing after the world, than in improving that knowledge he had of divine things, or of the means of grace which God was pleased to afford him.

2. Hiding his talent may also denote his concealing those convictions he might have in his conscience in respect of sin or of duty. Some men may be convinced of many sins they live in, and of their duty in closing with Christ and following him in a way of obedience, but they strive to stifle those convictions, and keep all in their own breast; and will not improve that light and knowledge they have, but wholly give way to earthly thoughts and to the temptations of Satan, and so dig in the earth rather than look up to heaven; and what is this less than a hiding their Lord's money? they will not declare to others what troubles, what fears, and terrifying thoughts they sometimes have had, concerning the state of their souls and of eternity, but strive to quench the motions of the Spirit, and so put out that fire that was kindled in their hearts, and will not make a profession of what they sometimes experienced God had done for them by the common influences of his Spirit and workings of their own awakened consciences.

3. Perhaps one great part of his talent lay in earthly riches, and that he laid up and refused to improve it by distributing according to his ability to the poor, and to support the interest of Christ. Some who have the one talent no doubt may be church members, and this way the young man mentioned in the gospel, hid his talent, who when our Lord bid him "sell all he had, and give it to the poor, and follow him, went away very sorrowful;" he hid his talent in the earth, and would not trade for heaven.

4. Or perhaps part of this one talent might lie in spiritual gifts and abilities, in the improvement of which he might have been useful to the church, or for the good of others, but he might utterly refuse to exercise those gifts, but hid or concealed them, and by pursuing with an inordinate warmth the things of the world, might hide his talent, if neither earthly riches or spiritual gifts are improved as God requires, they may be said to be hid.

5. Or perhaps God gives men much health and many precious opportunities to attend upon the means of grace, but out of love to their trades and secular affairs they spend all their time, health, and strength, about the things of this life, and though the word of God be preached daily but a few doors off where they live, yet they will not spare an hour or two in a whole week to attend upon the ministration thereof; and when they are told of their great neglect, they find one excuse or another, and so hide their Lord's money, or will not improve the talent God gave them.

Thirdly, Why do such who receive the one talent hide it?

1. Ans. No doubt but it may be from that multiplicity of earthly concerns that is in their hand, they have so much business of their own, and are carried away so much with self-love, that they can find no time to worship, obey, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of the world is in their heart, they can find no leisure time yet to think seriously of their immortal souls, and of eternal things.

2. They may hide their talent, because the fire burns too hot for them, I mean convictions are too strong, that have taken hold of their consciences, or that candle that is lighted, if they put it not under a bed, or quench the fire kindled in them, they fear they may come under reproach and be derided by their ungodly neighbours or company they used to keep, or perhaps they may foresee the fire will waste too much of the fuel, I mean their substance, perceiving religion may be too chargeable for them, and from hence are led by Satan to hide their talent.

3. By what our Saviour here intimateth in respect of this person's plea, one chief reason of his hiding of his talent, is upon a false apprehension of the blessed God; he confesseth he had not traded with his Lord's money, or had not improved his talent well: and what answer doth he give? what was the reason of his unfaithfulness? See what he says:

“And he said, Lord, I knew that thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sown, and gathering where thou hadst not strawed, and I was afraid and went and hid thy talent,” &c., vers. 24, 25.

He chargeth his Lord with the highest injustice, not only that he was an austere or a severe man, but a cruel and unreasonable man, for so much and

no less is implied in his answer. Is not he a cruel and an unjust man, that would reap where he never sowed? this person seems to talk like an Arminian, some that hold those notions, argue much as this man doth. Thou dost expect that I shall improve what thou gavest me, and yet thou never didst give me thy saving grace, nor sowed the seed of it in thy heart, and all the improvement I can make of the talent thou hast given me, (I am told by thy servants) will not bring me to heaven, what should I labour to improve what I have, for, it will bring no saving profit to my soul? It thou hadst done for me as for some others, I should have done as they did, the fault is not in me, but if I perish, the cause is because thou didst not sow the seed of true grace and holiness in my heart.

But the answer his Lord gave him, may tend to silence him, and all free-willers in the world.

“His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reaped where I sowed not, and gathered where I have not strawed,—thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury,” ver. 26, 27.

1. What though God acts in a way of sovereignty, and gives more to one man than he gives unto another, yet ought not he that receives the smallest talent, or but one, to improve that one?

2. May not God require of man that which he hath lost, that power which originally he had? man had power to keep the law of perfect obedience, and it was by his own sin he became weak, and is made unable now perfectly to keep it; yet is it not his duty still to keep it? hath God lost his power to command, because man hath lost his power to obey? and because man cannot change his own heart, nor wash himself from his iniquity; can he not reform his ways, nor cry to God for help, and improve the means God directs to in order to faith and regeneration.

3. Or because God's elect are helped to believe and to obtain eternal life, shall any ungodly wretches have an excuse in the day of judgment to say, thou reapest where thou hast not sown, or requirest that of us thou gavest us no power to do? I tell you again, that all men are condemned for the breach of the law or covenant of works; and their slothfulness and neglect of

improving the means and talent God hath afforded them, will aggravate their condemnation.

4. If God hath chosen some, all should strive to see that they are effectually called, for none can know that they were elected but by their being effectually called.

5. He that hath but one talent, is in a capacity to improve that one, and God commands him so to do, and for his non improvement of it our Lord shows in this parable, he shall be cast into hell. "And cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness." Take here what our learned annotators have said upon the answer of this person. The Lord of the unprofitable servant tells him that the fault lay in his own sloth and wickedness, and his dread of his Lord's severity was but a mere frivolous pretence, and unreasonable excuse; for if he had dreaded any such thing, he would have done what he could. And shall not God as justly another day reply upon those who think to excuse their lewd and wicked lives, their impenitency and unbelief from their not being elected, not having power of themselves to repent and believe, nor receiving efficacious grace. O you wicked and slothful wretches, did you suspect or fear you were not elected, why then did you not give all diligence to make your calling and election sure? Do you plead the power of your own will to repent and believe, and that I did not give you special and effectual grace? But had you not a power to keep from taverns and ale-houses? and to keep from lying and swearing, and open profanation of my sabbaths? had you not power to read, to hear, and to pray, if you had to the uttermost used the talent I gave you, and I had been wanting in my further necessary influences of grace, ye might indeed have said something, but when you made no use of the talent you had, why should I trust you with more? Faith comes by hearing, reading, praying, you had power to improve these talents you had, if you took me to be so severe a master, why did you not do what was in your power to do? &c. Thus the annotators.

Wicked men do not improve the talent they have. He that is condemned at the great day, (it appears by what our Lord shows in this parable) will be charged with this, they do not use the means, nor cry to God for faith, to enable them to believe; but sin against the light of their consciences, and hate the light, or love darkness rather than the light, and this will be their condemnation.

APPLICATION

1. Reproof. This reproves such that say, the one talent is saving grace, or of the same species with those who are sincere believers, or the two, or the five, and if indeed it was so as they affirm, then all men in the world have saving grace, because there are none that have less than one talent, and then it also follows God hath no special love to one man more than another, and then also mere natural men have power to “receive the things of the Spirit, and they can discern them,” and yet the apostle says, they cannot; and then also salvation would not be of God’s free grace, but of man’s free will.

2. Exhort. Be stirred up every soul of you, to a diligent improvement of the means of grace, and of the talents you have received. Have you the gospel? have you gospel sermons and gospel seasons? have you convictions? have you knowledge, have you gifts, labour to improve them; for know, God will leave all men without any excuse at the great day.

Be exhorted from hiding your talents.

FOR MOTIVES TO EXCITE

1. By hiding your talent you will show, that either you are ashamed or afraid to own and confess Jesus Christ, or else that you have earthly hearts, and are idle and slothful persons in spiritual matters; and either of these show the badness and baseness of your hearts.

2. God also by this means loseth that glory which he expected from you, in bestowing those talents upon you. We should remember that the talents are given to trade with that we may bring honour unto God, and profit to ourselves and to others also. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Mt 5:16. Though we can add nothing to God’s essential glory, yet we may predicate and manifest his glory, and the glory of his rich grace in us.

3. Otherwise also you will be great losers, for the profit of improvement will redound to you. “He that is righteous, is righteous for himself.” Properly God receives nothing of us, the more thou gainest by trading, the richer thou wilt be, the more rich in faith, rich in love, and rich in good works, and more rich in experiences, and the more joy, and comfort, and peace of conscience thou wilt find.

4. Hereby also others will receive the more profit by thee; the world suffers loss by the non-improvement of those talents the servants of Christ have received; how can we be the lights of the world, if we hide our candle under a bushel, or put it under a bed? they that are in the house will have no light by it, which is indeed to go about to frustrate the very end and design of our heavenly Father in lighting our candle.

5. Besides consider, that hereby thou wilt appear to be a faithful servant of Christ, and not a slothful and idle person, and thou wilt also have the more faith to live on in “the day of need,” Heb 4:16. “Thou knowest not what evil may be in the earth,” Ec 11:2; thou mayest be taken off of thy trading. “The ant gathers her food in the summer,” Pr 6:6, else how should she live in winter? These opportunities of improving thy talents may fail, our day may be darkened, and dismal storms may soon rise, and our spiritual trade be obstructed by our enemies.

6. If you hide your talents, you will certainly be undone, you will come to utter beggary; “For so shall thy poverty come upon thee as one that travaileth, and thy want as an armed man,” Pr 6:11. What is the fruit of idleness but shame and poverty? Such shall beg at harvest, and have nothing.

7. Moreover, consider, thou art but a steward of thy master’s goods, and shalt be called to an account when he comes, and the non-improvement of thy talent will bring eternal destruction upon thy soul; he will say, “Take the unprofitable servant, and cast him into utter darkness,” &c., ver. 30. You will certainly one day repent the nonimprovement of your time, your health, your treasure, your opportunities, your gifts, your light and knowledge, or whatsoever God hath bestowed upon you, and expects the improvement of.

SERMON XXXI

And after a long time the Lord of those servants comes and reckoneth with them.—
Mt 25:19.

This coming of our Lord refers to his coming the second time, and it also shows, that when he appears, he will call all men to an account, or judge the whole world.

1. And now that our Saviour will come again the second time, we have fully proved in opening of the precedent parable, no one truth is more clearly confirmed in the word of God.

Also we have showed how, or after what a glorious manner he will appear, and pray observe, that when Christ comes, our working time will be over, the harvest then will be ended, the servants shall then receive their rewards; “He will reward every one according as his work shall be,” Re 22:12. “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ,” Ro 14:10.

Note also. That though Christ will come again, yet it seems long before he comes. “After a long time the Lord of these servants comes.”

1. It seems long to the world, even so long that many say in their hearts, that he will never come again.

2. Also the time seems long to the saints, who love him, and long for his appearance, especially to such who are persecuted and in great tribulation; and the slothful servant by this means says, my Lord delays his coming. But come he will, and when he comes the godly will rejoice with exceeding great joy, it will be a happy day to them, but be a dismal day to the wicked, and to all idle and slothful servants; they do not desire that day, no, they have abused his mercies, and contemned his grace, and wasted his goods, he will come “in flaming fire,” 2Th 1:8; to all such, to take vengeance upon them, and let out his fierce wrath. “Sinners in Sion then will be afraid, fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites,” Isa 33:14.

USE

What do you think concerning the coming of Christ? do you love to hear of it? if you are true Christians, you believe he will come; but do you long for

his coming, and are you prepared for that day? do you pray for his coming? do you say, come Lord Jesus, come quickly?

Do you expect to be called to an account when our Lord comes? he will reckon with all his servants; you will be asked how you have improved your time, your strength, your wealth, your parts, your gifts and your graces; be persuaded to manage things so well now, and make such improvement of the talents you have to his glory, that you may be willing to give up your accounts to him: and this brings to the next words,

“And so he that had received five talents, came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverdst to me five talents, behold I have gained other five talents more.” ver. 20.

“He also that had received the two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliverest to me two talents, behold I have gained other two talents besides them,” &c., ver. 22.

We my note from hence,

1 Doct. That Jesus Christ hath some faithful servants.

2 Doct. That a faithful servant of Christ freely acknowledgeth all things whatsoever he hath received of Jesus Christ.

What every true Christian hath received,* he owns, and is ready to acknowledge it; Lord, thou gavest me my precious soul, endued me with reason, wisdom and knowledge, and gavest me the charge of it, to keep it with utmost diligence, and to see it well clothed, fed, healed, cleansed, sanctified, adorned, refreshed and comforted; thou gavest me the riches of the world, and much health, and many children; thou gavest me the gospel, and a gracious ministration thereof; thou gavest me many gifts, and many choice graces, thou gavest me a time of great gospel light, and sweet liberty to worship thee, thou gavest me a great dignity and honour in thy house, thou gavest me many precious promises and blessed ordinances, I was placed in a high station among thy people.

Whatever they have received, they readily confess and acknowledge it to the Lord Jesus; his Lord and he agree in their accounts, he is charged with receiving five talents, and says, Lord thou deliverest to me five talents. Some now are not ready to confess what talents they have received, no, but seem to

lessen them, as if they had not that time, that strength, that wisdom, that wealth, and those advantages and opportunities of doing good, and of serving Christ, his people and interest, as indeed they have; and this gives great ground to fear that they are not faithful servants. Again,

I have gained besides them five talents.

Note—2. Doct. That a faithful servant of Christ is ready to produce the increase, as well as the principle stock first received.

In speaking to this,—1. I shall show what may be meant by gaining five and two talents more.

2. Apply it.

1. It may denote an equal improvement of every particular talent; he had not only improved one talent, and omitted to trade with and improve another, to the honour of his great Master; no, but he had improved every one which he had received; not only his temporal or earthly good things, but his spiritual good things; and not only his spiritual good things likewise: he was not only faithful in much, but in that also which was the least. Some perhaps may improve their spiritual gifts, be ready to instruct others in spiritual things, and help them that way, nay, may be they are very forward to be preachers, none perhaps have greater zeal that way than they; but God having given them also a talent of earthly riches to improve, or a considerable portion of the good things of this world, but that they improve not; no, though the ministers of Christ and the poor want, they pretend they cannot give, cannot spare their money, no, that they keep for themselves, and convert it all to their own use; now these discover they are unfaithful servants, every talent proportionably is not improved.

And in like manner another may be ready to improve a talent which he hath received, the improvement of which not exposing him to any outward loss, but he having the word of God to attend upon, and the talent of time and opportunity to attend thereon, and strength and ability to visit the sick, or look after the concerns of the church; but that talent he has no heart to improve, pretends he cannot spare his time: as if his time was not his Lord's goods, and chiefly to be taken up in his service, to his honour, and to the good and profit of his people; now this manifests the baseness of the man's heart; if he hath five talents given him, he would never gain other five, viz.,

equally improved every one, and make them double, or at leastwise make great increase, satisfactory increase of each in particular.

Quest. Wherein doth the gain by his improving his talents consist?

Ans. In three or four things.

1. They gain for themselves. (1.) They gain more spiritual knowledge; by exercise they increase in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2.) In their gifts. (3.) In grace; they make their small faith to become a great faith, they gain also more love, more patience, more meekness, and more humility; they “add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity,” 1Pe 1:5-7. In these things they abound, and in these things their gain consists. (4.) They also gain double experiences of God in all his ways, ordinances, and providences.

2ndly, Others also gain by them. (1.) They that want spiritual strength, spiritual comfort, are both strengthened and comforted by “them with the same comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God,” 2Co 1:4. Others receive an equal portion of comforting, by improving their stock. (2.) They that want light, being very ignorant of God and of Christ, they by improving their knowledge in instructing them, gain perhaps in a little time as good an understanding as themselves, nay, perhaps do exceed them through God’s blessing their endeavours. (3.) Others who are poor and want the good things of the world, gain a comfortable supply of whatsoever they need, by their free contributing to them out of the talent or stock they received; and to others they perhaps lend five, ten, twenty, or a hundred pounds, and so put some in such a way to live, that in a few years they grow as rich as they themselves, and so their talent is just doubled.

3rdly, God also by the improvement of their talents gains honour to his great name. (1.) This is done when by their means many poor souls are gained to Christ by their holy doctrine, and holy lives and conversations. (2.) When by their means religion is commended, gains honour and reputation in the world. (3.) When the church of God by the care and faithfulness of his servants, is increased, preserved in love, unity and sweet concord, and flourishes in all the fruits of righteousness. O what glory doth hereby redound unto God! (4.) When by your holy and shining conversations the

mouths of such that scoff at religion are stopped. "For so is the will of God that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," 1Pe 2:15. Christ's servants by carrying it wisely towards all men, submitting to every ordinance of man not repugnant to the word of God, and in living godly and pious lives, bring double honour unto God; for, 1. They hereby stop the mouths of some; and, 2. Are instruments to convert others. (5.) Hereby also they gain a double reward to themselves at the great day; for according to every servant's improvements of his talents, our Lord shows such shall his honour be when his Lord cometh.

APPLICATION

1. We infer from hence, that true grace is of a most excellent nature, it is a fruitful seed; for in whomsoever it is sown, if cherished, it brings forth plentifully.

2. This also shows that such who are sincere and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, they equally improve every talent which they are entrusted with, they will not offer unto the Lord that which cost them nothing, but do honour the Lord with their substance; their time, their strength, and their wealth, is all improved to the honour of God, and the good of his people.

3. We also infer, that according to the quality and quantity of those talents we have received, Christ looks for our improvement of them; he that hath received five, it is not enough to trade with two or three of them, and never improve the other; no, every one according to the nature of it must be laid out and used for the honour of our blessed Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Let churches from hence learn to take notice who they are that have received any considerable talent, and observe whether they do faithfully improve them, whether their talents consist in spiritual or earthly good things. Moreover, if they find some do not do it, they ought to lay their sin before them, and labour to convince them of their evil, and if they persist in a continual neglect after all due means used, they ought to deal with them for their unfaithfulness to Christ and to his people; is it not strange that none are brought under a church censure for the horrible sin of covetousness; is there any instance in this case to be given? Certainly either there are no members of our congregations herein guilty, or else there hath been too palpable omissions of the discharge of duty herein.

5. Moreover, it may severely tend to reprove those ministers and churches who have profitable gifts among them, which if called out to the exercise of those gifts and talents, might be a great blessing to the churches, and interest of Christ in the present and future time: why were these ministerial gifts and talents given? were they not to the end Christ might by them receive glory, and the church and souls of men profit, perhaps the evil does not lie in the persons themselves; for they may say, would you have us impose ourselves or our gifts upon the church, or run before we are sent; we must be tried, and have the regular call of the church, before we undertake to preach; besides, no man is a competent judge of his own abilities for the ministry.

6. We may also perceive from hence how acceptable and well pleasing a thing it is in the eyes of our blessed Lord, to see every one of his servants to improve their respective talents, to the end he gave them.

“Well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” ver. 23.

See the high commendation Christ gives to these servants, “good and faithful servant.” None is originally, essentially, and perfectly good but God alone, goodness here refers to a man’s sincerity and serviceableness; he that is a faithful, true and laborious servant, we call a good servant, in contradistinction to a slothful and evil servant. It is said “Barnabas was a good man,” &c., Ac 11:24. That is a very sincere and godly man, one full of zeal and of the Holy Ghost. The acceptableness of the uttermost improvement of our talents in Christ’s sight appears.

1. In that commendation he gave him in calling him a good and faithful servant.

2. In that he makes him ruler over many great things, that had only been faithful over a few things; the Lord Jesus hath not made our burden under the gospel hard; no, his burden is light comparatively to the bearing of the duty and ordinances under the law. O what a multitude of statutes, laws, and ordinances were given to the Jews and Jewish church! and this will tend to aggravate their sin, who refuse to obey the Lord Christ in some of those few things required of us then.

3. In letting him into his Master's joy; for though it was not the faithfulness of the servant that gave him a title, and entrance into this joy, yet Christ takes his faithful obedience as well, as if he had procured thereby a title to heaven; nay, perhaps more kindly, because it was love to his master, and respect to his name and glory, that was the great motive of his obedience and faithfulness.

“Ruler over many things.” Note from hence,

Doct. That Christ make his saints and faithful servants rulers, yea, rulers over many things.

1. They shall reign and rule with Jesus Christ; the government of all the earth shall be given to the saints; they shall not only a thousand years inherit the earth; but shall be kings and rulers. “And thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth,” Re 5:10. And again it is said, “And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years,” Re 20:4. Over many things, i.e., Over many nations, and over many people. “A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall decree justice.” Compare these scriptures with that in Daniel. “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him,” Da 7:27.

Some think that all the kingdoms of the earth shall be given to the saints before Christ comes. No doubt but there will be a glorious state of the church in the last days, that now draw very near, and will commence at the sounding of the seventh trumpet; but the peaceable and universal reign will not be until the king comes; for Daniel and all the saints that are fallen asleep, shall have their lot in rule, government, reign and glory of the kingdom of our blessed Lord.

“Enter into the joy of thy Lord!”

The joy of our Lord is too great to enter into us, and therefore we shall enter into that. It is our Master's joy: (1.) That joy he hath procured for us, through his sorrow and sufferings. (2.) It is his, because given and granted to us by the Lord Christ; it is he that hath the only power to give it. (3.) It may be called our Master's joy, because to its nature or quality, it will be the same

he now himself swims in, or is possessed with, and filled full of, viz., heavenly joy. (1.) It will be great joy as it is heavenly, so it will be exceeding great, even joy unspeakable and full of glory. (2.) It will be soul-satisfying, and soul-ravishing joy. (3.) It will be unmixed joy, joy without sorrow, and light without darkness. (4.) It will be everlasting joy: “they shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing shall fly away,” Isa 35:10. O who is able to conceive, much less to express the nature or greatness and sweetness of the joys of heaven!

USE

1. What fools are those poor wretches, who are so much taken with, and delighted in earthly joys, which as they are but for a moment, so they are full of mixture of sorrow and misery, and can give no person ease and satisfaction.

2. But what fools are they then who value the joys of heaven, and resolve they will not part with their brutish lusts, though they never taste of the joys of our Lord, but expose their souls to eternal pain and sorrow in hell.

3. May not the joys of our Lord provoke us his servants to be very faithful and industrious in his service? No doubt but this was left on record on purpose to be a motive to press us to holy diligence, and faithfulness in the work of the Lord, our labour shall not be in vain. O what wonderful rewards will the rewards of grace be! Certainly there are none wise but such who contemn the glory of this world, and all the vain and sinful joys and delights thereof; they that have tasted how good the Lord is, or have tasted of heaven, cannot but prefer the blessed God above ten thousand worlds. Whom have I in heaven but thee? neither is there any on earth that I desire besides thee,” Ps 73:25.

4. Be exhorted ye that are Christ’s servants not to faint in your minds, nor be discouraged, though you meet with sorrow here; “For your sorrow will be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you,” Joh 16:20,22. Your sorrows are but for a moment, but your joys will be for ever, and the greater sorrows you meet with in this world for Christ’s sake, or bear patiently to his praise, the greater and sweeter will your joy be hereafter.

5. What folly then are they guilty of, that hide their talent in the earth! they choose to trade for the earth rather than heaven; that talent that should be improved for the good of their souls they hide in the earth.

SERMON XXXII

His Lord said, well done good and faithful servant, &c.—Mt 25:21.

WE are not a little pleased when our parents say, well done my good child, or a master says, well done good and faithful servant, but what is it then to have the praise of Christ.

Note. Doct. That the consideration of Christ's commendation of his servants faithfulness, should move the hearts of all his servants to holy diligence and faithfulness in improving their talents.

Quest. What talents ought they with their uttermost care and faithfulness to improve.

Answ. I answer:

1. The talent of time. Time is a most precious thing, which God bestows upon all, though to some a larger talent of time than others.

1. Time itself.

2. The opportunity of time.

1. The time of youth.* Some have the time of their youthful days, though others have lost that time and cannot recall it, and now mourn to think how foolishly they wasted and consumed those precious days, without bringing glory unto God, or reaping profit and comfort to their own souls, but contrariwise greatly dishonoured their blessed Lord and Master. I have showed in opening of another parable, how the time of youth should be improved. God calls for this time. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come," &c., Ec 12:1. Of all persons, such who improve the days of their youth, are accepted of the Lord Jesus Christ. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me," Pr 8:17.

2ndly. The time of health. Before sickness and bodily distempers take hold of us; many have by sickness, lameness, or one distemper or another, been taken off, being in no capacity to attend upon the word and means of grace. Moreover, experience shows how unable in sickness and under pains

and diseases, we are to dedicate ourselves to the work and service of Christ, or to discharge the duties of religion; we have then enough to do to bewail ourselves, and to bear up under our infirmities, therefore whilst health and strength lasteth, we should, with all our might, do whatsoever the Lord requires of us.

Secondly, the opportunity of time should be improved.

We have many opportunities allowed us, or particular seasons and advantages put into our hand. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, he seeing he hath no heart to it?" Pr 17:16. Why have we so many opportunities to attend upon the ministry of the word, who have no heart to lay our earthly business aside, and diligently wait upon God in those opportunities. O how would some in other nations rejoice, and prize such seasons which in and about this city have afforded us, nay, many poor hungry souls in some dark corners of this kingdom would not a little rejoice could they be entrusted with this talent; some go six, nay, ten miles to hear a sermon, and yet cannot perhaps have such opportunities but once in a month, while we have them every day in the week; but alas, alas, many will not go out of their houses, nor leave their earthly concerns for one hour in the week, though the word is preached very near their dwellings; I am afraid this sort will not be able to give a good account to their Lord when he comes, about their improving of this talent; they shew that they hunger not for "The word of God, nor rejoice at it as one that finds great spoil," Ps 119:162; as holy David did; neither do they prize a meeting with Christ, or communion with Christ in his ordinances; for hath he not promised to be in the midst of them that are met together in his name," Matt, 18:20. Besides, they consider not what reproach hereby they cast upon the worship of God, and what grief they bring upon his people, especially his ministers; they are commanded to preach the word out of season as well as in season; and is it not, my brethren, your duty as much to hear it out of season, as ours to preach it? and do you not hereby shew to all that you prefer the gain of the word. Alas, man knows not his time, he considers not the worth of time, nor knows how short his time may be; he may also perhaps have a heart to improve opportunities of time hereafter, when he may not have opportunities to improve: they might learn more wisdom by the children of men. Husbandmen improve the time of sowing and the time of reaping; tradesmen observe their fairs and markets, and merchants their exchange time; nay, the bees and ants observe the time to labour, and provide in

summer against the winter. If men lose the proper seasons and opportunities of improvements, in vain do they think to thrive.

Thirdly, Every man and woman should labour to improve the helps God affords them to the great end of glorifying God. (1.) The dictates and convictions of their consciences. (2.) The reproofs of his Holy Spirit. May be conscience accuses and convinces a man of this or that sin he hath committed, and the Spirit under the word severely reproofs them also, and yet they neglect, slight, and quench the Spirit, and seek to stifle their own consciences, which to do is an abominable evil, and dangerous also; for if those convictions go off, it may be long before they find them again: when a fire is almost gone quite out, it may cost much pains and blowing before it kindle again. A mariner, if he loseth a fair wind, he may lose his voyage.

Fourthly, all that light, knowledge and those gifts God hath given to us, we must improve, wherefore are these talents given? but this I have spoken largely to in opening another parable.

Fifthly, Are you entrusted with a portion of the good things of this world? you have heard this talent God expects that you should improve to his glory, and to the carrying on and supporting his interest in the world, and also his ministers and poor members, that which they are to have, he hath put it into your hands, and made you his stewards of it, and if you fail or be unfaithful in the discharging your duties, so that the cause of God languisheth in your hands, his poor ministers discouraged, wanting what is necessary, and his poor want bread to eat; you will have a sad account one day to give to your great Master. "Will a man rob God?" Mal 3:8. Methinks that high commendation Christ gives his faithful servants, should set you on fire to do your utmost in distributing your Lord's money to his children that need it; "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Sixthly, The talent of special grace, nay, every grace of the Spirit, must be improved.

1. Indeed grace is the chiefest talent, the best of our Master's goods, and it is a talent also (you have heard) which he doth not intrust all men with; no, none but such he hath a particular or special love unto. Brethren,

Our faith and other graces may be but small or weak at first, but by a due improving of them, they may in time grow strong, and flourish in our souls.

Paul observed after what a precious manner the faith of the saints at Thessalonica grew: “we are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you towards each other aboundeth,” 2Th 1:3.

The way how grace comes to grow, may be twofold.

(1.) By God’s infusing new degrees of it, or further measures, and so adding to the first stock.

(2.) By their daily exercise, for that way grace is augmented, and grows in believers also: indeed he that improves the grace he hath, God hath promised to give more grace unto: “But he giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble, Jas 4:6. Such shall be helped to mortify sin, to resist Satan’s temptations, and to discharge acceptably all religious duties, and to bear all reproaches and heavy burdens for Christ’s sake.

2. But by the non-improvement of grace, that which we have may be much spent and wasted.

3. Consider, what great advantages we have in order to growth in grace; what fruitful seasons, fruitful shinings, and fruitful showers; the sun approacheth near, and shines hot on us, beyond what it doth may be on thousands. And God affording such seasons of grace, expecteth suitable improvements of grace: “what could have been done more to my vineyard which I have not done in it?” Isa 5:4.

4. We had better have loss, waste, and decay in our earthly substance a thousand times, than to waste or decay in grace, zeal and holiness: also a saint may so far decline or decay in faith and other graces, that he may fear he hath not one dram of it left in him, and so fall under great darkness and despondency as to cry out with Job, “my hope is cut off.”

5. Moreover, according to our growth and increase in grace, will our peace, joy and consolation be; would you lose that through slothfulness and neglect of improvement of your strength and time, and opportunities in one year, that you did not arrive at until many years passed over your heads?

Quest. What hinders our growth in grace?

1. Ans.* Giving way to those fleshly lusts that war against the soul; also a neglect of a holy and diligent watch over our own hearts, or not endeavouring to mortify sin, but let the weeds of vain thoughts lodge in us, greatly tends to the decay of faith, and weakens all grace in our souls.

2. By letting earthly things take up too much room in our hearts, by giving way to inordinate desires after riches or about the cares of this world.

3. By grieving the Holy Spirit, by which means he may withdraw his sweet influences, whereby all grace is strengthened. Indeed, no grace can thrive when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from a poor believer.

4. Or it may be through neglect of prayer, hearing the word, meditation, and Christian converse: can the babe grow that refuseth the breast? we should “as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby,” 1Pe 2:2.

5. By preferring worldly gain above spiritual gain and profit; a little of the world will not satisfy some professors; no, they can be better satisfied with a little faith, a little zeal for God, a little holiness, than with a little gold and silver. God from hence may blast them in their gifts, and cause their grace to decay. When men do not increase in their bounty to God’s people, he lets them decay and wither in their souls, and sometimes in their trades and estates also.

Quest. How should all our talents be improved?

1. With uttermost care and diligence; “whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,” Ec 9:10, &c. It is said that Mary did what she could; it is the diligent hand that maketh rich: through slothfulness the evil servant failed, and his unfaithfulness consisted partly in his negligence.

2. According to the degree and measure every one hath received, (as before I shewed you,) he that hath five talents must improve those five, and he that hath received two must improve those two, and he that hath received one, must improve that one.

3. All the talents we have received, must be improved so as to answer the end for which they were given.

(1.) To the honour and glory of God, this is the first and main end why God gave talents to his servants.

(2.) To the good of others, even the good of all men, but especially the people of God.

Hast thou the true knowledge of God in a greater degree or measure of it than others, thou must not conceal or hide this talent, but when opportunity presents thou must speak for God. Perhaps,

1st. Thou mayst be cast where some may make violent opposition against some main truths of Christ, or points of faith, and thou art by: now if thou holdest thy peace and let the truth suffer, and yet art able to maintain and defend it, thou mayest be deemed to hide thy talent; therefore then thou must stand up for thy Master's cause, and with all wisdom plead for that truth thou seest is opposed, and neither be afraid or ashamed though it may be to thy outward loss; shall truth suffer through thy silence?

2ndly, or thou mayst be cast among poor ignorant persons, who know not Jesus Christ, and if thou seest they are willing to be informed, thou must improve thy talent to their instruction and profit; but be sure thou dost it in all sincerity of heart, in love to God and to their precious souls, and not to be taken notice of, or to get applause of men, or out of vain glory.

3rdly, Let it be our care to instruct the ignorant, and to reduce such, if possible, that are gone astray, and led into errors, or corrupted with heresy; and also,

4thly, to strengthen those that are weak, and confirm the feeble-minded, and such that are wavering.

5thly, To succour such that are tempted or in trouble.

6thly, To comfort such that are dejected or cast down in their spirits.

7thly, To encourage the fearful in a day of persecution. And

8thly, To reprove backbiters and tale-bearers, and rebuke the unruly and such that go on impudently in sin and ungodly courses.

9thly. To do what lies in us to quicken the slothful, and exhort them to their duties, and in all things to seek the peace and good of that church where God hath set us, that God in all things may be glorified.

Thirdly. We must so improve our talents, that we may be ready to give up our accounts with joy, that we may hear our blessed Lord say to us when he comes; “Well done, good and faithful servants.”

USE

This tends to reprove all such that never consider what talents they are which they have received, neither regard the due improvement of them.

Also it reproves such that are slothful or negligent in their duties, or barren persons, or like Israel of old, “empty vines, that bring forth fruit to themselves;” as if their time, strength, knowledge, wealth, and all they are entrusted with, was their own, and should never be called to an account about the improvement or non-improvement of them.—

But to proceed.

“Then he which had received the one talent, came and said, Lord, I knew that thou wert an hard man,” &c., ver. 24. “And I was afraid, and hid thy talent, lo there thou hast that is thine,” ver. 25.

“And his Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, &c., ver. 26.

Note from hence.

Doct. That he that improveth not that talent God gave him, but hideth it, is a wicked and slothful servant, he is charged with slothfulness.

In speaking of this I shall do two things.

1. Show wherein the wickedness of this servant consisteth.
2. Give you the character of a slothful person.

1. He is a wicked person, and part of his wickedness lies in his slothfulness. All men in the whole world are of two sorts, godly or wicked, good or bad, believers or unbelievers. Also Christ's domestic servants, those of his own house are also of two sorts, either faithful or slothful servants, wise or foolish, sheep or goats, wheat or tares.

2. The wickedness of the slothful servant lies in hiding his talent in the earth, viz., in his earthliness, or in preferring outward or external things above those things that are spiritual and eternal, or in loving this world above the love and favour of God.

3. In his charging God with injustice, or being hard and cruel, laying the cause of their destruction upon God himself, in commanding them to do that which they have no power to do; whereas the Holy God showeth that he will pass the sentence against them for their non-improving the talent he gave unto them.

“Thou knewest that I reaped where I sowed not.”

It is spoken ironically; well, if this were so, yet shall I therefore not reap where I did sow? It is the genius of wicked men to have hard thoughts of God, and to lay the blame of their miscarriages upon God himself; “I should do better if God would but give me grace:” such seem to dread injustice in God rather than his justice, whereas God could as soon cease to be, as cease to be just and righteous.

4. Ironical reprehensions, or rebukes of God set forth, is dreadful displeasure; Can the blessed Jesus bear the falsehood or misrepresentations of wicked men? “Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them (that is thy sins) in order before thine eyes. —Now consider this ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you,” Ps 50:21-22.

5. The wickedness of unfaithful or slothful servants consisteth in their slighting the Lord Jesus Christ through their unreasonable unbelief: “Ye have said it is vain to serve God, and what profit is it we have kept his ordinances?” &c., Mal 3:14. They think all that is done in the service of God is lost labour, neither bringing profit to God, nor any to themselves; better sit still, or hide our talents, and do nothing, than to do it to no purpose: —“Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not, wherefore have

we afflicted our souls?” &c., Isa 58:3. They complain (like this wicked servant) of hard usage from God, though they did nothing in a right manner, from a right spirit or principle, not to a right end, yet would be rewarded for the base and hypocritical services they had done.

Had the wicked servant believed what his great Master had done, and rested wholly upon him, or believed in him, though there was no reward for his own work, yet love to his Lord would have engaged his heart, and drawn him forth to have done his uttermost to the glory and honour of his blessed Master. The more severe wicked men apprehend God is, the more careful and strict they should be to improve their time and talents; for if they look upon him as a hard man, or a usurer, they might from thence learn to bring him the more increase, so that out of their own mouths they will be condemned. What have they such thoughts of Christ, and yet trade not at all, but return back only the principal stock? “Take that which is thine.”

Quest. How can a sinner give or restore that to Christ he received of him.

Ans. Here lies an absolute disparity, a disparity in this parable, and not only in this, but also in some other things, it runs not on all four. For though it is true, a servant among men may return the principal stock back to his Lord, of which he made no improvement, yet sinners cannot be said thus to do; for they like the prodigal (as they improve not what they have) so they waste what was first delivered to them.

6. The wickedness of this servant consisted in saying in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, (as our Saviour shows in another place;) this wicked person certainly thought his Lord would never come again, he being so long gone. Now this is an abominable evil, considering the repeated promises our Saviour has made of his second coming; it is indeed to charge Christ with breach of his promise, and his word not to be believed.

Secondly, How may a slothful and wicked servant be known?

Ans. 1. By his negligence in and about the Lord’s work; he is a wicked servant that basely omits or neglects the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and has his heart much more set upon his own worldly business; he cries I have business of great moment to do, I cannot come, I have bought five yoke of oxen, I must go and prove them; and another saith, I have bought a farm,

and I must needs go and see it. And, saith a third, I have married a wife, (one perhaps that is an enemy to religion) and I cannot come.

2. He is such a person whose heart is wicked, he being never changed or renewed by the Spirit of God; and therefore one that remains in the old nature, having enmity in his carnal mind against God, Ro 8:7, being filled with uncleanness, and covetousness, whose god is his belly, and that glories in his shame, minding earthly things, Php 3:19; every wicked servant is not to the like degree openly profane. For some of Christ's domestic servants; such, I mean, that are members of the visible church, are wicked and slothful servants; yet these are more close and secretly wicked, and some of them not known or discerned to be such persons, yet they may be partly discovered by their proud, niggardly and covetous tempers, and by their neglect of the most hard and most difficult part and duties of religion, being not indeed and in truth what they profess to be, nor the same abroad and in the closet, which they are thought, or taken to be by some, if not generally by all, yet their idle, slothful disposition manifesteth they are wicked persons.

Quest. How is that known?

1. A slothful person is soon weary; if you set him on work, he is tired presently, he takes no delight in his work, and thus we find God complains of some, "Ye said also, Behold, what weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this at your hands? saith the Lord," Mal 1:13. It seems to me, that which made them weary of God's service, was partly the great charge that attended his altars and sanctuary, they would not bring the best of their flock and herd, and therefore sith the Lord; "Cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing," ver. 14.

Thus some in God's house grow weary of his service, the charge is too great for their carnal hearts, and though they offer the lame and the blind, I mean some small matter, yet they are weary in doing so much; they can keep good tables, and clothe themselves and children in rich clothing, and spend pounds idly on unnecessary occasions, but one shilling once in the week to Christ is too much, they are weary, and so render themselves wicked and slothful servants.

A slothful professor neglects his heart, neglects mortification, &c.

Secondly, A slothful servant neglects his vineyard and his fields: “I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding—and lo it was all over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof,” Pr 24:30-31.

Just thus it is with a wicked and slothful servant of Christ, or one that professeth himself so to be, he neglects his own vineyard, I mean his own heart, he labours not to mortify his sins and inordinate lusts and desires, but lets the weeds and nettles of corruption grow therein, and earthly thoughts are given way to, also he neglects praying, hearing, and meditation, alas, he has no time for such duties, his own business is so great that lies on his hands; and this shows that he is a wicked and slothful servant.

3rdly. A sluggard or slothful person is ready to make many excuses, and small matters hinder him from attending upon the worship of God.

“The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets.” He dreams of danger when none is near; what lion or devil should hinder us from attending upon our Lord’s works? But this is indeed a ground to fear, a lion hath got hold of him, i.e., Satan by his temptations is too hard for him, but this lion he sees not; no, it is a lion of another nature which he fears.

A slothful person desires, but his endeavours are not agreeable to his desires

4thly. A slothful person’s endeavours are not agreeable to his desires: “The desires of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour, he coveteth greedily all the day long,” &c., Pr 21:25-26. He is a man of desires, but no man of endeavours; his desire torments him almost to death, whilst he passionately desires that peace and satisfaction which he hath not, nor is ever likely to find, unless his mind was changed; he desires inward joy, and fain would be saved. “Let me die the death of the righteous, let my last end be like his,” but he will take no pains to procure what he desires, nor improve the means to so great an end. And this his idleness exposeth him to want, and so to death; it will kill him at last, or be the cause of his damnation. “He coveteth greedily all the day long.” If desires, wishes, and wouldings would procure what he wants without endeavours, he would be a happy man; he is not like David. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I

seek after,” &c., Ps 27:4. He did not desire it only, but he resolved that his endeavours should be according to his desires; and thus the prophet Isaiah speaketh also, “With my soul have I desired thee in the night,” Isa 26:9. Well, was that all? Did he only desire God? No, see his next words. “And with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early,” most affectionately and sincerely, and also timely; he desired and longed for the Lord and his endeavours were suitable to his desires; and thus the spouse acted also. She desired her beloved, and she rose to seek him, and never rested until she had found him;* but this a slothful person does not, and as his endeavours are not for Christ; so also his desires are not after Christ neither; no, but only after salvation; he would be saved, but loves not the Saviour so much as he loves the world; he is for the portion, but cares not for the person.

5thly. A slothful person cries, “Yet a little more sleep, yet a little slumber,” Pr 6:6. Just thus some professors cry in their hearts, a little more liberty to pursue the world, I will be more diligent in Christ’s service, and thoughtful of his church, but at present O let me have a little more rest, dispense with my omissions a little while longer; and thus they slumber and sleep away their time, which should be improved to the honour of Christ, and to the good of his people, and the salvation of their own souls, until poverty and destruction comes upon them. “So thy poverty shall come upon thee, as one that travaileth,” &c. That is, swiftly and unexpectedly, and unavoidably, no escaping it.

6thly. A wicked and slothful person is confident of the goodness of his own estate. “The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason,” Pr 26:16. He may say, Christ is his hope, it is on his righteousness, or that he depends upon Christ alone; and saith, “He is rich, and increased with goods, and hath need of nothing,” &c., Re 3:17. Alas, sin is a small thing in his sight, and he troubles not himself about duties of religion, nor perhaps loves to hear the doctrine of sanctification and inherent holiness preached. Sirs, I am afraid many of this sort will appear slothful servants when our Lord comes; for he that loves not the doctrine of holiness, loves not he sure the practice of holiness. Come, such persons who exalt their own wisdom and knowledge above others, and are proud and conceited of their parts and attainments, and magnify their wisdom above seven wise men, (that is the perfect body of orthodox Christians) that can give a reason sufficient to convince them of their errors; have a black character upon them, for though they live in sin and are ungodly, yet are confident of their salvation.

7thly. A slothful person cannot encounter with difficulties;* “The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold, therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing,” Pr 20:4. It is not said in winter he shall beg, but in harvest, which I conceive refers to the great harvest day, viz., the end of the world, which our Lord calls the harvest, such that labour not to plough up the fallow-ground of their hearts, and sow to the Spirit, shall in that harvest day cry, Lord, Lord! but though they then beg, they shall have nothing. These persons hate, and strive to avoid all laborious and difficult work, though there is a necessity of it to be done. If an idle faith, a presumptuous faith, or faith without works,* will serve their turn; they have got that, but none of that purifies the heart, and that leads them to “deny themselves,* and to take up their cross and follow Christ,” Mt 16:24. But these things are too hard for them, they must be saved in an easier way, they cannot enter in at this strait gate, nor walk in this narrow way, they cannot bear the cold blasts of afflictions, temptations, reproaches and persecution.

8thly. A slothful person feeds not upon that which he hath gotten. “The slothful man roasteth not that which he hath took in hunting,” Pr 12:27. Some think, Solomon meaneth that which he hath got unjustly, or by fraudulent practices; but this I humbly conceive, is not meant hereby, but rather when a man hath got by his endeavour the things of this world, he does not live upon them, he enjoys not the fruit of his labour, though he may catch venison, yet lives upon mean diet. So some spiritual slothful persons, they may hunt for food for their souls, go and hear this and that minister, and search the scripture to know the way of life; but when they have attained to some great degree of light and knowledge, may be know Christ only is the way, yet they believe not on him, they find by hunting this and that promise, but do not make food of it, i.e., do not by faith apply those promises to their own souls; also they see this and that ordinance Christ hath appointed, but they obey them not, submit not to them, and also they find there are such and such severe threatenings pronounced against all unbelievers, impenitent and disobedient persons, but they fear them not; and thus the slothful servant roasteth not what he hath took in hunting.

9thly. The way of the Lord to a slothful person is as an hedge of thorns, that is, it is grievous to him, or there are in it such difficulties, that he despaireth to pass through, and never striveth to overcome them. “The way of the slothful is as an hedge of thorns,” Pr 15:19. The Holy Ghost alludes to that way which he ought to walk in, it is grievous to him, like pricking thorns;

now the reason of this is because his heart is not changed, for all believers found, before they received the grace of God, and were renewed, how grievous the work of religion was to them. The old nature hates true piety; "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Ro 8:7. "But the way of the righteous is made plain," Pr 15:19. And hence the beloved disciple saith, "And his commandments are not grievous." 1Jo 5:3. They that are true believers, having obtained a new nature and sincere love to Jesus Christ, the hardest command is easy and not grievous to them, though it may be hard to the fleshly or unrenewed part, yet after the inward man they delight in the law of God; and this shows the absolute necessity there is of regeneration, and what a woful state such are in, who only have their understandings somewhat enlightened, but have not their hearts, their wills, and their affections renewed or changed, for religion is but a burden to them; and this discovers that a vast difference there is between a true, sanctified person, and all others.

10thly. Slothful persons live not up to what they know of God, they do not improve their uttermost strength and abilities, but know more than they will do, and this our Lord shows very clearly in this parable, in respect of this wicked servant; they do not bring up the bottom of their lives to the top of their light, as it is impossible to obey the truth, and not to know it; so to know the truth, and not to obey it is unprofitable. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," Mt 7:21. Divine knowledge (saith one) is not like the light of the moon, to sleep by; but it is like the light of the sun to work by, it is not a loiterer in the market-place, but a labourer in the vineyard. A man may be a great scholar, and yet be a great sinner; Judas was a preacher, and yet a traitor. Many professors know what is to be done, but never do what is to be known.

Thus I have given you the character of the wicked and slothful servant.

"Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath the ten talents; for unto every one that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath," ver. 29, 30.

The taking away of his talent (saith one) and the taking him away from his talent, is all one. Our Lord no doubt means he shall be stripped of all Christ gave him, even his very soul shall be required of him, and he shall never be trusted any more; this is done at death, and will appear to be fully

done in the day of judgment. Though God sometimes before discovers some men to be hypocrites, and all they boasted of, seems then to be taken away, they are utterly blasted, &c.

“And give it to him that hath ten.”

In this there is also a disparity, we are therefore only to attend on the scope and design of our Lord in these words. A lord among men it is true, may take the money, or talent he gave to an unfaithful servant, and give it to another, but I see not how the talent our Lord refers to, can be given to another; neither ought parables to be strained after such a manner, that in all things they must run parallel-wise, and they that see not this, let them remain blind.

1. We are to learn from hence, that whatsoever wicked men have of earthly things, or common talents, they shall lose it, or be dispossessed of all they had.

2. That though Christ’s faithful servants shall not receive an addition from those that were wicked; yet that the industrious and faithful Christian shall have much more abundance; or, as the unprofitable servant, shall have nothing; so the faithful servant shall be greatly enriched; and all this our Lord speaketh to encourage our diligence in his service, and in improving all gifts and blessings we have received of him.

Quest. How can that be taken away from him which he had not?

How that can be said to be taken away what a man hath not

1. Answ. To say he had no talent, is not so; for his Lord gave him one talent; neither can that which a man hath not, be taken away from him.

2. Therefore our Lord doubtless meaneth it was all one as if he had it not, he hid it, he used or improved it not, or had gained nothing by it, and so it may be said he had it not, or did but seem to have what he had.

3. Besides temporal things are said not to be.* “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings and fly away,” Pr 23:5. Whosoever has true grace, has really something, *i.e.*, they have

that which hath substance in it; but whatsoever is short of this, is in Christ's account just nothing.

“And cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” ver. 30.

Thus our Lord ends many parables to discover the certainty of the torments of hell. “Unprofitable servant,” &c.

Quest. Are not all unprofitable servants?

Answ. All are unprofitable in the sense our Lord speaketh, when he says, “When you have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants,” Lu 16:10, that is, that we deserve nothing. God is not a debtor unto us, but whatsoever we have is of his grace alone; the meaning is, God receiveth no benefit by our service. Now if faithful servants are unprofitable, how much more are wicked and slothful servants, they neither bring glory to God, nor profit to men, nor unto their own souls?

USE

1. How dismal will the end of all wicked men be? Whether profane persons or professors, who are hypocrites or slothful servants.

2. Let the great end, design, and scope of our blessed Lord in this parable be well observed. 1. That though he tarries long, yet he will come again. 2. That when he comes he will be as a King, and Judge of heaven and earth. 3. That whatsoever talents any have received, God expects the improvement of them. 4. That some have more given to them, and talents that far excel what are given unto others, and that God distributes his own goods and favours as he pleaseth. 5. That all those that he gives true grace unto, do more or less improve their Lord's money. 6. That whatsoever any men have, whether earthly or spiritual good things, they received all from Christ, and shall be called to give a strict account to him for them at the last day. 7. That proud and sinful men are subject to charge God and the blessed Jesus foolishly; nay, to censure him as being severe, and even lay the blame of their miscarriages upon him, as if he had not given them enough, or that which was sufficient. 8. That all their mouths shall be stopped, and the justice of God vindicated at the great day, and that their own plea shall silence them. 9. And that, though the rewards God will give, are rewards of grace; yet all pious and laborious

servants of Christ shall have glorious rewards. 10. That there will be degrees of glory; one is made ruler over ten cities, another over two cities. 11. That eternal wrath in hell shall be the certain portion of all wicked men. Now to conclude with what I shall say to this parable.

3. Let us all be exhorted to holy diligence in our Lord's work and service. (1.) Consider the weightiness of the work, it concerns our eternal happiness. (2.) Consider, what hard work the Son of God (considered as God's Servant, or Mediator, hath done for us,) and how he sweat and bled at his work. (3.) Consider, what honour, fear, and service, love, and obedience Christ deserveth from us, and what a good Master he is; and God by our fruitfulness is said to be glorified. (4.) Let us consider, whose eyes are continually upon us, whilst we are at our work. (5.) Consider, that now our Lord is very near, or it will be but a very little while before we must all appear before him, to give up our account. (6.) Remember how kindly our Lord will embrace all his faithful servants, when he comes, and what a commendation he will give them, and what joys they shall enter into. And thus I close with this parable.