

AN EXPOSITION
OF
THE PARABLES.
BOOK IV

Benjamin Keach

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

BOOK IV
A SUPPLEMENT

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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A
SUPPLEMENT
TO AN
EXPOSITION
OF THE
PARABLES AND SIMILITUDES, ETC.

**1. I. Parable, Luke 7
Of The Creditor That Had Two Debtors**

SERMON I

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which loved him most? Simon answered, and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast judged truly.—Lu 7:41,43.

The reason of our Lord's speaking this parable, we may see, ver. 36. One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him, &c. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and he sat down. And behold a woman in the city, that was a sinner; that is, a great sinner, a notorious sinner, the chief sinner in the city; when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, ver. 37, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, &c.

This offended the Pharisee, and he said, "If this man was a prophet, he would have known what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner;" and then Jesus answered, and said, &c.

2. As to the scope of this parable, it is,

1. To show, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, great sinners, such that see the need they have of a Saviour: the Pharisees were sinners, though more close and secret sinners: not sinners in their own eyes, like others, but righteous persons.

2. To show there are degrees of sin, or that some are greater sinners, more notorious in sin and wickedness than others.

3. To show both little and great sins, when the sinner believes and repenteth, there is forgiveness and pardon in God, through Jesus Christ, for them.

4. That all sin is forgiven freely of mere grace and favour.

5. To show, that great sinners, when forgiven, do love Christ more than others; and that the sense of pardon of sin causeth a poor sinner to love Jesus Christ dearly.

But to proceed to speak to the parts thereof;

1. By the creditor, the great God is meant.

2. By the debtor that oweth Him five hundred pence, is meant Mary Magdalene and other great sinners, that believe.

3. By the debtor that owed Him fifty, any sinner that is not so notorious in wickedness, perhaps a Pharisee, or one who seems not so great a sinner; though I see not how it may be particularly applied to Simon, for whether he believed in Christ or not, and was pardoned, is doubtful.

Having nothing to pay, or nothing to satisfy the justice of God.

“He frankly forgave them,” that is, freely, without any payment the debtor made, or could make. Note,

Doct. 1. That sin is a debt,* and sinners are debtors unto God.

1. That sin is a debt, and sinners debtors: this I shall but just touch upon here, because it is opened more fully elsewhere.

Sin is called a debt, “forgive us our debt,” &c. By sin we are in debt to God’s justice, we having violated his just and holy law.

Sin is called a debt, *debita*, (saith one) sins and debts are used promiscuously, as Lu 11:4. Compared with Mt 6:10. It is generally used in respect of any that are obnoxious to punishment; the Latins, *Penas debere*, so

the Hebrew word is used both for debt and guilt; it is not called a debt as if it were owing to God, but the contrary, i.e., obedience and holiness; in sin there is guilt, or an obligation to eternal punishment; and this is called a debt, &c.

But for the farther opinion of it, consider,

1. A man may rob his neighbour of his goods, or of his good name, and so be a criminal and a debtor: sinners have robbed Almighty God of His holiness. Adam gave more credit to the devil than unto God, and so all wicked men.

2. Man brake God's holy law, and so became a debtor to His justice, i.e., obnoxious to the penalty denounced.

3. Debts may be more or less, though the least must be satisfied, for, so some sinners are more guilty than others; here is one that owed Him five hundred pence, and another fifty.

4. Debts may be as great, that a debtor may not be able to pay them, nay, have nothing to pay; sinners are such debtors they are not able to pay, or satisfy God's justice for their sins; they have not one farthing to pay.

5. If a debtor fall into a man's hand that is for strict justice,* unless he or his surety pay all he owes, he must go to prison: now, God being just, infinitely just and holy, justice being a perfection of his nature, unless sinners or their blessed Surety pay all the whole debt, or make a full and complete satisfaction to the law and divine justice, they must go to the prison of eternal darkness: "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both," or freely forgave them.

Doct. 2. That sin is frankly or freely forgiven, as an act of sovereign grace alone, to poor sinners, through Jesus Christ.

It is forgiven freely to us, as an act of God's grace alone, but not without a full satisfaction made by our blessed Surety, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Ro 3:24.

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," &c. ver. 25.

God doth not forgive sinners, as a simple act of mercy, without respect had to that atonement, redemption, or satisfaction, made to his justice by Jesus Christ, and this was signified in all those legal sacrifices, and without shedding of blood was no remission; to show, Heb 9:22, that without the shedding of Christ's blood there is no pardon, no remission of one sin, whether great or small sins.

Obj. If we, in Christ, paid all our debts, and that his righteousness, i.e., his active and passive obedience, is imputed to us, how can we be said to be forgiven freely?

1. Answ. We found not the Surety, but God.

2. Men may as well urge the Surety's money was the debtor's, because His money pay the debtor's debt, and it is accepted for him; nay, and that the bankrupt is as rich as his Surety.

3. Men, after the same manner also, may say they are their own saviours, because saved by One substituted and accepted in their stead, to make an atonement for their sins, or to satisfy justice, and save their souls; and thus, instead of magnifying free grace in pardon and justification, men may utterly destroy it, and say they are justified by works, because it is by works of obedience done by our Surety. But nothing is more fully laid down in the word of God than this, viz., That we are forgiven freely, pardoned and justified freely of God's rich grace; it is all in a way of mercy and grace to us, but in a way of merit and desert to Jesus Christ; so that all the glory does redound to the free grace of God, and to Jesus Christ, the great pay master; and thankfulness on our part: and that we are frankly and freely forgiven on our part, though our debts are paid by Jesus Christ, I shall endeavour to make appear.

I. In respect of the spring and rise of the way of our pardon; the satisfaction which was made for us, was contrived as an act of infinite wisdom, which is a greater demonstration of grace than if God had pardoned us as a simple act of mercy, without a satisfaction to his justice: what could be a greater gift of free grace, than to give his Son to die for us?

II. Because whatsoever Christ did for us, was in him also an act of his grace and love; "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2Co 8:9. &c. But farther to prove it;

How it appears that our pardon is of God's free grace alone Man an object of mercy as well as of love

III. Pray see how the scripture declares it to be wholly of the free grace of God that we are pardoned, justified, renewed, and saved; "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that sheweth mercy," Ro 9:16. As election is of grace and mercy alone, so is justification, pardon of sin, and eternal life also; "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," Eph 2:3. Grace may be extended to any object, but mercy refers to persons in misery; and God set his love to the elect, as fallen, and so as objects of mercy: mercy is grace and love to the miserable, though grace properly is love not limited to this or that person, in respect of their circumstances, but only let out as sovereign pleasure pleaseth: yet, I say, no elect person proceeding from Adam whom God manifesteth love and grace unto, but are objects of mercy also; because, they, by sin, were made miserable as well as others. The time when God set his love on us, and Christ loved us, was when we lay in our blood: and in that condition, from eternity, God beheld us. Observe St. Paul's words, "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit 3:5; according to his mercy as well as grace and love, though we are pardoned, justified, and saved according to the works which Christ hath done; yet we must not call his works and obedience, ours, not according to works of obedience or righteousness that we have done. Moreover, also the elect are called vessels of mercy, as well as of grace and love.

IV. That pardon of sin, justification, &c., is alone of God's free grace, love, and mercy, will farther appear, because there was no force or constraint put upon God, the Father, or the Son, to undertake our redemption: I mean, God had been just and righteous if he had showed fallen man no favour, no love nor pity; it rose not from any necessity of nature that was in the divine Being, but only from God's sovereign will, grace, and compassion.

V. It also appears in that the gift of his own Son was an act of his free love to us; he was given to die for us, to procure pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons. What could be a greater act of love than this?

VI. We did not, could not, oblige the Holy God, nor move his heart towards us in a way of grace, love, and compassion. Did Adam entreat, pray, or beseech God to pity or pardon him, or any of his offspring, and send him

(or them) a Saviour? No, no, he ran from God, and begged no help nor forgiveness of him, before free grace was manifested unto him.

VII. Did any sinner deserve pardon of God? much less such a way of it that divine wisdom found out. Were not all men rebels against God? it was free grace, sirs, without the least desert or merit; for we were so far from being deserving, that we were ill-deserving, nay, hell-deserving creatures.

VIII. Had sinners anything to pay which could satisfy the justice of God? No, pray read the words of my text, “And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.” Alas! they ran every day more and more in debt, and had not so much as one farthing to give, to satisfy for the evil one sin had in it; or had we any friend or brother, or could we find a surety who would oblige himself to pay our debts, was the ransom of our finding? No, no, (saith God) I have found a ransom.

IX. Or did God do all that good he designed to do, and hath done for us, with respect had to some after-recompence to be made by us, or compensation for his great love, grace, and pity, showed to us? No, no, he knew it was impossible for sinners to do that, nor did he expect it at our hands, no, not anything, but a thankful acceptance of his infinite favour. “What giveth thou to him, or what receiveth he at thy hands?” Job 35:7.

My brethren, when we have done all we can do, “We are but unprofitable servants, and do no more than what was our duty to do,” Lu 17:10. How then can we make him any recompence? besides, are not the blessings such that are infinite or inconceivable? i.e., God to be our Nod; what can finite creatures give in recompence of such a gift? “He (saith Paul) is not worshipped of men’s hands, as if he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all men life, and breath, and all things,” Ac 17:25. Do we, can we give anything to God? faith is the most noble grace of all graces, but faith doth not give anything to God; no, but it is always a fetching from him; we therefore bring nothing but empty vessels to him that he may fill them. Alas! all that we are and can do we owe to him, also faith, repentance, and all ability to do good, we derive from him as his own free gifts; we must therefore say with David, “Of thine own have we given thee,” 1Ch 29:14.

Besides, God is full already, we can put no more into this vessel; there is no empty space in God nor in Jesus Christ; who can add to infiniteness? or fill this ocean fuller than it is? There is, my brethren, no recompence to be made by us to God; no giving to him, nor of his receiving at our hands; God

hath no need of us, nor of any thing we can do, though he accepteth of our services in and through Jesus Christ; therefore the all-sufficiency and independency of God, shows it is of his grace alone. Is not God happy, yea, infinitely happy, perfectly happy in himself without us? and was he not as happy before he made the world, either angels or men, as he is now? or can there be any addition made to his infinite or essential glory?

X. Or are there any previous qualifications to be in us, or any gracious act performed by us, in order to pardon of sin, as a cause thereof, or wherefore God doth forgive our sins? May be you will say, yea, there is repentance, and faith required in order to pardon.

Answ. Is not man before grace, or before he is quickened, dead? and are not all his works dead works, and not accepted of God? Can a tree bring forth good fruit before it is made good; either that repentance you speak of is good fruit, or not, (I mean evangelical repentance) or it is not; but such repentance it cannot be before he receives the Holy Spirit; besides, are not faith and repentance the gifts of God, or doth legal repentance, or any evangelical act of the creature, procure God's grace and special favour? or must not God as an act of his own free grace turn the sinner before he can be turned? or because repentance is required as a condition of connexion; is it a procuring condition by way of casualty; or because God commands sinners to make them new hearts? hath the sinner power of himself to do it? or is not pardon, peace, wine, and milk, had "without money and without price?" Isa 55:1-2; if so, our repentance, faith, &c., procures it not at God's hand.

XI. Doth not God act towards man according to the counsel of his own will? and doth not pardon, and all good we receive, alone flow from hence? "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace that was given us in Christ before the world began," 2Ti 1:9.

XII. Or is there any room left, after all that God has done, for sinners to boast or glory? or doth the will of God depend upon the will of man? or the will of man upon the will of God? Is it not God (who by his almighty power inclines the will of man to move and bow to the will of God? Or shall any have cause to admire themselves in the day of judgment, in respect to the care they have had of their own souls, and for their improving the means of grace? or shall they not admire God's free grace and infinite love to them? or doth not God do more for them that are saved than he doth for those who

perish? “Who makes thee to differ from another? or what hast thou which thou didst not receive? now if thou didst not receive it? why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?” 1Co 4:7. What I have said I hope will fully tend to satisfy all, that pardon of sin, justification, and eternal life, is alone of God’s free grace.

APPLICATION

1. Let great sinners from hence see what ground there is for them to throw themselves upon Christ for pardon; this woman was the city sinner, she was a great sinner; but with Paul she obtained mercy. God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts; poor sinners are ready to were not their sins so great God would pardon them; but be not discouraged, though your sins are great, yet Christ’s merits, and God’s mercy through him, are far greater, We have a great High-priest, therefore say with David, “forgive my sins, for they are great,” Heb 4:14; Ps 25:11; he knew God was great in mercy, he that owed five hundred pence, nay, ten thousand talents was pardoned, as well as he that owed but fifty or a hundred pence. “Though your sins be as red as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,” Isa 1:18; it is as easy with God to pardon great sins as small, Christ having atoned for all the sins of God’s elect.

2. This reproves those who magnify the power of man, or the will of man, intimating, that after all that God or Christ doth, in order to conversion and pardon, he leaves the whole issue to the will of the creature; so that it is the will of man that determines the matter, whether the Word shall be effectual or not: God (they say) doth afford equal power, grace, mercy, and love to them that are damned, as he doth to them that are saved: if so, then we must read the text backward, “It is of him that willeth, and of him that runneth, and not of God that showeth mercy.”

1. If men, before grace is infused into them, or they are renewed, can act as they say, what is become of that enmity that St. Paul says is in the carnal mind? he says the will, or “the mind, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;” and these men say it may be subject, without any supernatural or Almighty power is put forth to change the heart, or else they say nothing, but must give up their bad cause.

Hear what one of them says;* and that no immediate operation of the Spirit upon the mind or will is needful for any one that believes, &c. This, he strives to prove.

2. They affirm that moral suasions are sufficient to bring men to believe; so that the power men have to believe, is naturally in them, and not given them immediately by the Lord.

And hereby they deny also, that man is dead in sin, spiritually dead, and cannot act spiritually, nor do anything that is truly good, until he is quickened.

3. Also then we are born again of our own will, or the will of man, and not as it is the effect of the will and good pleasure of God, contrary to the testimony of the Spirit, that says, “which are born again, not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,” Joh 1:13.

Moreover, (as one notes) it follows according to their opinion, “that the general love which they would have in God to all mankind alike,” is but an indifferent respect to all; which proves love or hatred, as the sinner’s will determines it; but when they ascribe any particular love to God, it is no other than what rises from the sinner’s love to Him, viz., He foresaw what we would do, and how we would repent and embrace Jesus Christ, and be holy, and therefore he chose us.

3. Since pardon is of mere grace, let God have all the glory; he will not give it to another.

4. Poor sinners, plead God’s absolute promises, and though you can find nothing but sin in yourselves, yet cry to God, and cry to Christ, to take the cure of you into His own hand, that you may feel His wonderful operations in the day of His power: it is good to lie at the pool, and wait for the moving of the water, and cry that the Holy Ghost would put you into that Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.

5. You are pardoned, see that you ascribe all to God’s free grace; O give all the glory unto Him, whose grace I shall the next time show is wonderful! it is God who, through Christ, frankly forgave you, and also gives all things else you need, with Jesus Christ also; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, wisdom, power, and everlasting praises. Amen.

SERMON II

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.—Lu 7:42.

Doct. 1. I have spoken to one point of doctrine from hence, viz., “That sin is frankly or freely forgiven, as an act of sovereign grace.”

I shall now proceed to another, viz.

Doct. 2. That the free grace, mercy, and goodness of God, through Christ Jesus, is great and wonderful.

1. I shall show the rise or spring of grace.
2. Prove and fully evince the truth of this proposition.
3. Show that this grace is let out in a way of righteousness.
4. Apply it

By the way, you know that the word grace is variously taken in Scripture; but here by it I mean the favour, goodness, and rich bounty of God.

1. As to the rise and spring of grace, it is alone from the glorious and transcendent nature of God: God in himself is good, nay goodness itself in the abstract. As he is love, holiness, &c., so he is goodness, that is one of the infinite perfections and attributes of his holy nature; and so God is the Fountain from whence all grace and divine favour flows to any of his creatures.

2. The rise and spring of grace is from the Divine will; it flows alone from the fountain of goodness, and as the result of God’s eternal counsel and purpose, according to his own good pleasure, wheresoever grace is let forth, it is as the apostle shows, according to the purpose of him “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” Eph 1:11: As it is let out in wisdom, and also freely and abundantly; so it is according to his own sovereign pleasure, “who hath saved us and called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace,” &c., 2Ti 1:9. It hath an amazing rise from God himself, without any motive, or anything foreseen in

the creature to excite him; “he is gracious:” No other reason can be given of divine favour.

2. To prove and fully evince, that the grace, mercy, and goodness of God is wonderful.

1. This appears, because where “Sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded,” or superabounded: grace did not prevent the entering of sin, yet God had a glorious design and purpose in permitting of sin to enter; “by one man sin entered into the world,” Ro 5:12. Though sin that entered was very evil, the worst of evils, the poison and venom of all evil, yet grace exceeds, far exceeds, exceeds beyond all measure the evil of sin, yet sin had mankind down, and reigned, nay, triumphed over them. Adam’s sin set sin upon the throne, and no man nor angel could pull down or destroy this tyrant; for “sin reigned unto death;” all men lay slain and dead at the feet of sin, and it hath (in all it reigns) the chiefest seat in their souls; they are led, influenced, and brought into subjection to it; it predominates, and has a ruling power in men, and they naturally yield themselves servants and vassals unto it. Nay, and every faculty of their souls is corrupted thereby; the nature of the reign of sin is therefore dreadful, and is attended with horrid guilt, filth, and pollution, causing the sinner to hate God, and filling his mind with enmity against him, making man a slave of the devil, and obnoxious to the curse of the law, the wrath of God, and everlasting torments and condemnation in hell; there is an amazing and frightful evil in sin; and the entering of the law made it appear more evil,* yea, exceeding sinful.

But yet the grace of God much more abounded or super-aboundeth, in that sin, (though it hath so much evil in it, nay, may objectively be said to have infinite evil in it) yet it is but the product of the devil: the fruit or spawn of a degenerate spirit; but grace is the product or fruit of the mighty God; and therefore as the cause (in its nature) far exceeds the effect, so does grace, goodness, and divine power far exceed the evil of sin. What is a degenerate and finite spirit to the holy and infinite God? though sin is very evil in its kind, yet grace is far more good and powerful in its kind, in respect of the cause and fountain from whence it proceedeth.

2. If we consider the subjects whom sin defiles, and in whom it reigns, and through whose consent it came to be: grace exceeds sin; sin is of the will of man; but grace is the product of the will of God: what is a poor, weak impotent creature? “What is man?” Sin is brought forth or produced by the consent of the will of man, in yielding to Satan’s temptations.

But grace is the product of the will of God, the fruit of a holy and gracious God; therefore, if grace be let forth freely, it must exceed and superabound all sin, as God exceeds the power of the devil, and an infinite Creator a poor finite creature,

3. Because grace manifested to a poor weak creature, can limit, restrain, curb, nay, kill and overcome sin, when it is in its highest power, or hath its greatest strength and dominion in the soul of a sinner, as appeared in this woman, in whom sin had (perhaps) as strong a power as ever in any one soul; yet the love and grace of God laid sin and Satan sprawling (as I may say) at her feet; she is made to trample upon them both, by the virtue of a small beam of divine grace shining in upon her soul, through Jesus Christ.

4. Grace must needs far exceed sin in its power, to the rooting out and vanquishing of it, because God purposed in his eternal counsel to permit sin to enter into the world, and to suffer it to abound, that he might thereby take an occasion to manifest the nature and infinite power of grace, in pardoning, subduing, and utterly destroying sin, and him whose work it is. To be sure the holy God would never have suffered this monster to have been born, and to have entered into the world, had it not been to magnify his own glory, and especially the glory of his rich and infinite grace: who would suffer such a traitor to get out of prison, (if he could keep him there) whom he knew would be too hard for a whole kingdom to overcome, when once let loose?

5. Grace must needs far exceed sin, or super-abound, because God added the law upon Mount Sinai on purpose that sin might abound, "moreover the law entered;" well, wherefore? That sin might abound; "but where is sin abounded, grace did much more abound," Ro 5:20. This was the grand reason, viz., That God might display his infinite grace in destroying it. What warrior would suffer his enemy to arm himself with new weapons, and give him to get fresh strength, if he did not know after all, he could with much ease lay himself sprawling at his foot? "The strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, which giveth us the victory." Grace, through Christ, giveth us the victory when sin is in the fullest strength. Sin hereby seemed to revive and get new arms, or renew its power in wounding and ruining mankind, (by reason of the weakness that is in them, to perform the righteous precepts thereof). And this, I say, God on purpose, caused to come to pass, that he might reveal the glory and power of his

Almighty grace, divine love, and goodness to his elect, in pardoning of sin, and vanquishing of it.

6. Nay, God lets the law break in upon the conscience of a sinner, that sin may abound in the soul by the convictions of the Spirit, when first he begins to awaken him, so that the sinner is amazed to see what horrid guilt and filth is in his heart, and what a Holy God he has offended, and what wrath he lies obnoxious unto thereby; and yet all this is but to discover his infinite and inconceivable grace in his free-pardoning of all sin, in the sight and sense of poor sinners, in whom the law thus entered, and sin revived; I say, the commandment came and sin revives, that grace might be magnified.

7. That the grace of God is wonderful, and doth much more abound than sin appeareth in that sin came into the world by man. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," Ro 5:12. But grace, as it enters by the eternal and infinite God, so it is by the grace of all the three Persons in the blessed Trinity. Now, shall the evil of the sin of one man exceed the grace of all Persons in the Godhead? or shall there be more evil done to us by the sin of one impotent man, than the grace of the infinite God, i.e., the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, can outvie or deliver us from, who believe in Jesus Christ?

8. That grace does superabound,* sin appears in respect had to the gift of God, in sending of his only begotten Son to save us from the guilt, power, and punishment thereof. No doubt God suffered man to fall, that his grace and inconceivable love might be revealed this way. O what a gift of God's free grace is Jesus Christ: which way could God manifest greater love and favour, than to give his Son, or not to spare his own Son, but to deliver him up to die the cursed death of the cross for all his elect? Ro 7:3. Grace (we may be sure) will withhold nothing from us, that hath not withheld the Son of God from being a sacrifice for our sins, and so to procure our pardon. O this is glorious grace, enough to astonish men or angels.

9. Grace appears yet farther to be wonderful, because none of the other attributes of God, but this of divine love and goodness, could help and save undone sinners. Could wisdom, holiness, or power do it? No, for as wisdom had never contrived the way, had not grace and favour stirred it up, so had not rich grace broke forth in the gift of the Son of God, justice would soon have put a stop to all the other attributes, (had it been possible for them to have stirred without being moved by the divine will, or God's grace, favour, rich bounty, and goodness).

Moreover, it is God's grace that is the spring and rise from whence all the divine attributes (in our Lord Jesus Christ) are magnified, shine in glory, and meet in sweet harmony, therefore divine grace through Jesus Christ is wonderful.

10. How wonderful must that grace be that lay hid in God from all eternity; and O what a way hath divine wisdom found out, to let it forth to poor creatures, and which could not, indeed, be manifested without various ways of revealing the divine will, in different times, different methods, and different dispensations of this Grace, as before the law, under the law, and under the Gospel; and hence it is called "The manifold wisdom of God," Eph 3:10. Moreover, it is the grace and favour of God to mankind, which the holy angels desired to look into, and which they are amazed to behold. They saw or beheld God in our nature, the second Person of the Trinity, who assumed our nature into union with His divine Person, and this with the greatest astonishment, but chiefly, no doubt, as it is the effects of glorious grace. "He was seen of angels," 1Ti 3:16." We preach the Gospel, we make known the infinite love and grace of God in Christ, which things angels desire to look into, or pry into, that is, with admiration.

11. It is wonderful grace, because it far exceeds all that favour, grace, and rich bounty which God bestowed upon Adam in innocency. It is true he was a son of God, but it was by creation, but by grace and peculiar favour we are the sons of God by adoption and regeneration, and so are heirs of God, heirs of all things, and can never be dispossessed of the inheritance. Adam had the image of God stamped upon him, but was liable to lose it, and did lose it; but grace in Christ Jesus restores that image again, so as never to be lost. He had a glorious earthly paradise, but lost it; but grace in Christ raises us up to possess the heavenly paradise, which we cannot lose.

12. It is greater favour, grace, and goodness (as it seems to me) than what the holy angels possess or partake of. They are the sons of God, but not the spouse of Christ. They have not that honour, but are only servants that wait upon the sacred Bridegroom and his bride. He that is the eternal God is truly man. Grace unites the Son of God and the nature of man, in one person. This grace and favour magnifies believers, who are united to him above angelic nature. "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," Heb 2:16.

13. The whole economy of man's redemption, and all the transactions of the Almighty from the beginning of the world, in and by Jesus Christ, as to the design and purpose of it, was to magnify God's glorious grace: if we spake of those covenant transactions between the Father and the Son, about our salvation before the world began; or God substituting, and accepting, and sending his Son into the world; or of his incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and glorification; it is all to manifest the glory of God's rich grace: or if we speak of election, reconciliation, union, justification, vocation, pardon of sin, adoption, final perseverance, and our glorification, it is all but to show the rich bounty and grace of God to his chosen.

14. If we consider to whom (or to what undeserving and ill-deserving creatures) this grace is manifested, it must needs appear wonderful to all; what they were I have already shown. O, what an ill and vile creature was man, and from what an estate to what an estate doth this grace raise all that receive Christ.

15. The beginning and ending, or finishing God's temple-work, is all to glorify rich grace, so that "when the top-stone is laid, it shall be with shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it," Zec 4:7.

16. Mercy, grace, and divine goodness is infinite, immense, and unsearchable; for as God is infinite in power, justice, wisdom, holiness, &c., so he is also in grace and divine goodness; therefore where sin abounded, grace much more abounded, for in Christ the streams of boundless grace and mercy are opened; and therefore grace let out in Christ is wonderful.

17. If the knowledge we have of this grace in this world, be so wonderful, or so much of it as is let out here, what will that grace be, which we shall have opened to us in heaven? For what is glory but the consummating, completing, or perfecting the design and purpose of God's eternal favour and rich grace to believers?

18. Lastly, Grace is wonderful, because it reigns: grace hath erected a throne and is upon that throne, and there reigns; and that grace might reign, it stirred up divine wisdom to find out the way of its advancement on the throne; which was to remove all those obstacles which hindered grace's accession thereunto, and mounting thereon; which was divine justice, the law, sin, and the devil; but by Christ's obedience justice is satisfied, the law magnified and answered, and sin and the devil dethroned. So that "as sin

reigned unto death, grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord,” Ro 5:21. Grace, my brethren, like a glorious and victorious queen, is by Jesus Christ raised to the throne and is crowned; it reigns and prevails against all opposition whatsoever. As he that reigns must first overcome all that attempt to have supreme sovereignty or the pre-eminency, or those that were got on the throne; so hath God’s grace prevailed against sin and Satan who before reigned and tyrannized over us. Our Lord “hath spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it,” Col 2:15. That is, by the blood of the cross, “And hath condemned sin in the flesh,” Ro 8:3. And now grace reigns, and shall reign unto eternal life.

Thirdly, I shall show that grace is manifested, and comes to reign through righteousness, or in a way of righteousness. See the text just mentioned. “That grace might reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ,” Ro 5:21. Grace is not elevated, it hath not its accessioin to the throne in an unjust or in an unrighteous way, but it reigns through righteousness; not through our righteousness, no, but through the righteousness of God, in His fulfilling His faithful promises to His Son, but chiefly (as I conceive) through the righteousness of Christ, or through His perfect and complete obedience, or that righteousness He wrought out, by doing and suffering. It was through the righteousness of Jesus Christ that grace reigns; for without this righteousness, neither holiness, justice, nor the holy law would let grace reign; but O, how hath divine wisdom contrived a way, in a compliance with the divine will, that grace might reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ! divine justice was upon the throne before, judging and condemning guilty sinners, and grace could not reign: but wisdom hath so provided matters now that grace is upon the throne, and all the divine attributes are mounted with rich grace, being magnified, and shining forth with equal glory; but it is all to advance sovereign grace and infinite goodness.

2. Grace reigns through righteousness by Christ also, in the application of what He hath done and suffered for us; His merits are applied, and His righteousness is imputed to every one that believeth in Him, as an act of sovereign grace; and hereby also it appears grace reigns in subduing a man’s self, sinful self, righteous self, and all the powers of darkness in the soul, and in quickening, acquitting, justifying, and pardoning, &c., all sinners, yea, the greatest sinners that believe in Jesus.

3. In persevering in the profession of righteousness, and in a state of life unto the end, God’s rich grace by Christ is such that He will not break the

bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, until He hath brought forth judgment unto victory.

4. Grace reigns and will reign through righteousness, by conquering and subduing sin, or all those remainders of corruptions in the hearts of His pardoned ones. Moreover, let our condition or temptations be what they will, “Grace is sufficient for us,” 2Co 12:9; which is upon the throne, and shall reign unto eternal life, and at last will crown with glory all who are under the ruling and reigning power thereof.

5. Grace reigns, and will reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ, in subduing and finally vanquishing the last enemy, which is death. Jesus Christ, by whom and in whom grace reigns, hath overcome death, “And now hath the keys of hell and death,” Re 1:18; he hath power over death and the state of the dead; “I will deliver them from death: O, death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction,” Ho 13:14. So long as Christ reigns as mediator, so long grace will reign in and by Him, “And he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet; the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death,” 1Co 15:25-26.

APPLICATION

1. Wonder not now, that this woman that owed five hundred pence was forgiven, and he that owed ten thousand talents was forgiven, since divine grace in and by Christ Jesus is so wonderful, and is let out in an amazing manner; or since grace and divine goodness is infinite, the ocean and great deeps of unspeakable love and mercy are broken up, and overflow all banks and bounds. Nothing can stand as a bar in the way of grace; no sin, no unworthiness; for the more sin, the greater sinner, and the more unworthy a sinner is, the more is free grace raised, magnified, and exalted in and by Jesus Christ.

2. How may this silence all the objections any sinner can make against himself? My sins are great. Are they greater than grace by Jesus Christ can pardon? “Where sin abounds (remember) grace has much more abounded,” Ro 5:19-20.

3. Is grace exalted? does grace reign? is grace upon the throne? O, blessed news to a rebellious world, and to all vile traitors and ungodly sinners. O, haste to this throne; it is one thing to have a gracious king or queen to reign, and another thing to have a gracious Saviour to reign, and

grace itself; infinite grace, boundless grace, immense grace, unspeakable grace, inconceivable grace, and unsearchable grace to reign. O, how happy are we under this reign; let all cry, long live this sovereign, this queen, i.e., grace that reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ, this is the best reign that ever was; no sovereign prince or princess ever reigned through such righteousness: this is a just reign, grace reigns and exalts the infinite justice, infinite righteousness by Jesus Christ; it is a God-honouring reign, a Christ-exalting reign, a law-magnifying reign; it is a sin-condemning, a sin-killing, a sin-destroying reign; it is a hell-confounding and a devil-consuming reign; it is a death-vanquishing, a death plaguing and a death-destroying reign; it is a sinner-enlightening, a sinner-quickening, a sinner-renewing, a sinner-acquitting, a sinner-justifying, a sinner-pardoning, a sinner-comforting, a sinner enriching, a sinner-exalting, a sinner-sanctifying, and a sinner-glorifying reign, &c.

4. O happy souls; in whom, and over whom, and from whom grace reigns, almighty grace, infinite grace, and unspeakable grace: what, O child of God, dost thou fear? who can pull grace off the throne? can men? can devils? no, they can as soon pull God out of heaven, or Christ out of heaven, as dethrone God's sovereign grace, as we may infer and perceive by what hath been said.

5. We may infer what vile wretches they are who despise the reign of grace, or contemn God's sovereign grace magnified in bringing Christ to the throne, and being now exalted in and by him on the throne: woe to such that ever they were born! who had rather let sin reign, their lusts reign, the devil reign, unbelief reign, free-will reign, than that grace, free-grace, sovereign grace, almighty grace, should reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ, to eternal life.

TRIAL

Doth grace reign in and over you? Examine yourselves: are you united to Christ, for that way grace comes to reign in us? Do you truly believe in Christ for righteousness? are you quickened, renewed, regenerated; for so are they in whom grace reigns? Are you dead to sin, dead to the law, dead to your own righteousness, dead to this world? then grace reigns in and over you; if the life of sin is not let out, or if sin reigns in you, and you obey it in the lusts thereof, grace reigns not in nor over you.

6. O come in, sinners, before grace comes off the throne, and divine justice ascends the throne, to condemn such who have abused sovereign grace; we know not how soon that may be.

7. Rejoice, ye saints, and triumph in rich grace; Satan is under your feet, and subdued by divine grace; the world is overcome, “and sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace,” Ro 6:14. That is, the reign, power, and influences of grace.

SERMON III

Tell me therefore which of them loved him most, and Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most: and he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged, wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. He said unto her, thy sins are forgiven.—Lu 7:42-48.

It appears from hence, that Jesus Christ is the most High God, for he forgave her all her sins; but none can forgive sins, as they are against God, but God himself only. But to proceed, there is one proposition more I shall speak to, viz.

Doct. 3. That all those whose sins are forgiven, do love the Lord Jesus Christ; and such to whom much is forgiven, or who have been great sinners, they exceed others in love to him.

1. I shall speak a little as to great sins, and show you who are great sinners.

2. Show what pardon of sin is.

3. Show why such who are forgiven, do love Jesus Christ; and why great sinners, when pardoned, exceed others in their love to him.

4. Show that pardon of sin is a great gospel blessing.

5. Apply it; and so conclude with this parable.

1. All open profaneness, or all gross immoral acts of wickedness, are great sins, as murder, treason, sodomy, buggery, adultery, blasphemy, swearing, drunkenness, theft, backbiting, railing, lying, cheating, oppression, extortion, &c., these are great sins, and such who are guilty of any of these sins are great sinners, and are to be punished by the judge.

2. Such who deny the being of God, or the blessed Deity, are great sinners, or that wish there was no God; it is thought by worthy men, that all Atheists ought to die.

3. Such that deny Christ to be the most High God, are great sinners: and sad it is to see and hear what multitudes of them are in and about this city; I say, such are sinners of the first rank that deny the Deity of Jesus Christ. For,

(1.) They justify the unbelieving Jews in their cursed evil, in charging our blessed Saviour with blasphemy, because he said he was the Son of God, that is, the Son of God, by an eternal generation, or of the same essence with the Father, for so they understood him when he said God was his Father; “And Jesus answered them, many good works have I showed you from my Father, for which of those works do ye stone me? the Jews answered him, saying, for good works we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God,” Joh 10:32-33. Now if the Lord Jesus was no more than a mere man, or not the true living and eternal God, he was a blasphemer, and they that deny his Godhead are guilty of the same blasphemy the Jews were guilty of; they do (I say) justify them in their horrid wickedness, and so render the ever blessed Jesus to be a grand imposter; and therefore are great sinners, or sinners of the first magnitude; which also farther appears.

(2.) Such who deny the Deity of Christ, provided they worship him or give the same divine honour and adoration to him which is due to the Father, or to God only, they are idolaters, because they worship a mere creature, “And give the glory of God to another,” Isa 42:8; nay, and if they trust in him for soul help and salvation, they are cursed. “Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusted in man, and maketh flesh his arm,” Jer 17:5, &c.

(3.) Moreover, according to their notion and cursed heresy, Jesus Christ cannot be our Saviour, for none is our Saviour but God alone; “I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me,” Isa 45:5. “I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour,” Isa 43:11. Let such men, who deny Christ to be the Most High. God, never call Jesus Christ their Saviour any more. O what great sinners are these! let them pretend never so much to sanctity and holiness, yet they are sinners of the first rank.

4. Such men that have received much light, and have been under great convictions of sin, and of the evil which is in sin, yet live in, continue in sin, and in a hellish course of life, their sins are great sins, and they abominable sinners.

5. Such who after most solemn vows and promises unto God, (when they have been laid in a sick bed, or have been in danger of death) how they would return to him, and leave their evil and ungodly lives, yet sin, and as bad and as vile, or viler than ever, these are great sinners.

6. Such who have been often reprov'd, and yet harden their necks, are great sinners, and near to destruction, or being suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

7. Such that plead for sin, or extenuate their sin, nay, boast and glory in sin, or in their shame, or make a mock of sin, and are ringleaders to sin, enticing others to sin against God; these are great sinners, who do only destroy their own souls, but the souls of others also.

8. Such who abuse, the mercy, patience, and long-suffering of God, or turn the grace of God into wantonness, are great sinners.

9. Such who pretend to be teachers of others, reprove others, and yet are guilty of the same crimes; what a minister and a swearer, a drunkard, whoremonger! O what abominable sinners are such!

10. Hypocrites, such that appear to be godly, and yet secretly are wicked: these are also sinners of the first rank.

11. Persecutors, and such that reproach the people of God and would take away their lives: those are great sinners.

12. All unbelievers, or such who refuse or reject Jesus Christ and the offers of grace, are great sinners.

13. All that sin presumptuously are great sinners, though they know the thing they do is abominable to God and destructive to their own souls, yet will do it.

14. Lastly, All backsliders in heart, who wickedly depart from God, are great sinners. Now, Mary Magdalene was a great sinner; some say she was guilty of seven abominable sins; whether that was so or not, we cannot tell; but let it be so: suppose a man was guilty of all those cursed sins I have, mentioned, and Christ should pardon him, certainly you would conclude he must needs love him with a wonderful love. Our Lord saith her sins were many, and yet were forgiven; and therefore she loved much, and more than some others.

Secondly, What is it to have sin pardoned? or what is the forgiveness of sin?

First, negatively.

1. Pardon of sin doth not free a poor sinner from the being of sin in his soul; no, there is, after a man is forgiven, much corruption still remaining in the best of God's children, which makes them cry, as Paul did, "When I would do good, sin is present with me," Ro 7:21.

2. Pardon of sin frees no child of God from being corrected or chastened by the Lord, for sins that he may afterwards be overtaken with: no, "as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," Re 3:19, &c.

3. Pardon of sin doth not take away the desert of sin, it doth not argue, because sin is forgiven, that therefore, those sins do not deserve eternal punishment, but it discovers that Christ hath borne the demerit of all legal punishment of all the sins of a person that is pardoned.

4. Pardon of sin doth not denote, that every person forgiven, sees, or hath the sight and sense of pardon, or feels the comfort of it in his own conscience: no, a man may be forgiven his sins in the court of heaven, that cannot find that pardon in the court of his own conscience; for as some truly believe, and know it not, so they may be forgiven all their sins, and know it not.

Secondly, affirmatively.

Pardon of sin is an act of God's great and infinite grace,* whereby he, for the sake of Christ, or through the redemption of his blood, removes the guilt of all sin from the poor sinner.

1. God discharges him from the severe sentence of death denounced by the law; the law can no more condemn a pardoned person.

2. He is discharged whom God pardons, out of the hand of divine justice, the satisfaction of Jesus Christ being applied to him.

3. A pardoned person is freed from all vindictive wrath here, and from that which is to come; so that no guilt can come upon him to condemnation for ever.

4. Pardon of sin heals the soul, it cures every disease of the inward man; such have all their sins blotted out; as a debt that stands in a book is crossed,

so pardon puts sin far away; it is called a covering of our transgressions; God will not see sin.

5. Pardon is a non-imputation of sin to the sinner, it being imputed to Christ, and by him all the whole debt is paid; and in pardon, a discharge is given to the poor sinner.

6. Pardon is the receiving of a penitent and a believing sinner into God's special love and favour, and that for ever there is an accomplishment of the warfare between God and that person, to an endless eternity.

Secondly. Why do pardoned sinners (especially great sinners) love Jesus Christ dearly?

Answ. Because, when they are pardoned, they hereby come to taste of the nature of Christ's choice love; and it is indeed impossible for any to have a sweet and saving relish of the love of Jesus Christ, and not love Him; "We love Him because He first loved us," 1Jo 4:19; Christ's love is the fountain love, our love is the stream; His love is the inducement and the effective cause of ours to Him: He that first loves, loves freely; the other therefore loves under obligation. Sinners are bound or obliged to love Jesus Christ, and such who have most forgiven, are obliged to love most: to forgive one pound to a poor man that had not one farthing to pay, must create love in him to his creditor; but he to whom five hundred pounds is forgiven, and was in danger every moment to be arrested and laid in prison, must needs cause greater love in him to such a merciful creditor.

II. Because a pardoned sinner sees, or is convinced of the freeness of the love of Christ, and how undeserving he was of such love and pardon. O, saith the sinner, I was an enemy to my dear Lord Jesus, and also a vile and loathsome creature, and yet did he love me and pardon me: O matchless love and mercy! I, but, saith a great sinner, a city sinner, I was more undeserving, I was the chiefest of sinners, a ringleader to all iniquity, here is a poor creature forgiven, but, alas I led him into many acts of wickedness, and yet my dear Lord freely pardoned me, as he hath this and that person, who never sinned as I have done.

"I was (saith Paul) a blasphemmer, a persecutor and injurious, but I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding great with faith and love," 1Ti 1:13-14; I consented to the death of Stephen, that holy disciple of Christ. Brethren, suppose a rich traitor, one who raised up war against his

gracious sovereign, and prevailed by craft and malice to draw thousands into the same rebellion, should be freely pardoned by his offended prince, would not he see cause to love his sovereign dearly, yea, more than any of the rest? O, saith he, I had no ground to expect to be forgiven of all my companions, but rather to be made an example of; but lo, I am pardoned, and also received into his love and favour.

III. Because when a sinner is pardoned, he comes to know that he was one of those objects which Christ set his heart upon, and chose from everlasting. O! I see I was beloved before time, that I am called and pardoned in time. "O what is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him!" What, Christ set his heart upon such a creature! what, on me! saith a great sinner; what, the great God pardon me, because he loved me, and Jesus Christ set his heart on me, and love me, and die for me, to pay my debts, or satisfy divine justice for my sins, and espouse me! O this raiseth, nay, even ravishes the poor believing and repenting sinner! Should a poor damsel in rags, a mere vagabond, a beggar, be told, that a king is fallen in love with her, and sends to her a most endearing letter, and rich token of his love worth millions: Oh, she stands astonished! Nay, says the messenger, it is so, and lo, here is also a rich wedding robe sent you, and all princesses' ornaments, jewels, and pearls, to adorn you. Now, she cannot but believe it, and she breaks out into tears for joy, and readily yields; but cannot forbear, when she comes into his presence, to get behind him, and washes his feet with tears, (as poor Mary did to her dear Prince, Sovereign, and Saviour). I was that vagabond, that vile beggar, saith she, and I see Christ loves me, and hath given to me a rich token of his love, viz., the pardon of all my sins; and he hath put upon me the glorious robe of his own righteousness, and adorned me with the graces of his Spirit. Now, how can such a Mary, such a sinner, forbear, but must love Jesus Christ dearly! A free pardon is worth millions of millions of gold, nay, more than ten thousand worlds; and what is the robe of Christ's righteousness then worth, and the ornaments of his own precious graces?

For Christ to set his heart upon a sinner, denotes an act of his love and affection, also a high value and esteem he hath for such persons.

IV. Because pardon of sin the soul sees cost Christ dear, even his own heart's blood. O his love, Mary now could say, is wonderful, I cannot comprehend it, I see love in his purposes, love in his leaving his throne above, and coming into this world, love in his assuming our nature, love in his covenant, and in his promises, love in his dying groans and bleeding

wounds, love in his face and countenance, and in his invitations and kind embraces. O my heart is sick of love; I was the person he loved. He loved me and died for me; loved me, and has washed me from my sins in his own blood, Re 1:5.

V. The glory of Christ appears to all them that he pardons, but especially to great sinners, the glory of his person, and the glory of his love: and this melts the soul down and makes it little, nay, nothing in its own eyes. O wretched me! how have I carried it to this God, to this Christ! am I beloved thus by Him! and do I love him no more: love him no better! who have pierced him, wounded him, grieved him! I loathe myself; nay, “abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,” Job 42:6. Woe is me, (saith the prophet Isaiah) “I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts,” his glory who hath set his love upon me! what an admirable beauty and glory is in this Prince! in this Person! and doth he vouchsafe his favours to me, pardon me, love me, so loathsome a creature?

What strange effects had the knowledge of David’s love on Abigail’s heart when she heard of his intention to take her to wife.

“Let me be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord,” 1 Sam, 25:41.

The knowledge of Christ’s love in pardon, &c., kindles a vehement love in the souls of such unto him; it is discovered too, especially if great sinners. “Love begetteth love,” when it is known and manifested to the person it is set upon. O what strange passions of love have been kindled in some virgins, when they have heard of the love of such or such renowned person to them, from whom they deserved no such favour. Sirs, the love of Christ is of an attractive nature in its manifestations.

VI. Divine love is shed abroad in the heart (of a sinner) by the Holy Ghost, Ro 5:5. Divine love is a grace of the Spirit; it is not the bare effects of natural affections but of the Holy Spirit, and of Christ’s affections expressed to a poor undone sinner; they are constrained by his love, whose love being deep and unsearchable, the more we know of it, the more and more we love him. “The love of Christ passeth knowledge,” Eph 3:19. The deeper the mine of gold is, the deeper the miner must dig for it, and more pure gold he finds. Now, these great sinners, above others, comprehend the love of Christ, though it can never be fully comprehended by men or angels.

VII. Pardoned sinners, especially great sinners, dearly love Jesus Christ, by reason of the effects and fruits of his love.

1. Pardon of sin is not only the effects and fruits of Christ's love to sinners, but of life also; Christ loves us, and therefore he hath quickened and raised us from the dead, as he raised Lazarus from the dead because he loved him.

2. Faith, repentance, and a new heart, a broken and contrite heart, are the effects of Christ's love.

3. Union with him is another effect of it also; because he loves us, he espouses us. A sinner is not only pardoned, but espoused; Christ marries all he forgiveth, and so they are thereby freed from all dangers of being arrested for former and after debts contracted; the Husband answers all

4. Justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, communion, and free access to the throne of grace, are the effects of Christ's death, of his obedience, intercession, but primarily of his endearing affection to poor sinners.

5. Peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost, are the effects of Christ's love, and of pardon of sin.

6. Lastly, Final perseverance, everlasting life, a crown of glory, the full fruition of God, and of being for ever with Christ, where he is, are effects of his love. Now these things being so, it must needs follow, that such who are pardoned must needs love Jesus Christ; yet such that were great sinners love him most! their love exceeds the love of all others, considering how black and miserable they were once above others, and now are made happy for ever.

Thirdly, From what hath been said, it appears that pardon of sin is a great blessing; yet to open this a little farther, together with the nature and way of forgiveness.

I. Consider, that such who are forgiven, or whose sins are pardoned, are pronounced blessed: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered," Ps 32:1; nay, no man is blessed indeed, whose sins are not pardoned. Luther saith free justification and remission of sin makes a divine, and another of great worth also saith, it is this that makes a man a

Christian; and such that understand not this doctrine, all other knowledge is to little purpose.

II. Consider the original spring of it, and that is God's wonderful love, (which I have opened) it is the fruits of infinite love, and product of the excellent and inconceivable mercy and divine goodness of God; "To the Lord our God, belongs mercies and forgiveness," Da 9:9, wherein doth the riches of mercy, the abounding of mercy, the multitude of mercies, more appear than in pardon of sin, and in the way of it, in the sea, the ocean of mercy, all the sins of the elect are swallowed up: the mercy of God (as one notes) makes no difference between little and great sins. O consider the original and efficient cause of forgiveness! *i.e.*, the love and rich mercy of God.

III. Consider also the meritorious cause of pardon of sin, or that which procured it, or opened the door and flood-gate of mercy and free forgiveness unto us; for although it would be free to us, yet it cost Jesus Christ dear; it is not had but through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Many think not of the way of pardon; Christ must stand up and plead for pardon, and do also whatsoever he obliged himself to perform in that covenant that was between him and the Father, if ever we are forgiven our transgressions.

Our sins, you have heard, were a debt, a great debt, they obliged us, bound us over to eternal wrath, and this debt must be paid; God is just, and we had nothing to pay. Now, the Lord Jesus took this debt upon himself, he became our Surety, he entered into bonds to pay every penny which sinners owed, "he made him sin for us that knew no sin," 2Co 5:21; our sins were transferred on Christ, they were charged upon him, and he must not only plead for our pardon, but must bleed also; he must suffer and die for us, he bore that wrath and punishment that was due to us for our sins, that we, through his blood, might receive free remission. O what a blessing must pardon be that is thus procured; we have no remission but through the blood of Jesus Christ.

IV. Consider the final cause of forgiveness of sin, which is the glory of God; not only the glory of his grace, love, and mercy, but the glory of his justice, holiness, truth, power, and faithfulness. Sirs, justice, mercy, &c., equally shine forth in glory in our pardon, through the satisfaction made for our sins by the Lord Jesus. God appears not only gracious, but just and holy also. Sin is punished, the sanction of the law is vindicated, and justice is satisfied in Christ, or in the way of remission of our sins, "being justified

freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," &c. That God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," Ro 3:24. We have not pardon of sin in a way of mercy only, but in a way of justice, and righteousness also.

Now, what a blessing is that which tends to advance and to magnify the glory of God in all his glorious attributes! God is glorified as well as we are pardoned through Jesus Christ

V. Every person that is forgiven their sins, are also justified, and stand righteous before God. Thus do not guilty criminals among men, though forgiven, yet they are not pronounced clear, or justified and acquitted of the guilt of their horrid crimes and treasons that were charged on them. No, they are looked upon as vile and wicked wretches still; but a believer pardoned, is also "justified from all things," Ac 13:39, and stands without spot in God's sight, in the righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ: "Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee," Song 4:7. Pardon of sin is never without justification; the one is in a way of mercy, or as an act of mercy, and the other an act of justice. Some would have justification only to consist in pardon of sin, but that certainly is a great mistake and error; though we grant, that actual pardon and actual justification of a person always go together, and therefore forgiveness, I say, is a great blessing.

VI. Consider, that when God forgives a sinner, He forgives not only one or two sins, but all sins; and not only all sins past and present, but all the sins that ever he shall commit afterwards, in respect to vindictive justice; therefore well might the prophet say, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoueth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage," Mic 7:11. I know some deny that sin is forgiven before a person repents, &c., but sin, as it lays the soul obnoxious to divine wrath, may be forgiven so; and yet not forgiven in some other sense. A father may correct his child, and so doth God his Children, as a tender Father; but as God is considered an offended Judge or Governor, all their sins are forgiven at once, as soon as they are united to Christ, and have his righteousness imputed to them; for else they do not stand always justified, or are not in a justified state, and so not free from condemnation. "But there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Ro 8:1. Besides, do we not sin daily? "There would be (as one observes,) no instant of time, wherein a believer would not be in a state of condemnation," were not all sins to come, of justified persons, forgiven, as well as those past; therefore there is no necessity of a

renewed act of faith, when we sin, in order to our justification, nor pardon of sin, or as to vindicate justice, (for he that is once justified so, and pardoned, is for ever justified and pardoned, and cannot be brought into a state of wrath and condemnation,) though there be need of a renewed act of faith, as to our own consciences and peace, when he have sinned; for a believer may by sudden death, be taken away before he has put forth an act of faith, for the pardon of his last sin; but though he be, he is happy for ever, being ever in a state of life and peace. But if a saint should die before he hath repented, and put forth such an act of faith, which some speak of, he must perish for ever, but this cannot be; the union he hath with Christ cannot be dissolved. “And whom God justifies, them he also glorifies,” Ro 8:29-30. Therefore pardon of sin is a great blessing.

VII. Pardon of sin is a great blessing, because such have peace with God. “Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee.” Though a weak believer, because he sees not his pardon may want peace, yet he is in a state of peace, and the ground of all fears and doubts are gone for ever. “We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father,” Ro 8:15. There remains no more fury in God to believers, or to pardoned persons. No sin can break the covenant of peace, or make God to become our enemy, and cast us off. Our consciences may be troubled when God is pleased, and sin be pardoned in the court of heaven, though a poor believer cannot see the pardon in the court of his own conscience. Therefore pardon of sin is a great Gospel blessing.

VIII. Pardon of sin makes all mercies sweet, and to be mercies indeed. What mercy can be sweet to him who lies under God’s wrath, and is not forgiven his sins? What comfort can such take in riches, honours, lands, wife, children, or friends, when such guilt lies upon him, and he stands charged at God’s bar, and condemned by God’s law?

IX. Pardon of sin heals all the wounds of the soul, and gives ease to a poor believer. “Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee,” Ps 41:4; that is, give me the sight and sense of free forgiveness, let me know I am pardoned. Remission of sin takes away the sting of death.

X. Forgiveness of sin also makes all our afflictions easy to be borne. With what comfort may such, in times of greatest trials and dangers, lift up their heads? So that those afflictions that sink others down, and are hard to be borne, a believer can triumph over, and is more than a conqueror. “Her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned,” Isa 40:2. If the sweet

of pardon makes the bitterest affliction easy, it is a great blessing; but this is so; therefore it is a great and inconceivable blessing.

XI. Pardon of sin takes away the fear of death; such need not be afraid to die, nor to come to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. It is only the guilt of sin that in both those respects terrifies the sinner.

XII. Such that are forgiven their sins, are “delivered from the wrath to come,” and shall have eternal life; therefore pardon of sin is a great blessing.

XIII. When sin is forgiven,* it is forgiven for ever, and shall be remembered no more. All our sins are “cast into the bottom of the sea,” they are “blotted out,” they are “cast behind God’s back,” they are “put as far away as the east is from the west, the north is from the south,” Ps 103:12. O, what expressions are these! and all to let us know that sin is forgiven for ever. Pardoning mercy is the sure mercy of David; pardoning mercy is an irrevocable blessing. God will never revoke His act of free forgiveness.

XIV. Pardoning mercy is only given to a few. “He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.” It is denied to the fallen angels, and only given to them for whom Christ died, with an intention and purpose to save; and it being a special and peculiar blessing, it is a rich and a great blessing. What, are there but a few in all the world who have their sins pardoned? and am I one of them, and I one of the worst of all men! O, what peculiar love, distinguishing grace and favour is this.

1. What blessed news is here for great sinners, the worst of sinners, even for city sinners? Is there a Mary Magdalene here? I mean, any as vile as she was. O, let such cast an eye upon Jesus Christ, to look to him, throw their souls down at his feet with selfabhorrence, believingly, and they need not fear but Christ will pardon them.

2. O, admire pardoning grace! how free, and how full it is! Sirs, you that are once pardoned, are for ever pardoned, as to vindictive wrath and justice; your iniquities God will remember no more; they are thrown into the depths of the sea, and shall never rise again to your condemnation in this, or the world to come.

3. Try yourselves, you that are professors; do you love Christ? have you been great sinners? Certainly you are not pardoned if you do not love the Lord Jesus with most endeared love and affection.

It will be a hard thing for such to satisfy themselves that much is forgiven them if they do not find their hearts burn in love to God and Jesus Christ.

Christ hath the chiefest room in the hearts of pardoned sinners, “He that dwells in love, dwells in God,” 1Jo 4:16; their hearts, thoughts, and desires are set upon, and remain with, and run out after Jesus Christ; if you love him, he is continually in your minds, more than husband, wife, children, silver, gold, or anything in this world. “Whom have I in heaven but thee? neither is there any on earth that I desire besides thee,” Ps 73:25. Such will often visit him, and labour to be like unto him, and do or suffer anything called to, that they may honour, and show forth the praises and glory of Jesus Christ; be sure Mary did what she could. And sin, every sin and lust is hateful to them, because it is so to him; they also love all that Christ loves, or are born of God.

Lastly, let Christ’s love to you satisfy you always, comfort and console your souls, “For who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

2. II. Parable, Matthew 12:20 Of The Strong Man Armed

SERMON IV

Else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.—Mt 12:29.

Thus Matthew: Mark also hath the same parable.

No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house.—Mr 3:27. See Luke also.

When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.—Lu 11:21-22.

The Evangelist Luke seems to speak more fully and distinctly to this parable, than either Matthew or Mark, though all agree in substance, and speak the same things; and so also as to the occasion or reason of it.

Which we shall first briefly open; and in order to this, consider, that the Pharisees charged our blessed Lord with casting out devils by the prince of devils, after he had dispossessed one with a devil who was “both blind and dumb, who immediately both saw and spake,” Mt 12:22.

“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, this fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils,” ver. 24.

“And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself, cannot stand,” ver. 25.

“And if Satan cast out Satan, how then shall his kingdom stand,” ver. 26.

“But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you,” ver. 28.

And then he adds, “or else how can one,” &c.

So that, (1.) The occasion of these words, or the scope of the parable, was to convince them that he by the power of God did cast out devils, or by the power of his glorious Deity. 2. To discover and detest their most horrid blasphemy in saying he cast out devils by Beelzebub, &c., which he first doth by the parable of “a kingdom divided against itself,” which I purpose to speak to afterwards. The devils are not divided, they agree and unite in upholding their kingdom, and did they oppose one another, or not agree among themselves, their kingdom, (our Lord shows) would fall or come to desolation; like as a kingdom, city, or house, if it is divided, would do; but farther to convince them that what he did in casting out devils, was done by the Spirit of God, &c., he brings in this parable also, and that thereby he might manifest their detestable evil, and make it appear that he was the true Messiah, and God over all, blessed for evermore, for who but the mighty God bath power over the “Prince of the power of the air,” Eph 2:2, or the God of this world; he therefore that can subdue Satan, bind Satan, and throw him out of his palace, must be one stronger than he, which none is, but God only, for the devil will never yield up his strong hold as long as he is able to hold it; there is no way to dispossess him but by force or power; will any man consent, or willingly yield up to his enemy his palace, his goods, his power, kingdom, and all he hath? No certainly, if he could prevent it, he would do it, and so would Satan also; and this is the chief thing our Saviour discovers and makes appear by both these parables.

Else “how can one enter into a strong man’s house?” Luke calls it a palace; by the house or palace here is meant a poor sinner, not his soul only, but his body also; but chiefly his soul. A “strong man’s house,” &c. Satan is this strong man, and sometimes he possesseth both the body and soul of a sinner; though the body is not under his power, but by the special permission of God, nor doth he so universally possess the bodies of sinners as he doth their souls, by his power, craft-devices, temptations, suggestions, and diabolical influences; who “ruleth, or worketh in the children of disobedience,” Eph 2:2, that is, in them all universally.

“One enter,” that is, any one that is opposite to him, one that is his enemy, with a design and purpose to dispossess him, bind him, and throw him out of his strong-hold, and take possession of his palace or habitation. The meaning of our Saviour is, how can I enter by my spirit and power into the house or palace of the devil, viz., into the heart of a sinner, if I do not first destroy, or spoil Satan of all that power he hath in such a poor creature,

or bind and throw him out? or I must subdue Satan, if I either dispossess him of the body or soul of a sinner.

“When a strong man armed keepeth his palace,” Satan is armed, and he must be disarmed before he can be overcome.

“Wherein he trusteth;” the devil trusteth in his armour, but when Christ, who is a stronger than he, comes, he takes from him all his armour, and makes him know his armour is not sufficient to defend him from the almighty power of the Son of God. From whence we may note one or two propositions.

1. That the heart of a sinner is the house or palace of the devil.

2. That the devil is a strong and formidable enemy, dreadful and terrible, and yet,

3. Must be subdued, and his power destroyed in a sinner that is converted, which none can do, but the Lord Jesus Christ only, who is stronger than he.

I shall speak briefly to both of these.

(1.) The body sometimes, and the soul always, of an unconverted sinner, is the palace and habitation of Satan; but before I proceed, let me lay down one or two explanatory propositions, by way of premise.

(I.) The devil hath no just or lawful right to this house, viz., neither to dwell in the body, nor the soul of any sinner, no, but it is wholly by fraud and usurpation he got in and rules there.

2. The devil could not by force take possession of the sinner’s heart, but he gets in by craft and subtilty; this way our first parents gave him originally the possession of the hearts of all men.

Secondly, to prove that the heart of a sinner is the house or palace of Satan.

(1.) Our Lord calls it the strong man’s house; true, God only hath the just right to every man and woman in the world, “all souls are mine saith the Lord.” But God left man at first to keep this house, I mean his soul, for him,

that is, for his own praise and glory, and gave such strength to man that he might have kept possession, his faculties being true, strong, and uncorrupted at first; they were like so many valiant soldiers that Satan could not by open force conquer; the will being able to resist the whole infernal lake of hellish fiends; but by subtlety the enemy prevailed, and the will consented; as Paul shows, “the serpent beguiled Eve through subtlety,” 2Co 11:3. And the will complying, all the faculties or powers of the soul were overcome, and so the devil entered, and made it his palace or chief dwelling-place.

2. A palace of a prince is commonly well fortified, when it is in the midst of enemies; so Satan hath fortified his palace with a high wall on one side, called presumption, which seems to be as high as heaven, and on the other side with a deep ditch, called despair, lest grace should assault him; and by this means he secures his palace, and dwells there for a long time in peace; and though the word of God seems to batter the high wall, yet, it is common operations can make no great breach in it on that side, nor fill up the ditch on the other; and let me tell you, the devil hath not stronger fortifications than these two.

3. A palace is the place of a prince’s chief residence, and where he keeps his court, and hath his attendance; so Satan’s chief residence is in the heart of an unregenerate sinner, and there he keeps his court, and hath all the depraved faculties of the soul, and “lusts of the eyes, and lusts of the flesh, and pride of life,” to attend upon him, and who readily submit to his commands, or cursed suggestions; he “goeth to and fro in the earth, and walketh up and down in it,” and is the “prince of the power of the air,” but there he finds no rest, no, the heart of an ungodly sinner is his dwelling-place, that is, his palace, where he lodgeth and delights to be.

He goes from one place to another, not as an idle Peripatetic, or one that has nothing to do, no, but as a spy to see what house is empty, that so he may get in and dwell there; for the devil has many palaces, yea, thousands of thousands, so that he is no small or petty king; in his walks also he curiously observes, and pries into every person’s temper, and into all families, nations, and churches, to see what advantages he can get over them, and set them together by the ears, for he strives to do all the mischief he can to kingdoms, churches, families, and particular persons.

4. A prince can go in and out of his palace at his pleasure, so Satan sometimes, as an unclean and filthy devil, a black and debauched devil, goes

out of his house or palace, or out of a man, as our Lord shows, and lets it be swept and garnished, but if it be empty,

i. e., if Christ dwells not there, he says, “I will return to my house from whence I came;” nay, and brings other spirits with him also, though not debauched devils, yet worse evil spirits, and there afresh he takes up his habitation and dwells, though the man perhaps thinks he has a better prince dwelling with him.

5. A palace of a prince commonly is painted, adorned, and made a place of delight suiting his spirit; so the heart of every sinner, the devil makes fit and pleasant to him, suiting to his odious and unclean spirit, nature, and temper; nay, and some sinners’ hearts are garnished, and richly painted with moral virtue and seeming holiness, which pleaseth

Satan very well, as a white devil, when he can cause them to rest in, or trust to mere acts of morality and external holiness; he can transform himself from a swearing devil, a blaspheming devil, into a religious devil, a praying devil; for such a painted palace were the hearts of the Scribes and Pharisees, which were swept and garnished (as in the next place in speaking to another parable) I shall show.

6. In a house or palace of a prince are many lodging rooms both for repose and security, so in the sinner’s heart the devil hath several rooms to repose himself in, and are also as places of security to him against danger; which are the “corrupt faculties of the soul,” as the “rebellious and obstinate will, depraved judgment, the misled conscience, a deceitful and traitorous memory, and the carnal and earthly affections;” for by this means he takes as it were his quiet repose, and remains safe.

7. A house or palace hath many doors, by which the prince that dwells therein can enter; so the devil he hath many doors by which he enters into the heart of a sinner, which are the five senses; at the eyes he gets into the heart of unchaste persons, and also into the hearts of the covetous. “Achan saw a goodly Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold,” Jos 7:1; he saw it with his eyes, and then Satan entered his heart, he coveted them, and at this door also he entered into the heart of Judas. He gets in also at the ears of others, they are charmed with bewitching music, perhaps at a play-house, or a whore-house, and there the devil enters; the adulteress was taught by Satan to “perfume her bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon,” Pr 7:17; the devil knows how to get in at their nostrils by bewitching smells, as well as at the

ears by flesh-pleasing melodies, moreover he enters into thousands at the door of tasting and feeling; how are sinners ensnared by delicious wines, meats, and other liquors, and abominable delights and pleasures of the flesh, every one, like pampered horses, neighing after their neighbors' wives.

Thirdly, I shall show you what kind of house or palace this strong man's is.

1. It is a most odious and filthy house, prepared and made fit for unclean and filthy spirits to delight in; the heart of a wicked man is alike abominable with the devil in the sight of God, being full of snakes, vipers, filthy vermin, mire, and dirt, for unto such thing the filth of sin, and unclean spirits are compared. Our Saviour likeneth the hearts of the "Pharisees to filthy sepulchres, painted without, but within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness," Matt, 23:27.

2. It is a house prepared and furnished by the devil, fitted for him to dwell and delight in, and it is also fortified against God and Jesus Christ, with all the hellish art, subtilty, and strength the devil hath, that all attacks of the word of God, ministers, godly persons, and motions of the good Spirit might be ineffectual; the devil helps all the powers of the soul (they being under his influences) to resist all good counsel, reproofs, and persuasions, of yielding up their palace to the the Lord Jesus Christ; moreover, wicked men are true drudges to their hellish master, and are always in arms, and fight against God, and blaspheming his name, and all that dwell in heaven.

3. It is a house built upon the brink of hell, and stands in the regions of darkness, and the devil that dwells therein, who pleases those wretched and misled mortals for a time, according to the varieties of their carnal appetites, designs to murder and destroy them every one, and make them as miserable as himself, and will in a short time if they meet not with the mighty Jesus, to enter in, and destroy the strong man armed, their house will be set on fire, and burn to the lowest hell, for the materials with which it is built are fit matter for eternal flames.

APPLICATION

1. We infer from hence that sinners are woefully blind, and misled, and that their state is most deplorable.

2ndly. Also we from hence infer, that it is no wonder that the word of God hath no more effect upon the hearts of sinners, as they are under the power of the prince of darkness; the strong man armed keeps the house, he hath power over, and reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience; their hearts are fortified against the Lord Jesus Christ, and Almighty power must be exerted to subdue Satan, if ever the gospel becomes efficacious to one sinner. But to proceed,

2. Doct. The devil is a strong and formidable enemy, dreadful and terrible, and yet must be subdued, and his power be destroyed in a sinner that is converted, which none can do but Jesus Christ only, who is stronger than he.

I shall in speaking to this,

1. Show what renders the devil so formidable an enemy.
2. Show why he must be subdued in a sinner that is converted.
3. Show why none but Jesus Christ can subdue Satan.

The devil is a formidable enemy

I. Satan is a dreadful enemy in respect had to his great strength, called the strong man, and upon the same account he is called a lion, a strong and fierce creature; should all the men in the whole world combine together to fall upon one single devil, they would be but as so many little babes in the hands of a mighty giant, I mean in respect of their own strength.

II. He is a formidable enemy, considering how at one blow he overcame man before he was depraved, or lost that power with which he was created, and also when Satan was but a few days old; and in subduing innocent Adam, a man clothed with mighty strength, he by that one stroke conquered all the world, all the whole race of mankind fell down dead at his feet, O what an enemy is this? If man, when he was so strong and well armed, was subdued by him; what can sinners do now, who are become weak and feeble, and also naked, to withstand his force and mighty power?

III. The devil is a dreadful adversary, considering what a multitude of evil angels he hath in his army, they are a mighty host, and all clothed with great power, though perhaps some of them have greater strength than others, yet all are strong and powerful; they are all angels, though fallen angels, and

though they have lost their purity, yet they have not lost their strength: “Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength,” Ps 103:20.

Two things discover their strength, (1.) Their superiority, (2.) Their spirituality.

1. Angels are the top of the creation; man was made a little lower than the angels. Now in the works of creation, the superior (as one notes) hath a power over the inferior, the beast over the grass and herbs, and man over the beasts, and angels over man.

2. The spirituality of their nature, adds to their power. Man hath a glorious soul, but he is flesh as well as spirit, and his soul is darkened, weakened, and weighed down by a lump of flesh. It is forced to row with a strength suitable to its weak partner, and sometimes to war against himself. I mean his flesh; also his fleshly part clouds his understanding, but now angels are all spirit, and have no such mixture of matter to encumber them.

IV. Their unity renders the devils dreadful enemies; our Saviour shows us here that they cement together, and are not divided; order and oneness makes their number formidable, though we cannot say there is love amongst the devils, yet there is unity; they all agree together in carrying on their design against God, Christ, and the souls of men. Whoever heard of any discord, jarrings, or wranglings amongst the devils? This may shame the saints. Shall devils agree to ruin us, and shall not we agree to oppose and counter-work them?

V. The falls of so many brave champions by Satan’s assaults, render him a dreadful enemy; what mighty men of God hath he worsted, who were strong in grace, or well armed. Remember righteous Noah, just Lot, meek Moses, and David a man after God’s own heart, and wise Solomon, and patient Job, and valiant Peter. What can naked and unskilful sinners do, if such expert warriors were worsted and fell by him?

VI. His courage or fierceness, and undauntedness, renders him a formidable enemy; what saint of God was Satan ever afraid to assault? Nay, oftentimes whole churches, and spoiled them too, tearing them to pieces, nay, his courage and undauntedness appears in his attacking and assaulting the Son of God himself, as also his power in “taking up, and setting him upon a pinnacle of the temple,” Mt 4:5; what a bold devil is this, and what a sight was there? to see the Son of God, carried in the arms of the devil,

whom he knew was a Son of God; nay, and though he was worsted, yet came again upon our Lord. “The prince of this world cometh,” &c.

VII. His implacable malice, hatred, and envy to God and sinners, renders Satan a very formidable adversary, he is filled full of enmity, and is unreconcilable, he will never yield nor submit himself to his enemies; some men who have received a little of his spirit and nature, have been very malicious, and hardly reconcilable, but the devil is all malice, even made up of hatred and envy, who can stand before envy saith Solomon? if not before an envious man, who can stand before an envious and a malicious devil, who is wholly set upon doing of mischief?

VIII. Bloodiness and horrid cruelty, shows that Satan is a dreadful enemy; many tyrants have been very cruel, but how bloody minded and cruel then is the devil? all the cruelty that any tyrant and bloody persecutor ever exercised he was stirred up to do it by the devil, whose servants they were, and still be, who act in malice and cruelty. 2. What cruelty hath he exercised towards mankind? what ruin hath he brought upon the world, and on the souls of men? (3.) How many millions hath he sent by his cursed temptations to hell? how many hundred thousands of godly Christians hath he murdered, and caused to be tormented with unhuman cruelty? (4.) But what was all this to his attempting to murder the Son of God himself, or the Lord of life and glory?

IX. The subtilty of the devil renders him a terrible enemy; where strength cannot prevail oftentimes, policy does, and many by craft have done more than could have ever been done by power. Now the devil’s subtilty is exceeding great, we (saith Paul) are not ignorant of his devices. But too many there are that perceive them not, we should labour to “stand against the wiles of the devil,” Eph 6:11. It was by his craft he overcome our first parents; the serpent by his subtilty beguiled Eve, yea, and Adam too; he hath his wiles to keep sinners from closing with Christ, and ruin the ungodly; and he hath his devices also to ensnare, deceive, and ruin, if possible, believers; observe some of his devices also.

1. He chooseth the most advantageous seasons to tempt and allure sinners.

2. He manageth his temptations in such ways and methods that shows his great subtilty.*

3. In his making use of fit instruments to carry on his designs, in respect of the one and the other, he knows how to assault young converts, by filling them up with pride and vain-glory; he waylays such that fall into great afflictions, causing them to despair, and to think God does not love them, because he afflicts them; he will be sure if possible, to defame, or render odious, such as do him the most mischief, as the faithful ministers of the gospel; and spoil the peace of the churches. He observes the weakest place of that fort he designs to attack, and there make his assaults, also comes upon poor saints, when they are asleep, or off of their watch, or in a secure state; he acts sometimes like a black, and yet can appear also as a white devil, “or transform himself into an angel of light;” 2Co 11:14. He observes every man’s natural temper, and suits his temptations accordingly; he sometimes appears as a friend, when his design is to murder and destroy, like a treacherous enemy; he strives to get ill persons into the church, to hinder the peace and increase thereof, and to expose the whole to reproach. He knows how to retreat and leave his house as a debauched black devil, and swept and garnished with the paint of seeming holiness, and outward zeal and piety; if it be but empty of true faith and saving grace, it matters not how zealous men are for outward sanctity, if they are in a false way; he will rather promote their external holiness, than go about to hinder it; he is not more for discord in the true church, than he is for unity in the false: in a word, there is not such a politician in the world like to the devil; he knows he cannot force, and therefore he will entice.

X. The devil is a formidable enemy, because he is unwearied; he will not be discouraged if he miss ten times in carrying his designs and purpose: nay, to thousand defeats he will attempt again, hoping to prevail at last; hence the apostle gives the saints a needful caution to be vigilant, because of the unweariness and great diligence of their adversary the devil, who walks about seeking whom he may devour; it is not whom he would, but whom he may, or such God permitted him to devour; though Satan hath worked hard to destroy the souls of sinners near six thousand years, yet he is no more weary than he was when he first began, and therefore a dreadful enemy.

XI. The devil is a formidable adversary, in these last days more than ever, because he is come down in great wrath, knowing his time is but short,” Re 12:12. Therefore woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea; my brethren, though the beginning of this his coming down was many years ago, when he was thrown out of the church as a persecuting devil, in the time of Constantine the Great, yet he knowing his time is very short indeed, he is in more rage than ever, and from hence it is that he strives to foment wars and

slaughters in kingdoms and nations; and to disturb the churches of Christ with horrid errors and heresies, and to drown the world that way if he can, and fill Sion also with strife, discord, and contentions, which certainly abound now more than ever; and all this is but the effect of Satan's rage, malice, and fury; nay, and we may expect it will be every day worse and worse, as he grows nearer and nearer the end of his reign and tyranny; therefore most dismal times must be looked for; yea, such temptations and tribulations over the whole world that never was since the beginning thereof, or since man dwelt upon the earth; and it will continue until Jesus Christ sets up his visible kingdom, who will take hold of him, and bind this dragon for a thousand years.

XII. And lastly, Satan is a dreadful and terrible enemy, because he is armed; our Saviour calls him a strong man armed.

1. His armour may be his great power; he is clothed as you heard with power and might, which is such armour that no mere man is able to encounter with him.

2. He is filled also with malice and revenge; which is as armour to him; moreover, his pride is as a coat of mail, his power creates in him great confidence, and this fills him with pride, as it is said of the "Leviathan, his scales are his pride, they are joined one to another, they stick together that they cannot be sundered," Job 41:15,17. Strength, confidence, and pride, is the devil's shield, or armour, by which means he is very fierce and undaunted, so that the darts of a sinner unarmed, are not regarded by him; but like the "leviathan, darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of the spear," Job 41:29. All the weapons of mere creatures unarmed, he esteemeth as straw.

3. The wonderful success he hath had, and victories obtained, is as armour to him, he having conquered millions, and subdued the whole world; all nations are become as stubble to his bow, and as a prey to his teeth.

4. Moreover, utter despair of ever obtaining favour with God, arms him against poor mortals; he knows that he shall have no quarter given to him, no terms of peace offered him for ever, and therefore will give no quarter to any he can subdue and overcome; nothing renders an enemy more fierce and cruel than the thoughts of this; what mischief will not that giant, that tyrant do, that knows he shall have no pity showed him, no pardon, no mercy given

to him. And this hardens Satan's heart against God, and his hard heart and final despair is as armour of proof that cannot be pierced.

There are no repentings, no relentings, no sorrow in devils, after all the wrongs and mischiefs done to mortals, no, no; therefore his hardness and despair is as armour, that none can touch, but one that is more mighty and more strong than he.

5. Sin also is as armour to him where sin reigns; the devil is armed; a sinful, depraved, hard, rebellious, and an unbelieving heart arms the devil, and makes him irresistible by such mortals in whom sin predominates; and the changing of the heart, of that enmity that is in the carnal mind, tends to disarm the devil, and over such souls he hath but little power.

6. God's law being broken and violated, is as a sword in Satan's hand, by which he kills and wounds unto death, great multitudes; the devil knows how to use a believer's sword to wound them, and oftentimes doth so; but as the law being broke is called the strength of sin, so it is the armour and strength of Satan also, by which means no man in an unrenewed state can get out of the devil's hands: do you not see, saith he, how your God in his law curses you, and for your sins hates you, and how this broken law you slain and dead at my foot; nay, that God that made you, hath left you, and given you up into my hands, and I have power over you, and will dwell, nay, reign in and over you, do what you can, you cannot, shall not get out of my hand; therefore let your hearts take pleasure in sin and all unrighteousness, and deny yourselves of nothing that is either sweet, pleasant, or profitable to the flesh, so much to the first thing.

Secondly, I shall shew you why Satan must be subdued in a sinner that is converted, and his power destroyed in his soul.

1. Because he will not be intreated, there is no, persuading the devil to yield up his palace, no, no, he cannot be prevailed with by flattery, as some cruel tyrants have been: if Satan be not destroyed and overcome by force, he will hold his own for ever, there are no devices against him, or subtle stratagems that any poor sinner can invent, to supplant or countermine him. Many a strong and cruel enemy whom men could not spoil nor destroy by force and power, have been utterly overcome, defeated, and spoiled by policy; but Satan is too great a politician this way, to loose his strong hold.

2. The devil must be subdued in the sinner's heart that is converted, because he hath them all in his chains, and they are his mere slaves, and captives, nay he "takes them captive by him at his will," 2Ti 2:26. There is not one man nor woman in the world, but naturally are the captives of this cruel and merciless devil, he rules in the hearts of all the children of disobedience.

3. Because grace cannot enter into that heart where the devil reigns, nor will, nor indeed can Jesus Christ dwell therein, for wherever Christ dwells he reigns, sirs, it is impossible for two princes that are directly opposite in their nature ends, and designs, to reign over one and the same subject; now thus sin is contrary to grace, so is grace absolutely contrary unto sin, and as the devil is an unreconcilable enemy of Jesus Christ, or an implacable adversary in his very nature to him, so the pure and holy Jesus hates and abhors Satan; and as the devil seeks to be revenged on Christ, so the Lord Jesus in his whole design, seeks to destroy and overcome the devil; therefore if grace and Jesus Christ enters into the heart of a sinner, the power and dominion of Satan must be destroyed in him.

Thirdly, I shall show you why none but Christ can subdue the devil. When I say none but Christ can, I mean no man in earth is, nor ever was able by any power of his own, or by any power short of, or besides the almighty and irresistible strength of Jesus Christ, could or can do it.

1. Because Satan is set forth in the scripture to be much stronger than man, and more cunning; and being an angel, he exceeds man in wisdom also. But what I have said, in showing what a prince Satan is, fully demonstrates this to be as I say.

2. Because God hath laid our help upon Christ only, as being one able and mighty to save sinners; and to this end Christ also came into the world, "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1Jo 3:8,

What need was there for Christ to come into the world to this end and purpose, if man had been able to have destroyed this strong enemy, Satan.

He that subdues the devil must first bind him and disarm him, which none could do but Christ only

3. None but Christ can subdue Satan in the sinner's heart, because he that doth this, must first bind this strong man armed, and take away also all his armour, and what man on earth can do this? But these things our Lord in this parable positively affirms.

4. Because it is Jesus Christ alone that hath subdued him, and broke his head, as it was promised to our first parents he should do; moreover, that broken remaining power that Satan has left, none but God can destroy. "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." He that hath overcome and conquered the devil he only can subdue and destroy him, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. None but Christ can subdue Satan, because none but he can make an end of sin and destroy death, if the works of the devil are not destroyed, the devil is not subdued: sin is the grand work of Satan, and death is the wages and punishment thereof; now sin and death, none hath nor could destroy but Jesus Christ, and this he hath done, and took our nature upon him to this end, "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them, who through the fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Heb 2:14-15. Where sin remains in its full power, there the devil lives and reigns, and death also triumphs over all such sinners, they are dead in sin, and liable to eternal death: and since none can destroy sin and death but Jesus Christ, none but he alone can destroy the devil.

6. None can destroy Satan, but he that destroys and utterly spoils his image, and stamps the image of God in the same soul: but this is done by Christ none: can any man utterly deface and spoil the image of Satan in his own soul, and form the image of God in himself? What mortal will affirm that? besides man lies spiritually dead in sin, naturally even slain at Satan's feet, and what can such dead and lifeless creatures do against the strong man armed, can they subdue this terrible enemy?

APPLICATION

1. From hence we may infer that there is cause enough why we should fear the power and malice of Satan, so as not to think he is a small or weak enemy or fear him so as never to make head against him, by any power of our own.

2. We from hence also may infer that it is no wonder the world is so spoiled, overcome, and blinded by the devil, you hear what a strong and subtil enemy he is.

3. Moreover we infer from hence, that this world is an evil world, a dangerous and perilous world, because it hath such a multitude of strange and malicious devils in it, who go up and down and defile all places. O! who would desire to live in this world! we live here not only among men, like the devil, but also among devils, amongst multitudes of devils.

O! admire and praise the holy and ever blessed God for sending a Saviour, such a Saviour, such a mighty Saviour as Jesus Christ is, into this world, none but a Saviour clothed with almighty power, could save us from this strong man armed, or subdue and vanquish the devil: and indeed from hence it appears, that Jesus Christ is God because none but the most High God could destroy Satan, the god of this world, and from hence Christ is able to save all fly unto him, "he is mighty to save, until one stronger than he binds the strong man," is a mere man, stronger than Satan? or is any besides the Most High God able to bind Satan, and throw him out of his palace?

Quest. How hath Christ destroyed, or conquered the devil.

Ans. By death, he by death destroyed death and devils also. Christ subdued Satan in his life, this enemy set upon our Lord; but was utterly put to flight in the combats he had with him, nay, by his spotless life and painful death, our Lord destroyed sin, the work of the devil, and answered all the demands of the law; also by his death and resurrection, "he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly," Col 2:15.

2. By taking from him all his armour. (1.) He has spoiled and divested him of all his power, bruising and breaking his head: sirs, the strong man is wounded, he is a maimed devil now. (2.) Jesus Christ hath out-done the devil in wisdom, all Satan's policy in one day was defeated, and turned into foolishness, that way he thought to have destroyed our

Captain, and for ever have prevented our recovery, he himself, sin, and death, and all enemies were subdued, no doubt when Satan had brought Christ under death (to which end he entered into Judas) he thought he had done our Lord's business, and ours also, but thereby he was disarmed of that part of his armour. (3.) By destroying of sin, in the guilt power and punishment thereof, our Lord took away the chiefest of all his armour, (4.)

By his perfect obedience to the law, and by bearing the penalty thereof, (which we lay obnoxious unto) he disarmed him of another piece of his armour. (5.) Our Lord disarmeth this strong man, by making all Satan's wrath and fury to turn to the good and advantage of his saints, his church and people. (6.) By sending the gospel or gracious revelation thereof, our Saviour hath scattered and expelled that darkness which the devil brought upon the world, and thereby discovereth those errors, heresies, idolatries and superstitions, that every where abounded therein, "he hath brought light, and immorality to the light, through the Gospel," 2Ti 3:10; so that Satan's craft and cunning is all laid open, and himself utterly vanquished, and brought to shame, and his kingdom overthrown for ever.

Quest. How doth Christ bind this strong man, &c., and so spoil his house.

Answ. The Lord Christ doth this by entering into the sinner's heart by his Spirit he binds him, so that he can make no resistance.

2. Also by restraining Satan, or putting him into chains, that he can go no further than our Lord permits him; also what hurt soever he is suffered to do to his saints, his church, and people, our Lord makes it turn to their good, and for their profit and advantage, whether it be done more immediately by himself in those suggestions and temptations, whereby he fixeth and troubles the saints, or what he doth by his servants and diabolical emissaries. Moreover, he spoils Satan's house, by pulling of it quite down, and new building it, so that it may become a fit habitation for himself to dwell and reign in through the Spirit: by this means also sin (which is the chief goods) is destroyed, the power thereof being broken, and the poor believer delivered from the guilt and punishment thereof; also hardness of heart, ignorance, and unbelief are spoiled, which were Satan's goods, so that he hath in that soul no goods to boast of, nor a house to dwell in.

1. For, poor sinners, your strong and cruel enemy Satan is overcome. Almighty Jesus hath conquered and slain him; the strong man armed is subdued, your adversary the devil is brought down, and lies mangled in his blood (as I may so say) at the foot of your blessed Saviour. What though he hath as yet possession of your hearts, cry out to the Lord Jesus Christ to give you faith, and pray him to come in to your assistance; if you get the shield of faith, and manfully in the name and strength of Jesus Christ resist him, he will fly from you; be not afraid of his power nor policy, but tell him he is a

beaten and conquered enemy, that Christ the seed of the woman hath broken his head. But,

2. The chiefest comfort is yours that are believers.

(1.) Satan is cast out of your house; a stronger than he hath appeared for you actual relief. (2.) Your house is now new made, and, “Christ dwells in your hearts by faith,” Eph 3:17; and by the Spirit, whose habitation you are now become. (3.) Satan can never return again to get power over you, nor rule in you; “because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world,” 1Jo 4:4. You have through Christ overcome the wicked one. (4.) Christ is your Captain; he hath espoused your cause, nay, it is his own cause; and whenever Satan assaults you, Christ will come into your assistance, but be sure sleep not; be always on your watch, and never engage this enemy in your own strength. Remember Paul, when he was buffeted, “he sought the Lord thrice,” 2Co 12:8. O! be much in prayer. (5.) Know though your own inherent grace may not be enough, yet the grace that is in Christ is; “My grace is sufficient for thee.”—Let our condition be what it will, his grace is sufficient, and his love an everlasting: “We are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us.”

3. III. Parable, Matthew 13:44 Of The Unclean Spirit, Gone Out Of A Man

SERMON V

When the unclean spirit is, gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished: then goeth he and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.—Mt 12:43-45.

This place of holy Scripture is generally acknowledged to be hard to be understood;* most expositors and annotators (I have met with,) say but little to it.

Some call it a parable, and others a parabolical speech or a similitude.

By the scope and coherence of the place, it is evident our Saviour setteth forth by it the direful state and condition of the Scribes and Pharisees, and other people of the Jews, who boasted of their external holiness, or seeming sanctity, they being not profane or notorious sinners; or as they themselves foolishly said, “Not extortioners, unjust, or adulterers, like as the publicans were,” Lu 18:11. Yet the Lord Jesus showeth by this parable how they were deceived; for though they were delivered from that profane and debauched unclean spirit, yet was their state worse than the state of gross and wicked sinners, which is signified by the entering into them seven other unclean spirits, worse or more wicked than the first that were gone out of them.

That the words may be applied to them and other people of that generation, is evident from the sequel of ver. 45, “Even so shall it be with the people of this froward generation.” Yet no doubt our blessed Saviour in this place may have reference to a man in the like state; or as Beza, *Ceterum quum spiritus impurus exierit a quopiam*, &c., as well as unto that people who were carried away with cursed hypocrisy.

“When the unclean spirit,” &c.

By the unclean spirit, to avadap xov rcvsnpa, is certainly meant the devil, called “an unclean spirit,” Mr 5:8.

1. Because he hath lost his own original purity, or clean and holy nature, he being at first created an angel of light, having like holiness before he fell, which the blessed and elect angels of heaven have.

2. Because he is so universally filthy and abominably vile in himself, and so remains, and will abide for ever, there being no possibility for him to become better, he being left and forsaken of God, without any means afforded of being purged from his unclean and filthy nature.

3. Because he is not only unclean in himself, but also defileth the hearts and spirit of all such persons who receive and entertain him, nay, all the pollution of our nature; yea, the whole nature of the human race was originally from that compliance and yielding to him by our first parents. It is this unclean spirit that hath poisoned and notoriously defiled the whole man, both body and soul in all its powers and faculties; and not the whole man only, but the whole world also. And as this is naturally the filthy and miserable condition of all creatures, so those who yield to his temptations, come to have further pollution and defilement cleave to their hearts and lives. Sin is an unclean thing, and it makes all such loathsome and abominable in the sight of God, who are overcome by it. Though all naturally are vile and filthy, yet there are degrees of uncleanness; some are worse than others, more wicked, and so more like to the devil, in whom his very image or likeness clearly may be seen.

4. He may also be called an unclean spirit, because he continually enticeth, and strives to draw men to filthiness, and to all manner of uncleanness, being an utter enemy to all purity and true holiness, envying all those who love it, and strive to promote it.

“Is gone out of a man.” Not that the man was actually possessed with the devil, (as some may think,) though it is very like the Lord Jesus may borrow this parabolical speech from a person actually possessed; but he showeth hereby that all wicked men are in a mystical and spiritual sense possessed with the devil; all graceless sinners have an unclean spirit in them. Where sin predominates and rules in the heart, there the devil has possession; that heart is Satan’s throne where he reigns and sways the sceptre. Satan was said to enter into Judas, and to fill the heart of Ananias. Both these had this unclean spirit in them; the one was plagued or possessed with a treacherous devil,* and the other with a lying devil. Hence it is also said, that Satan,* who

is the prince of the power of the air, both “worketh and ruleth in the children of disobedience,” Eph 2:2-3.

“Gone out.” Either by the power and force of the grace of God in its common operations he was thrown out; or else, through policy, he voluntarily leaves his house for a time, with an intention to return again with a stronger force. Some adhere to the first sense, and others to the last.

“Gone out,” *i.e.*, as a carnal, profane, or black devil, for so he may be said to be in all debauched persons; and in this respect he may be said to be gone out or thrown out of the Pharisees, and other false and counterfeit professors; he may not be able to keep them any longer under the power of open and gross profaneness. And from hence the Pharisee proudly breaks forth, “God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican,” Lu 18:11. Why may not Satan be expelled or forced out of his house in some degree, by the common influences of the Spirit? All generally grant that legal convictions, and the operation of common grace through the workings of natural conscience, have some considerable power in them to reform the life of a wicked person. Nor can I think Satan would yield to any soul voluntarily, so far as to let him become so much as civilized if he could help it; therefore I rather think he was forced to give place, as not being able to hold his own (in some respect,) as formerly, although whilst the creature abides in his natural state, not having a changed heart, Satan hath possession of that soul still in a great measure; and therefore he leaves, no doubt, a strong guard behind him, when he is said to go out, though they may be said to hide themselves, or retire into some lurking-holes and comers of the house, or rather of the heart. Satan cannot, doubtless, keep possession always, so far as to hold men under the power of gross and scandalous sins, or cause them to continue openly profane; such power and virtue is there in the common operation of the Spirit, or in legal convictions and workings of natural conscience, together with the help of the external ministration of God’s word, and by the means of afflictions, and those severe providences and dispensations, under which wicked men may be exercised, that it may tend to make them become other men; though it cannot change their hearts, yet it may make a great change in their lives, by which means they may look like saints, and talk like saints and sanctified persons, and be taken for such too by the truly godly; nay, and that which is worse, may conclude within themselves they are converted, since their former enemy, that debauched, gross, and unclean spirit is gone out of them. I am so far of the mind of James Arminius, that man may by the means of that common help and power God affords to all in general, may

leave the gross acts of wickedness, let Satan do what he can; which has been often evinced by that terror severe human laws have had on the consciences of wicked and ungodly persons. I am persuaded were there a law that he that swore an oath, or was drunk, or committed adultery, should have his right-hand cut off, or be made a slave all the days of his life, we should see men would get power over those temptations of Satan, and neither be drunk nor commit adultery.

“He walketh through dry places.”

What is meant by Satan’s walking through dry places

1. Satan is said in that of Job 1:7, “to go to and fro in the earth, and to walk up and down in it.” Satan here speaks, saith Mr. Caryl, like a prince; therefore saith he, “Some conceive this was the prince of devils that is mentioned in this text, or Beelzebub the chief of devils.” He walketh about to view his provinces and territories, from one place to another, but he doth not walk to and fro as an idle peripaterick, but to enquire, to observe, and consider, as a spy, to search all things and persons as he passeth along. Therefore,

2. This notes that Satan is a diligent enemy; if he hath lost a little ground, or is worsted in one soul, he will try what power and success he can find in another.

3. It shows that he is an unquiet and restless spirit, being cast out of heaven, he can rest nowhere; and if he be forced out of some men at one time, he will tempt others, nay, if the servant hath a little worsted him, he to revenge himself, will fall perhaps in the next place upon the Son; if he lose some place in his own house, he will see if he cannot get into the temple of the Holy Ghost; or, if he is forced to leave wet and filthy places, in which he delights, he will walk through dry places, and see what he can meet with there.

4. Satan’s great work which he employs himself in and about, is, no doubt, to get into the heart of men to dwell, nay, rule there, and so subject them to himself, and defile and pollute them one way or other.

“Dry places, seeking rest, and finding none,” i.e., where there is no water or moisture, or not enough to refresh him; he has a cruel thirst upon him, and unless he meet with that he seeketh, which is to make a prey of the souls

of men, he is in a restless state, like a thirsty person who walking through dry places, can find no water. There are some sorts of men that afford Satan no content nor satisfaction; he seeketh for that oftentimes which he finds not; he is not pleased to be as a traveller, to pass through a place and stay, (as it were but for a night) but would fain find rest, i.e., have a place or heart to dwell in, and take sole possession of. I find one of the ancients, who, writing on this dark expression, speaketh thus: "So long as he dwelleth not in me, he is said to seek rest, he is grieved and vexed," &c.

1. Dry places, are commonly clean places, or places where there is no dirt or mire; and Satan, that unclean spirit, is like a swine, i.e., he delights in filthy and miry places; dry places signify his assaulting the saints, or seeking to get into sanctified hearts, or hearts renewed by the special grace of God, and thoroughly purged by the blood of Christ, in whom that filthy sink of sin and pollution, is not only dried up, but the heart is changed and made new, and so no more a house or habitation for this unclean spirit, but is become the temple of the Holy Ghost, or a habitation for God through the Spirit. And these men's hearts are unto Satan, like dry places to a thirsty and restless person. For as the Holy Spirit cannot rest, nor take up his abode in filthy and polluted hearts; so the devil, that wicked spirit, can find no rest nor place of abode in renewed and sanctified hearts. And as it is no suitable house or habitation for him; so likewise believers have one dwelling in them, strong enough to keep Satan out. "For stronger (saith the apostle) is he that is in us, than he which is in the world," and again he saith, "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one," 1Jo 5:18. "He that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not," 1Jo 2:14. Shall not so touch him as to enter into his heart and take up his dwelling, or get possession of him any more, and therefore these men's hearts, i.e., the hearts of true sanctified Christians, I conclude are meant here by our Saviour, which are to Satan as dry places, where there is no dwelling or abiding for him.

2. As dry places are clean places; so likewise they are commonly barren places, places where little or nothing will grow; Satan is for such hearts that will receive his evil seed, i.e., suited and fit to close in with his cursed temptations, which are like to moist or miry place, such as all corrupt and unregenerate hearts are, in others that bitter and evil seed which this unclean spirit sows, will not take root. Or if it should so fall out, that through the carelessness and negligence of believers, and strength of temptations, Satan should drop some of his cursed seed in them, and it should meet with a little of the old corrupt nature (there being in the best of men an unregenerate

part) yet it would soon wither and come to nothing, for their hearts are, (as I said before) no proper soil for the seed of the wicked one; therefore if he gets in a little, he is soon turned out again; so that in a word, according to the import of this saying of Christ, (as I conceive) these men's hearts are to the devil, like dry places, where he can find no rest.

3. Dry places are for the most part places least inhabited for want of water, the hearts of saints are like uninhabitable places to Satan; in them he cannot find those proper accommodations which he needs and must have where he dwells. But since he can find no dwelling here, no diabolical comfort nor refreshment, i.e., no abode in godly hearts; he saith, "I will return into my house from whence I came out," ver. 44.

"I will return." Not that he was quite routed and vanquished before; it is called still his house, he lays claim and pleads propriety in him and interest still. Therefore this man's heart was not become the temple of the holy Spirit, he was gone out, or forced out before, as a swearing, cursing, whoring, or drunken devil, &c., and this might enrage him, and move him to attempt some greater enterprise which we have already spoken to. Satan doth not love to lose or let go any strong hold he hath of carnal and profane persons; but seeing he had received some small defeat, he sets upon the truly godly Christian; like as when he was cast out of heaven unto the earth, he presently persecuted the woman which brought forth a man child, Re 12:13. When he saw he could not uphold his kingdom by Paganism, nor farther execute his malice by Pagan emperors, but was routed and overcome as to that power he had, (as our late annotators observe) to let us know that he retains his malice, though he hath lost his former strength, he goes on in pursuing the church of God. Even so, I say, he having been forced to give way before as I hinted, he walks about to seek revenge upon the saints, but they being to him like dry places to a thirsty man, or as an inn to a traveller, viz., no resting place, he resolves to return to his own house, that is, the hearts of hypocritical professors, such as the Pharisees were. And this returning of his into his old house, imports (as I conceive) his coming again in another form or shape, and with a resolution to get better and more firmer and surer possession than he had before.

Now he appears as an angel of light. Nor can we suppose he had no party left in the said house when he went out. Parables must not be strained too far; we ought not to screw or make to severe a scrutiny upon every phrase; therefore we cannot think when he is said to return to his former house, or attempt afresh the false and counterfeit Christian, that he hath

quite given over his designs in assaulting sanctified persons; but he cannot endure to be an underling, he is for kinging it in the souls of men, would fain reign and sway the sceptre there, and where he cannot rule and domineer, he hath no rest, nor can be satisfied. And therefore he may be said to return as an exiled prince, and lest he should be discovered, he puts on a new garb, and is now contented his captive should become religious, that so the deluded sinner might not discern him, but take him for his lawful sovereign; as if he should say, I will yield to you now; if you will be a professor and become religious, ye shall, but I will dwell with you notwithstanding; here is room enough for me as a white devil, though not as a black one.

“And when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished.”

Empty, that is the Spirit of God was not there, true grace was not there, Christ dwelleth not there, that house may be said to be empty, where God and Jesus Christ are not; nor is it a hard and difficult thing for the unclean spirit to enter into such a soul, since there was no enemy strong enough to keep him out; but contrariwise, the place seems to be rather prepared and made fit for him, to take up his abode in this new religious and spiritual appearance, nay, here is not only room for himself, but the house is so empty, that many other unclean spirits more wicked than himself, may have their abode and dwelling there also. Satan saith, I will return to my house, &c. He speaks as if he was sure enough that this sinner was his own, and therefore should without any difficulty enter in, in that new disguise in which he now appears; and accordingly it is said, he findeth it empty, and also swept; but doubtless some dirt and filth was yet in some hole or corner. For like as a lazy and slothful housewife uses to sweep a little of the loose dust and filth in the open and middle of the room, and lets many secret corners lie foul as before, and may be leaves the dirt behind the door out of the public view of people: so the false and counterfeit Christian reforms his life in the sight of men; or like the Pharisees, makes clean the outside of the cup and platter, but their hearts are still polluted, and as vile as ever.

Swept, but not with a proper and fit broom; it is said to be swept, but alas it was only with the besom of legal reformation; and how far that will cleanse the unclean and wicked person, is known to understanding men; it only takes away the filth of gross and scandalous sins, therefore said by St. Peter, “To escape the corruption that is in the world,” 2Pe 2:4; that is, the profane world, i.e., vile and notorious sins and pollutions.

And garnished, or painted, which may signify that seeming sanctity, moral virtue, and the common graces of the Spirit. Our Saviour elsewhere compares pharisaical holiness, to painting or garnishing of a sepulchre; "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. Ye build (saith he) the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous," Mt 23:27,29. And thus Pharisaical and hypocritical professors may be said to be garnished, i.e., they seem glorious to men, who only judge by the outward appearance, and know not the heart; there may be a great change of life, a beautiful outside, and yet the evil and vicious habits and pollutions of the heart may still the same, and not changed. And remarkable is the phrase of our Saviour "garnished," which we know is commonly a curious piece of art, men by their ingenuity strive to imitate nature; they will draw the face of a man, &c., with curious painting, very exact, so that it much resembles the person's natural face, yet it is not the same, it is but a piece of paint, an artificial invention. Even so in like manner by the improvement of man's natural parts, common grace, light and knowledge, he may appear in the view and sight of men, as a true child of God, and may talk and discourse like a saint, read and hear God's word, nay, and pray also with much seeming devotion and piety, and may likewise bridle many unruly lusts, and gross enormities of life, and give alms to the poor, insomuch that he may very exactly resemble a true and sincere Christian, and be taken by all godly people to be indeed such an one; but notwithstanding all, it is but an artificial piece, it is but like a curious paint, or vain-glorious garnish; it is not the image of God, it is not the new creature; though it looks like it, much resembles it, yet is not the same; for the man is a mere hypocrite, a counterfeit Christian, the work upon him being only the product of natural improvements, and not the effects of the saving operations of the Holy Spirit. Nay, and Satan, though an unclean spirit, likes to dwell in such a house, I mean such a heart, thus swept and garnished, as well as in the heart of a vile and debauched person, and evident it is, that this sweeping or external cleansing with the broom of outward reformation, or the garnish of moral righteousness, common gifts and graces of the Spirit, prayer, hearing the word, partaking of the sacraments, and doing many good works, cannot secure his soul against Satan's attempts, in order to his taking up his habitation in such person's hearts.

After I had preached these two sermons, a godly friend who heard them, told me he had met with a treatise of a worthy author, who gives the same sense on this mysterious place of scripture, he helped me to the book which I was ignorant of, and I shall give you some brief hints of what he hath said.

“When the unclean spirit goeth out of a man,” &c. That sinners are vile and abominable, (saith he) it is from that wicked spirit Satan, that dwells in them, every sinner is a person possessed of a devil; when a little reformed, they seem for a time to be dispossessed, &c., he walketh through dry places; what these dry places may be, is not easy to determine, some by these *loca arida*, understand *loca vacua*, void, empty places, the deserts and wastes of the the earth, where he finds nobody to tempt or molest.

But could Satan, saith he, think to find rest there where was no house for him to lay his head in? would the tempter waste his time in seeking whom to devour in those waste places, where he knew well enough there were none to be found? He knows too well where sinners dwell, than to go to seek them where they are not; more like to find the devil at a market, than in a wilderness. This therefore seems not to be the sense—

Why may not, saith he, these dry places be the saints on earth, the fountain of whose blood is dried up? in whom the sun hath dried up their dirt and mire, in which this swine loves to wallow, &c., [he seeketh rest] this notes two things.

1. When the devil is gone out of any person, he is never at rest till he is gotten in again, from whence he went out, or into some other habitation where he may do more mischief, like children, like father, is said of some, so it is much more true of him, “He rests not but in doing mischief.”

2. The devil loves to dwell where he may be at rest; that is, not from work (his rest is his work) but from resistance or opposition, i.e., in carnal and unclean hearts, &c.

“Seeking rest and finding none,” he goes, saith he, through these dry places, from saint to saint, from heart to heart, in hope to find entertainment, but is still disappointed; here is little rest for me, saith he, to be had, these dry places I see are no places for me, here is watching and wrestling and warring against me; so much praying, complaining against me, that there is no stay for me here—I will go back to my old habitation, and when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished, a little cleansed, a little cleaner and handsomer than when he left it. The devil can allow sinners a little reformation; but though it be a little cleansed and garnished, yet it lies empty still, there is no tenant hath taken it up, though the devil went out, Christ was not let in, but there it lies void for the next that comes.

Then he goeth and taketh seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Beware of a returning devil; the devil at his return often makes sevenfold worse work than before he did. Allen's godly fear, p. 213, 214, 215, 216.

He modestly offers this as his thoughts on the place, and I find others confirming by some brief hints the same things. I thought it not amiss to recite this passage of his, as a farther confirmation of the exposition I have briefly given you of this dark place of scripture, not doubting but it is the sense and meaning of our Saviour.

Take two or three points of doctrine. Observe,

1. Satan is an unclean spirit. As God is the Author and Original of all true holiness, so is Satan of all sin and wickedness. And as God's nature is pure, so the devil in his nature is impure; all purity proceeds from God, and all sin proceeds from Satan; God strives to promote the one, and the devil labours to promote the other, as God's kingdom is set up in the world, and maintained by holiness and spiritual sanctity; so the devil's kingdom is set up and upheld by sin and filthiness. As God by his Spirit dwells in sanctified hearts, so the devil dwells in polluted and sinful hearts: and as Christ makes that man or woman holy and clean where he makes his abode; so Satan makes those souls where he take up his dwelling, unclean and abominably wicked. Moreover,* as he who is truly sanctified and made holy, is said to be of God; so they that are wicked and ungodly, are said to be of the devil. All those who are spiritually and truly gracious are like to God, or bear some resemblance of him; and all unclean and wicked persons are like to the devil. These things considered, no marvel Satan is called an unclean spirit.

2. All profane, notorious, and ungodly sinners are in a woful state, the unclean spirit is in them, their hearts are Satan's habitation.

The heart of man was not originally Satan's house,* nor hath he any just right or property to it; it is his by usurpation and conquest, as men yield up themselves to him, and entertain his temptations. Man, both body and soul, is the Lord's, he is his creature; nor ought he to suffer any to dwell in him, much less to rule and sway the sceptre over him, but the holy God. But as all men as they come into the world, have wretched and cursed natures, through original depravity; so ungodly men actually have cast off God their lawful

and only sovereign, and have embraced the wicked one, they have received, and do subject themselves to Satan, that unclean and filthy spirit, he is king and lord over them. The devil hath got possession by craft, he enticed our first parents to open the door to him, they gave him the first entertainment, it was then he took possession, and thereby at once corrupted all that are in the house; I mean, all the faculties of the soul to such a degree, that they all naturally side with Satan,* and are for him, and are filled with enmity against God, and oppose and resist his Spirit, and rebel against the light. Wicked men had rather be under the tyrannical government of the devil, than to be ruled and governed by Jesus Christ, and from hence it is no wonder they rather choose to have wicked earthly rulers and tyrannical kings to be over them, than to be subject to a prince who is an enemy to wickedness, tyranny and oppression. This shows the blindness and miserable state and condition of all wicked and ungodly men. We may further note also,

2. That Satan may lose some ground in sinner's hearts, he may seem to be gone out of them, and they may become sober and civilized, and yet may be in the gall of bitterness, and their hearts notwithstanding may be still Satan's habitation.

Let these men change their lives, and become other men in the view of the world; alter their course of life, yet they are miserable; Satan has spiritual power and dominion over them, he has a strong party in their hearts, when he seems to be gone out, and knows they are his still, and owns them as his dwelling-place. When he cannot meet with entertainment in other places, when saints afford him no encouragement, but displease and defy him, and their hearts are as dry places, he can nevertheless return at pleasure to his old habitation, and there he enters and dwells. Let them change their religion, yet they are Satau's slaves still, be matters not if they leave popery and cleave to prelacy, and so become protestants in general; nay, embrace a more refined sort of people, and take upon them a more strict profession of religion, yet still they belong to him, if they are not truly regenerated and renewed in their souls; let them be Presbyterians, Independents, or Baptists, it signifies nothing, they are still the same, and under Satan's power and dominion. O how miserably are some men deceived, thinking if they are reformed and become zealous for external ordinances, and have taken up this or that form of religion, and are taken for saints by men, that all is well, and they shall be saved! How did the Pharisees glory in their seeming zeal and piety, and flatter themselves, and yet wofully blinded, and in a damnable state and condition? Note also, that,

4. Morality, external gifts, and common grace, are but like a vain paint, a mere empty and artificial garnish.

They make a fair show in the flesh, they pride it in themselves, and men praise and admire them, but what doth all this signify? they are still under a diabolical power and influence, and two-fold more the children of the devil than they were before. Nay, as I shall hereafter show, rather seven times worse than when they were openly wicked and profane.

APPLICATION

1. A terror to sinners. Tremble you that live wicked lives, remember the unclean spirit dwells in you, and has power over you, your hearts are his habitation, he rules in you, and takes you captive at his will. If in this state you die, you are undone for ever.

2. See to it, you that are professors, lest you are also deceived. What is a reformed life without a changed heart? To cast off the gross acts of sin, will not avail you anything, without the evil habits are broke, and you renewed in the spirit of your mind. Though you seem to be godly to men, yet God knows your hearts, and how they stand affected to him, and to true real godliness. A form of religion will never save you; and though you may have got some ground against Satan, and he seems to have left you, or is gone out, yet take heed he does not return again with greater strength, and get you into stronger bonds now, than he had before. But because this will be more fully opened in the next place, I shall at present say no more to it now.

3. This also affords much comfort to God's people. Satan sets upon you, and fain he would subject your souls to himself, and take possession of your hearts, but he cannot prevail, you have got one in you who is stronger than Satan, who will preserve you to his heavenly kingdom. But no more at this time. I shall leave what I have said to the blessing of God.

SERMON VI

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, &c.—Mt 12:43-45.

The last day I opened the several parts of this place of holy Scripture,* in the usual method I have all along taken in my exposition of other parables, which I have already spoken to, according to that small measure of light and knowledge the Lord hath been pleased to bestow upon me. There remains one thing further to be done, and that is indeed the chief and most material of all, which is to show you the sad state of the false and counterfeit professor, out of whom the unclean spirit is said to be gone, but yet is returned again with seven other spirits more wicked than himself. Our Blessed Lord saith, “The last state of that man is worse than the first,” Mt 12:45. Now in what respect a painted hypocrite, or one garnished only with common gifts and graces of the Spirit, may be said to be in a worse state than the open profane, I shall endeavour, God assisting, to demonstrate.

It is said, “Satan returned with seven other spirits,” &c. Seven is a number of perfection. I judge our Saviour designed hereby to show that the devil hath now got stronger hold and possession of such a person by many degrees; many unclean spirits, or worse and more dangerous sins cleave to him than before, so that he is like to be perfectly miserable. But to proceed;

First, That which renders false professors, or counterfeit Christians, to be in such a deplorable condition, (which also evidently appeared in the Pharisees, and other people in that generation, to whom primarily our Saviour refers, as the close of the 45 ver. shows) is, that great ignorance that cleaves to them, notwithstanding their common illuminations; which usually does consist in these respects following,

1. “They know not their own miserable state, looking upon themselves to be rich and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing,” Re 3:17. As appears by that charge of the Lord Christ against the church of Laodicea, who were fallen into the like condition; they think none knows more than themselves, insomuch that they secretly contemn him who tells them how it is with them; and this rises from the consideration of that great knowledge they conceit they have above others; “But now ye say, Ye see, therefore your sin remains,” Joh 9:40. If your ignorance were simple, (as if Christ should say) and not affected, or were you sensible of your blindness, then your disease would not be so incurable. But now you say you see, and you doubt

not but you are in a state of happiness, and are the only people of God, and yet presumptuously refuse the way of your relief and salvation, and do not conclude you are under guilt and wrath, as indeed you are.

2. Their blindness and ignorance consisteth, in that they cannot discern nor distinguish between a changed heart, and a changed life, or between legal reformation and true regeneration. They think, because their state seems so much better than it was before, in their own apprehension, and in the apprehension of others also, their condition is good enough; they comparing themselves with themselves, beholding what a vast difference there is, or seems to be in respect of what they once were, when swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, &c., cannot but commend themselves to themselves. Once they saw themselves sinners, and called themselves so, and were ashamed of their own sinful and wicked lives; but now they are righteous in their own conceit, and so have no need of any farther work, being arrived to that state of holiness, (as they think) or that degree of piety, to that change, to that conversion, that they conclude they need not seek for any other, and yet are deceived, and in the gall of bitterness. And hereby they seem to put themselves out of the call of Jesus Christ, “who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Mt 18:11. Let men think what they please, certainly there is no devil like this devil. If he can persuade a man that he is whole, and not sick at all, and so needs no physician; and that when the gospel is preached to sinners, and the danger of unbelief is opened, yet it doth not affect him, nor concern him, he being become a righteous person; what hopes can there be of such a one? Alas, the ministers of Christ have received no commission to offer Christ to any but to sinners. Now these are not the persons a precious Saviour is tendered unto, they see no want nor need of him, and therefore these are passed by, as such who need no repentance.

3. Their blindness consisteth in their ignorance of God’s righteousness, not knowing what righteousness it is that will render them accepted and justified in the sight of God; and so, like the poor Jews, go “about to establish their own righteousness,” Ro 10:3, their own personal righteousness, a home-spun righteousness; they see no need to go to another, to be beholden to another.

Secondly, Their danger appears also from a proud devil that is now entered into them. Pride commonly accompanies ignorance, and this abounds in the heart of man by nature, and there it will predominate, till the soul passes through an effectual change, but it appears in none so fully, or to

such a degree, as in a Pharisaical person; he cannot endure to think he is so poor as profane and notorious sinners are; what, go to his neighbor's door for every morsel of bread he eats, and for every draught of drink! no, it is below him to beg, he thinks it is enough for publicans and sinners to do so. And indeed what need he go to be fed and clothed by another, that is full, and sees his goods increased, and hath need of nothing? Faith empties the soul, makes it poor, before it fills and enriches it. But this man knows not what faith is, nor the life of it. Pride springs from an inordinate self love, and self-flattery, are the glasses in which a self-deceived hypocrite looks, in which he appears indeed that which daily he is not. Self-love is a multiplying, yea, a magnifying glass. These never had a true sight of themselves, never saw their own poverty, and horrid pollution of their nature; it is with them, as it was with the apostle, before the commandment came, they are alive and beautiful in their own eyes.

Lucifer, as some pretend, is one of the chief of devils, who is called also the king of pride. If so, certainly he is one of those wicked spirits that entered into this person. Now what but infinite power can throw out this devil, this pride, and bring this soul to the foot of the cross, and make it strike its swelling sails to Jesus Christ, and become nothing in himself, and to hate and loathe his own righteousness, by reason of that impurity and pollution that cleaves to every best duty they do or can perform? Thus this unclean spirit raises up strong fortifications against the way of salvation, the way of faith, or going to Jesus Christ, for all, as poor and undone sinners. These enemies, in hypocritical and self-righteous persons, stand armed in the breaches of nature, (as one observes) to beat off all assaults of the gospel, and therefore the latter state of these persons is worse than the first.

Thirdly, Self-confidence may be another evil spirit that is entered into these persons, and which renders their state so bad. It is impossible to persuade them that their condition is nought and damnable: you may (as hinted before) quickly bring a vile and debauched person to acknowledge his state is dangerous, though there is no turning him from his evil course; yet he stands not upon self-justification, but rather readily yields to you; if you deal with him at seasonable time with wisdom, and tell him he is a very wretched creature; I know I am, so saith he, the Lord have mercy upon me. But the man out of whom the debauched devil is gone, is in his own eyes become another person, a seeming saint, one that hears sermons, prays, and gives alms, and yet not renewed, nor his evil habits changed. O it is no easy thing to bring him once to doubt or question the goodness of his condition, he blesses God for that help he has had to change his former course of life;

“God, I thank thee, I am not as other men, nor as this Publican;” I was as bad as others, but I am become religious; I am no swearer, whoremonger, drunkard, extortioner, &c. To this purpose you have the Pharisee boasting and praising God; this renders his state lamentable with a witness. What made the foolish virgins so bold as to go forth to meet the bridegroom? Was it not that confidence they had that their condition was good? “A wise man,” saith Solomon, feareth and departeth from iniquity; but a fool rageth, and is confident,” Pr 14:16.

Fourthly; vain-glory also certainly may be another sin this person is become guilty of. The design of God in the gospel, is to discover how vile, helpless, and wretched all men naturally are in themselves, and so to show us that we have nothing to glory in, “but that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord,” 1Co 1:31. But these persons glory in their seeming gifts, parts, learning, knowledge, and external privileges: they are like those of old who cried out, the temple of the Lord, or the church of God are we. Poor sinners have nothing to glory in unless it be their shame. The publican cries out, “Lord be merciful to me a sinner.” But the false and self-righteous professor, like as a rich man glories in his riches, and a strong man glories in his strength, so he glories in his own righteousness, in his spiritual attainments and seeming sanctity.

This vain-glorious person little considereth what horrid pollution abides still in his heart, for which he is accursed by the law of God, and so remains till he hath real union with Christ, and is brought under a divine change. What though he has escaped some abominable evils and corruptions of his life, since his vicious habits, and filthy nature is not changed, nor he sees not the purity of the law of God? alas, he beholds it, as only forbidding all outward acts of sin, but the spirituality of it was never opened to him, for if it had, he would see no cause of glorying in himself, but contrariwise would soon be convinced of his error and sad mistake, and behold himself an undone and cry out of the deceitful nature, turnings and windings of his own base heart, thoughts and affections, and that great disproportion or disagreement to the perfect rule, or how far he is from that holiness and rectitude described in the book of God. It amazed Paul, when he once came fully to understand the law, when he looked on all the parts of it, not only on the grosser sins forbidden by it, but on the rectitude, the holiness, which is required therein: when he saw the law discovered lust to be sin, and that the least lust of the heart is as palpable a breach of it, as murder, theft, or the outward act of adultery, and exposed equally to the curse of it, and so to the wrath of God: then (saith he) “sin revived, and I died,” Ro 7:9. that is, as to

any hopes of life and salvation; by that righteousness which before he gloried in, and made his boast of.

Fifthly; moreover, formality, it may appear to all, from hence is another evil that does attend this sort of men, or is another wicked spirit that hath possession oft heir souls.

What a stir did the Pharisees make about ceremonies? how zealous were they, like some now-a-days for outward rituals and traditions of their own devising, or which are merely human? as if the chief part of religion, and the sacred worship of God, consisted in external forms, rites, and ceremonies; “And art confident (saith the apostle) that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light to them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast a form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law,” Ro 2:19-20. A scheme or system of notions, a compendious model method which is artificially composed, such as tutors and professors of arts and sciences do read over again and again to their pupils and auditors: these men are commonly the chief enemies to the power of religion and godliness, and like their brethren of old, great persecutors of God’s faithful and sincere children, whilst they cry up their external forms, considering not what our Saviour saith, that “God is a Spirit,” Joh 4:24, and seeks spiritual worshippers of him, not formal, not external, or carnal modes, bodily gestures, consecrated places, attended with glorious ceremonies, saying over a few prayers, in which are many vain repetitions, not minding whether their matter of worship be of divine institution or not, nor whether they perform their devotion in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, flowing from a rectified nature, and from sacred principles in the life and power that attends all sanctified Christian worshippers. Others of the same sort may be right in the matter of worship, seeming to hate idolatry and all superstition, yet wholly resting on the external part of religion and godliness, whose state may be as dangerous as those before named; though in this they seem to excel them, i.e., the first miss it both in the matter of divine worship, as well as in the manner of it; they are zealous for the traditions and commandments of men; as they are formal in their worship, so their form is not that form of doctrine once delivered to the saints; it is not the true form of godliness, having “a form of godliness,” 2Ti 3:5, not the form; it is like a mask or vizard, or appearance, an accidental form (as one observes on that place) it is a devised, or an human, nay, may be an anti-christian form, thinking themselves to be Christians, and the only worshippers of pretended Christ, and cry up themselves to be the church, and yet under this vizard and piety are very vicious, empty and vain; denying the power of godliness.

Sixthly, The wicked spirit, or abominable sin that some of these men's souls are also possessed with, is legality. And though this clearly appears by what I have already said, yet I shall speak a little more fully and distinctly unto it. All that these persons do and perform, is in a legal spirit; and that I may show you what I mean by legality, in short it is this, i.e., that act and do for life, look upon themselves to be under a conditional covenant; and whilst they live up to that law or rule which they judge they are bound to observe and keep, in order to justification, they have peace, rendering the gospel and covenant of grace (by their false apprehensions of it) no better than a legal ministration or conditional covenant, as was hinted before in respect of another sort of men: for like as the Jews of old acted in a legal spirit, and sought to be justified by the works of the law, so these perform all their services and duties in the same spirit, viz., not from life, or a divine principle of saving faith, but for life. To keep the commandments of God, and live religiously, is absolutely necessary. But then this must be done from a renewed nature, and flow from faith, it being the proper effect or fruit thereof; but to strive to live a sober and holy life, and obey God's precepts, and rest upon their so doing, and look to be accepted with God, and justified thereby, is that which too many of this sort of people do, and this is to act in a legal spirit. Possibly a man may say, I know I cannot presently keep the law, but I will do (by the help of God) what I can; and wherein I through weakness do transgress, the Lord is merciful, and I trust will forgive me. But let them remember what God saith, viz., "that he will in no wise clear the guilty. Moreover, what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that all mouths may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God," Ro 3:19. It is evident, as God will not forgive an impenitent person, so he will not forgive the penitent, except they believe in Jesus Christ.

Seventhly, Amongst the wicked spirits that are entered into this man, namely, into this counterfeit Christian, that horrid and wicked spirit of unbelief must not be left out, for though this sin of sins is in all unconverted persons, yet it reigns and triumphs more in this sort of people than in others. Profane persons are kept up by a false faith, depending, as they will tell you, on the death and merits of Christ, though it is only cursed presumption in them; for that cannot be a true faith, which changes not the heart and life of the creature. But they believe not, by reason of love to their sins, which they not as yet willing to forego. But these believe not on Christ, because of that love which they have to their own seeming righteousness, which in point of trust, hope, and dependence, they as not willing to forego. These men place that hope on their own works and righteousness, which true Christians place

on Christ, and so unbelief in them throws Christ quite away, they having no need of him.

1. What is unbelief, but an actual or virtual denial of the truth of the gospel, when men do not assent to the doctrine of it, by an act of the understanding?

2. It is a refusal to accept heartily of Christ upon the terms of the gospel, which is opposite to justifying faith, when there is not a fiducial motion to Christ as the centre. When Christ the only foundation and chief cornerstone, is laid aside, and the need and worth of him not believed. This sin binds all the guilt of all their old and new sins upon their souls, it is a sin against the highest goodness of God, and casts contempt upon it; for never did God manifest such sovereign goodness unto his creatures, as in Jesus Christ. God hath said, there is no life, no salvation any other way,* but by the Lord Jesus. But these men do not assent to this truth, do not believe the report God hath given concerning the want of perfect righteousness and regeneration, and self-debasement, &c. Nay, they seem to contradict the will of God, by their going about to establish* their own righteousness, and so not submitting to the righteousness of God. In a word, it is a denying of Christ, and a disesteeming the price of his blood, as it also reflects on the wisdom of God, in fixing on this way to save sinners. It is an invaluating the excellency of Christ's person, blood, and merits. As faith counts all things dung in comparison of Christ; so unbelief accounts the person, offices, and doctrine of Christ, but as dung in comparison of the excellency of self-righteousnes, self-wisdom, self-sufficiency, &c. These men are the worst neglectors of the great salvation,* they do not only neglect it, but slight and contemn it, there being in their thoughts not any need to look for salvation this way. They that sin against the law fly to the gospel, but these sin against the cure held forth and extended in the gospel. Whither must these fly, since there remains no more sacrifice for sin? If this be slighted, no other way or means is ordained for salvation. Such who refuse the covenant of grace, and depend on the covenant of works, how woful is their condition? And what hope a law often transgressed can give a malefactor, is (saith a worthy person) easy to imagine. Millions have perished by it, none can be secured by it, as none ever by it were or could be saved. At first these persons transgressed against the rule, but now they transgress against the rule and remedy too. None but unbelievers are despised by God, none but these shall taste of his wrath and divine vengeance; this is the condemning sin, this is Satan's strongest hold, hither he retreats after all, and here he keeps, as in chains, his miserable captive. "He that believes not, shall be damned," Mr

16:16. And what is faith but a going out of a man's self to Christ for life and righteousness, as a poor wretched and miserable sinner? But these men now see not themselves to be in such a state, these are hypocrites.

Hypocrisy is opposed to that inward simplicity of the heart, and all counterfeit professors are guilty of it, though all do not act the part of an hypocrite with an intention, i.e., are not convinced they are hypocrites. Some deceive their own hearts, they are the grosser sort, then their hearts deceive them, therefore most to be pitied; a man may doubtless be an hypocrite, and he may not know it, he may go on in a way of duty, and do all things, as he thinks, exactly according to the letter of the word, and in uprightness, as he may judge,* and yet be unsound; certainly thus it was with the foolish virgins.

Hypocrites may be nevertheless discerned, our Saviour hath given the character of them.

1. They are commonly most zealous from the lesser things of religion, i.e., for "paying tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, but neglect the weightier things of the law, judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God," Mt 23:23-24. "They strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel," Lu 11:42. They make a stir about external rights, observation of days and meats, but to the power of religion and godliness are strangers, and experience nothing of a divine change on their souls.

2. As they lay the greatest stress upon the least things, so they are commonly partial in their pretended obedience; they lay hard things, "Or heavy burdens upon others, but they themselves will not touch them with one of their fingers," Mt 23:4. What they preach and press on others, they do not themselves, they will not obey Christ, nor follow him in the hardest things, nor do they obey in love.

3. They are commonly finding faults in other men, "Can spy the mote in their brother's eye, but cannot see the beam that is in their own," Mt 7:3. As it is a sign of notorious hypocrisy, and impudence, to censure and judge others for those sins which men live in themselves, so it is a sign of the like hypocrisy, to spy faults in others, and reproach them for those faults, and yet the person is guilty of worse himself. What they preach and press on others, they do not themselves, they will not follow Christ in the most hard and difficult things of religion, but pick and choose; will do some things that they like of, and not only neglect others, but quarrel with them who contend for it, and faithfully subject to Christ in it. And as they are not universal in their

obedience, so they do not obey in love, nor do they obey always as sincere Christians do, as David intimates.

4. They are generally very confident touching the goodness of their own condition, not questioning their salvation, thus were the Pharisees; they judged others were in a damnable state, but as touching themselves, did not doubt but they were the only people, and blessed God they were not as other men; whereas a true Christian is full of fears and doubts about the truth of grace received, and goodness of his condition.

5. They are vain-glorious, do what they do to be seen of men; like the Pharisees, "They love the praise of men, more than the praise of God," Joh 12:43. Their hopes are kept up by the good opinion others have of them; they, like their predecessors, "love greetings in the markets, and uppermost rooms in feasts, and to be called of men Rabbi," Mt 23:6-7. They also are subject to envy, or have their hearts rise against such, who they hear outdo them, and would be looked upon as the chiefest of men; in learning, and wisdom.

6. They are commonly very zealous to make men proselytes to their own notions of religion,* though may be, false and corrupt notions. But if they can but bring a person to receive their principles, and external ordinances, then they glory, though hereby he is made twofold (perhaps sevenfold) more the child of hell than before; the poor deceived wretch thinking this change of religion is a true conversion, and so never looks out for any other, but speaking peace to his own soul, judging all is well within. They doubt not but they have religion enough when it doth commend them to men, and are taken for saints by saints; their greatest labour is to keep up their name and credit in religion; so that they may pass unsuspected amongst their fellow-creatures, or have the approbation of men, and if none can charge them justly with any immoral actions, they rest satisfied, whereas the greatest care of a true child of God is so to walk and labour, that he may be accepted of God, and have his approbation.

7. Self is commonly in the bottom. In all they do, they aim not at the glory of God, but have a carnal design, self-advantage, or self-applause, &c. This moves and quickens them, and animates them in all they perform in religious services; and if they miss of their end, be it what it will, they soon are weary, and grow cold and flat in their spirits, and become quarrelsome, and seek offences, and disturb the peace of the church to whom they belong.

8. Moreover, they are not the same at home, which they are abroad; not in private what they seem to be in public; may be seldom pray, either in their family or closet; or if they do, it is with little zeal, enlargedness, or affection to God.

APPLICATION

This may inform us of the cause and reason there is so great reproach brought upon religion, and on the ways of God, and on the people of God, by some who profess the gospel. Alas, many of them who are called saints, who we may fear are but counterfeit Christians, such who never experienced a true work of grace; they may have knowing heads, but unsanctified hearts. And from hence it is there are so many proud persons in many congregations, who with brazen foreheads will brave it out, with impudent faces, in the presence of Christ's faithful ministers; and though reprov'd, and told of their cursed pride and abominable dresses, high and shameful towers, hateful to God and good men, yet reform not, will not deny themselves of their filthy lusts, though the name of God and religion is exposed to great reproach and contempt thereby, and the hearts of sincere Christians wounded, and mourn for it bitterly before the Lord. If they had but a spark of true grace, could they ever stand it out thus against the gunshot of heaven? How fearless do they seem under the rattling peals of thunder of heaven? They regard not the whetted sword of the Almighty, nor the bending of his dreadful bow; nor mind the arrows that are just upon the string, God being ready to send forth his anger with fury, and his rebukes in flames of fire.

Moreover,* from hence it is also there are so many covetous, earthly and hard hearted professors and members in churches. Alas, you may tell them of this abominable sin a thousand times over, and all to no purpose; their hearts (it is to be feared) are set upon their covetousness, they love the world more than the word, nay, more than God or Jesus Christ; and yet, under a cloak of religion, shelter themselves as if all was well, and they good Christians. And because they covet no man's goods but their own, and so are not guilty of theft, they conclude they are not chargeable with this sin of covetousness; though Christ's poor members are not regarded, the naked are not clothed, nor the hungry fed, nor the sick visited. They will give something it is true, but not according to the need and necessity of the poor, nor according to their ability; nor is it out of love to Christ, nor to his poor saints neither, they give what they do give, but may be to free themselves from reproach, or to quiet their own consciences. And hence it is likewise there are so many whisperers, tattlers, and backbiters in congregations, and so consequently so

much trouble and disorder in our churches. Though godly Christians may be guilty of great disorders and many infirmities; yet I am persuaded, were there not many false and deceitful, carnal, and hypocritical professors, it would never be as it is. What makes the best design that ever was among us for the promoting the interest of Christ, and good of the churches, so neglected, and like to sink in the bud, but the great discouragement these sort of people lay it under? They have no mind to such a good and great work, they are for enriching themselves, and to lay into their own coffers and treasuries, but not to cast into Christ's treasury. And this evil example of theirs, lays a temptation on sincere and upright men and women. What do such and such do? they are far richer than I, and they will do nothing. To these let me speak one word: why, will you do no more for God, because some who love him not will do nothing? Alas, you had need do the more. I am persuaded you would not willingly be found foolish virgins in the day of Christ. How do you know but these very men shall be found to be such, who value the gratifying of a base lust, above the discharging a holy and acceptable duty to Christ? who give more to deck and adorn their houses, and please the lust of their children, than they will give to promote the gospel, and recover the languishing interest of Jesus Christ that is in our hands. And may not this be the reason our assemblies are so thin on lecture-days? is it not because the hearts of the people are not right with God? Can godly Christians be always under the same temptation? Can sin predominate in them, and they act thus habitually to the scandal of their sacred religion? Can sin be in the affections of saints, because there are some infirmities in their conversations? Is not a true child of God quickly convinced of his fault? and doth he not straitway reform? But this is a constant course of evil, and wilfully persisting in it; nay, and ye shall incur their displeasure perhaps, if you deal plainly with them. Sure Christ is at the door. Now the kingdom of heaven may certainly be compared to ten virgins, five wise, and as many foolish, Read the latter end of Mt 24, and the beginning of the 25th chapter. Multitudes of foolish virgins, it is to be feared, are now got into the church, as Christ signifies it would be a little before his coming, whose latter end will be worse than the first.

This also reproves those who foment such notions, and strive to distil them into the minds of people, that are absurd, and tend to blind and ruin men's souls, telling them they are in the covenant of grace, and church-members by their parents' faith, and have the seal of the covenant; yet I could never learn what it doth seal or make firm to them; for a seal, all know, usually makes sure all that is contained in the said covenant. Shall they miss of the blessings of the covenant of grace, who have it sealed to them? Alas,

hereby it is to be feared, many think they are in a good condition, though never united by saving faith to Jesus Christ. Can it seal, and not seal covenant-mercies to them? Or can they perish after they are in the covenant, and have the seal of it? Circumcision was a seal it is true, “of that faith Abraham had, being yet uncircumcised,” Ro 4:11-12. It was not a seal of that faith which he had not, but of the faith which he had; and therefore it could not be a seal to his male-infants of the righteousness of their faith which they had, being yet uncircumcised, because they had no such faith before circumcision, as to believe in God, and to have it imputed to them for righteousness, as had Abraham their father, to whom circumcision was only called a seal of the righteousness of the faith, “which he had, yet being uncircumcised, and that he might be the father of all them that believe,” ver. I. It was a seal to him of the latter blessing as well as the former; for the promise that he should be the heir of the world, the apostle shows was not through the law, nor in or through circumcision, nor had any that dignity conferred upon them but Abraham only, which clearly shows circumcision did not appertain to the covenant of faith.

Likewise it may reprehend another sort, who tell the people they were made “the children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven,” in their baptism, or rather rantism. O the danger of this pernicious doctrine! How many flatter themselves with the hopes of heaven from this false foundation, thinking they sucked in the true faith, and true religion, with their mother’s milk, and were made Christians by a priest’s scattering a little water on their faces when babes, though they live in all manner of horrid sins, and are enemies to the life and power of godliness? This is a way of making Christians which Christ and his apostles never taught; and it is a healing of the hurt of the people slightly, taking them off from seeking after grace and true regeneration; for if they were made true Christians then, regenerated then, doubtless their state is good; and so it is to be feared, thousands of them conclude, and never doubt of their salvation.

Moreover, it reproves all who rest on morality; who, because they live a sober life, and pay every man his own, doing justly, &c., conclude all is well, yet look after no other religion. And it also as much reprehends those who boast of their knowledge and spiritual attainments, they conclude their state is good, because they are members of a true church, and have been baptized indeed, and break bread, read and pray in their families, and discharge all other external duties of religion, but rest wholly upon these things, and never were brought to be poor in spirit, nor obtain real union with Christ, but are ignorant of the faith, of the operation of God. What means the pride of

some? their earthliness, contention, whispering, backbiting, want of love, divisions, &c., shutting their eyes at further light, and discovery of truth? O look about you for the Lord's sake, lest after all your high profession and hopes of heaven, you do not at last drop down to hell.

Lastly. It reproveth all such nice and scrupulous persons, who seem to make it their chief business to render all odious who are not of their own fantastical humor; women must not wear a bit of lace, &c., nor a gold ring, nor men wear a periwig, though never so short and modest, (and advised to do it by able physicians, for their health sake) because the apostle saith, "It is a shame for a man to wear long hair therefore they run into extremes, and cut their hair close to their ears, and so disguise themselves, and censure others as guilty of great abomination, (who will not imitate them) as if the main points of religion lay in these foolish formalities and niceties, and as if none were to be taken for godly Christians, but such who are just of their height, and length, and breadth, and conform to them in these smaller things (that may be lawful notwithstanding what such say;) and render those odious, who are better than themselves, even as such who hate instruction, and cast God's word behind them, &c. These men seem to bear the exact image of the Pharisees of old! and though they thus strain at a gnat, yet at the same time seem to swallow a camel. For one of this sort will be found, it is to be feared, guilty of horrid lies and slanders, backbiting and reproaching his neighbours, securing to be filled with malice and envy, rendering a great body or multitude of godly Christians odious, whom Christ loves, I am persuaded it would be better with the churches, if many were severed from them. But O how seldom have any been dealt with, either for pride or covetousness! as if it were not possible to find out such offenders as well as others.

Moreover, it sharply reproveth those preachers whose great business it is to bring men into a visible profession, and make them members of churches, whose preaching tends more to bring persons to baptism, and to subject to external ordinances, than to show them the necessity of regeneration, faith, or a changed heart. For the Lord's sake take heed what you do, if you would be pure from the blood of all men. We too often see when people are got into churches, they conclude all is well; and when conversion is preached, they do not think it concerns them, but others who are openly profane; and thus they come to be blinded, may be to their own destruction; and if their blood do not lie at some of your doors, it will be well. I am afraid some now-a-days like the Pharisees, may be said to compass sea and land to make proselytes, but when made, they are twofold more the children of hell than before, as our Saviour intimates.

It may also put us all upon a strict examination of our own hearts, lest we should be found some of these false and counterfeit Christians. And that we may clear ourselves in this matter, consider.

1. Were you ever thoroughly convinced of your sinful and lost condition by nature, and of that horrid evil there is in sin? Did you ever see sin as the greatest evil most hateful to God, not only of the evil effects of sin, but also of the evil nature of sin; not only as it has made a breach between God and man, but has it also defaced the image of God in man, and made us like the devil, filling our minds with enmity against God, godliness, and good men.

2. Is there no secret sin lived in and favoured, the evil habit never being broke? Is not the world more in your affections, desires, and thoughts, than Jesus Christ?

3. Are you willing to suffer and part with all that you have, rather than sin against God? Do you see more evil in the least sin, than in the greatest suffering?

4. Do you as much desire to have your sins mortified as pardoned, if so, it appears you are sincere, and no hypocrite; and thus I close with this parable.

4. IV. Parable, Luke 13:6-8 Of The Barren Fig-Tree

SERMON VII

He spake also this parable, a certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of the vineyard, behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he answered, and said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it, And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, thou shalt cut it down.—Lu 13:6-9.

IN speaking unto this parable I shall in my usual method,

1. Open the scope of it.
2. Explain the terms.
3. Observe several points of doctrine, and prosecute them distinctly, as the Lord may assist me.
4. Apply the whole.

1. In the first verse of this chapter, our Saviour takes notice of Herod's cruelty.

2. He also mentions that fearful judgment which befell eighteen men, on whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them.

3. And from hence he exhorteth them all to repentance, showing that they might not be greater sinners than others who suffered such things; and though perhaps it might be their sins that brought those judgments upon them; yet if those to whom he preached did not believe in him and repent, he shows that they must expect far worse punishment, even eternal wrath and vengeance to be poured forth upon them; think you (as if our Lord should say) that your state is good, because ye are "Abraham's seed," and enjoy many external church privileges, and are spared, and God doth not execute present judgments upon you, no, no, this will do you no good, since you are a company of barren, and unprofitable persons; though you are planted in the Jewish church (which was then the vineyard of God) and trust that that you are righteous, and the only happy people, yet are you likely to perish

eternally for all this; and now to convince them of their great danger in this respect, he brings in this parable.

“A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard,” &c.

1. From the scope of the parable thus opened, we may note,

Doct. 1. That temporal judgments inflicted on some persons, should excite others to fear God’s divine wrath and vengeance. Alas, some are ready to cry out, O what wrath, what judgments are fallen upon such and such persons! and thus bewail their condition, when perhaps, though they suffered on earth, yet might be happy for ever; and, at the same time these very persons (who seem affected with the state of those who suffered temporal judgments) are in a far worse condition as to their eternal state; for evident it is, that many gracious persons have been born and endured most severe punishment on earth, as the blessed martyrs who are now glorified in heaven. And many others also have borne bitter things here, though not by martyrdom, as holy Job, &c.

As a trial of their faith, and other graces; and some for their sins, &c.

Doct. 2. No persons ought to be rash to censure others on whom temporal judgments befall. There is no knowing either love or hatred by anything that is under the sun.

Dost thou hear of any judgment fallen on such or such a man. Tremble, for thou knowest not but in a short time, as bad, or worse may befall thee; every judgment which falls upon any person, calleth aloud upon all sinners to repent, lest they also perish; and that not only on earth, but also in hell for ever; thou art a sinner, and perhaps a greater than such who were taken away by sudden death, or in an unusual manner with a fearful stroke; and God is angry with thee as well as with them, and may make thee an example of his wrath and judgment, as he hath others; if not, yet be not rash to judge them, nor be thou an idle, or careless spectator of the theatre of God’s judgments. So much as to the scope of this parable.

Secondly, We shall proceed to explain and open the parts and terms contained in it.

1. “A certain man;” by this certain man is meant, or intended the great God; God is sometimes called a certain king, also sometimes a man, yea, an

husbandman; “my Father is an husbandman,” Mt 22:2; Joh 15:1. Though God be a Spirit, immense, infinite, of and from himself, and incomprehensible, yet he is sometimes compared to a man that hath a vineyard, “that had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard.”

“A vineyard;” by vineyard is here meant the church of God; and wherefore the church is compared to a vineyard, we have in opening other parables showed; but yet take a few things upon this account here.

1. A vineyard is a select, or choice piece of ground taken out of other common ground, designed by the owner for some special use.

Even so God hath taken his church out of the field of this world, or from the rest of mankind, who lie barren, like the waste wilderness, for some special and peculiar use and design.

2. A vineyard is walled, or fenced in, so is God’s vineyard, “he made a wall about it,” Isa 5:1-2. The church of God is “a garden enclosed,” Song 4:12, and not only the church in general, but every member thereof particularly is walled in. “Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about all that he hath on every side,” Job 1:10. The church (and every particular believer) hath many enemies, and are in the midst of dangers, why else need there be a hedge or wall about them; alas, none in the world are more envied and spited, and exposed to danger than God’s people are by Satan, and wicked men, therefore God walls or hedges them in on every side. And,

1. God himself more immediately protects them, or is a guard to them by his special providence, by his power, wisdom, love, care, and faithfulness.

2. He employs his holy angels to protect and preserve his church, and all that dwell therein; “the angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear him,” Ps 36:7. What a glorious guard had the prophet Elias round about him, when in great danger. Angels are compared to fire, and they are as a wall of lire round God’s people.

3. By a wall, the church like a vineyard is severed or separated from the world; the constitution and discipline of the church, makes it distinct from the rest of mankind; many confound the church with the world; but what saith our Saviour, “ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world,” Joh 15:19; they are commanded to separate themselves, in respect of church-state worship and discipline from the world, “come out from

amongst them, and be separated saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you,” &c., 2Co 6:17-18; again he saith, “be not conformable to this world,” Ro 12:2; that is, in point of worship, and in human traditions, or in fantastical fashions, and evil customs.

4. A man greatly delighteth in his vineyard which he hath walled in, manured, and sowed with precious seeds, and planted with precious plants, as vines, fig-trees, &c. So the Lord greatly delighteth in his church, which he hath made a peculiar people to himself, and sown with holy right seed, and planted with trees of righteousness. “Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah, for the Lord delighteth in thee,” Isa 62:4.

The church he calls his portion, “Israel is the lot of his inheritance,” therefore cannot but take great delight in them; and from hence he is said to dwell in them, and walk in them,” 2Co 6:16, as a man walks up and down in his vineyard, being pleased therewith.

A vineyard of a noble person he esteems as his choicest possession. Kings have had their vineyards, we read of Solomon’s vineyard (and how Ahab was in love with Naboth’s vineyard) and so hath the King of Heaven and earth; and it is his own, he bought it with a great price, and therefore highly values it.

5. A man bestows great pains upon his vineyard, he plants it, dungs it, waters it, and weeds it, and thinks nothing too much to lay out upon it to make it fruitful. Now, the holy God in respect of cost and pain that he has laid out, and been at with his vineyard, far exceeds all that ever had a vineyard; no vineyard was ever purchased so dear, nor planted with choice and precious plants; it was brought with blood, the blood of his own Son, Ac 20:28; his only-begotten Son, and sown with the graces of his own Holy Spirit; so that God may well say, “what could I do more for my vineyard which I have not done,” Isa 5:1-3.

6. He that hath an excellent vineyard, appoints one to be his vine-dresser to prune it and purge it, and to cut off superfluous branches.

Now God hath chose and appointed the Lord Jesus Christ to be his vine-dresser as chief, and under him faithful ministers whom he employs to labour in his vineyard.

Had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, not only one, but many; yet one, and many of that sort; it may be feared that are barren or fruitless, by this fig-tree is meant all barren and fruitless persons, (who sit under the means of the gospel, especially such who are members of the visible church; this fig-tree I say signifies all barren and mere formal professors of religion.

A fig-tree planted, &c. Quest. But why doth Jesus Christ compare professors of religion to fig-trees.

Answ. 1. He may allude to the practice of such who had vineyards in the land of Canaan, in which they frequently planted, not only vines, but fig-trees also.

II. It may be because a fig-tree that brings forth ripe and good figs, requires much heat of the sun, or must grow in a hot climate.

So professors of Christianity cannot thrive as to bring forth ripe and good fruit, but under the divine and warm influences of the Sun of righteousness, and the blessed gospel of God's grace; as in our cold climate, no fig-tree bears ripe figs, so in those regions where the gospel is not preached, and the Sun of righteousness shines not, but being only under the influences of natural light, bring forth no spiritual and saving fruit, no gospel fruit, nothing but the fruit of morality.

III. Because no tree (as naturalists observe) is commonly more fruitful than the fig- tree.

For the first year they are planted (as my author notes) they commonly bear fruit; they bring forth fruit sooner than other tree.

2. But if they bring not forth fruit, the first, second, nor the third year, it is observed there is but little hope or ground to expect they will ever be fruitful trees.

Even so if men are not changed, converted, or renewed, in the beginning of the preaching of the gospel, or when it is first preached to them, it is rare if they ever be converted, or if not in the beginning of their days (provided they are under the means of grace) there is but little hope or ground to believe they ever will be converted; very few who have long sat under the powerful preaching of the gospel, if not converted, ever afterwards are converted, or if not in their youth; it is rare if they are when they are old,

though perhaps some may, but it is not usual, or a common, or ordinary thing: for them which God calls at the third hour, he doubtless seldom calls at the eleventh hour.

IV. A fig-tree is a tree full of sap, and draws much moisture from the root, and from the fatness of the earth.

So true Christians are full of divine sap, or have much grace in them, and also daily draw fresh virtue from Christ, and from his word, and holy ordinances; hence it is said, “that the trees of the Lord are full of sap, they flourish like trees planted by the waterside,” Ps 104:16; 1:3.

V. A fig-tree bears choice fruit, figs are of a pleasant and feeding nature and also have most sovereign qualities in them to assuage and break a hard and dangerous swelling; it is said they are excellent good to break and heal a plague sore, and indeed this is confirmed by the word of God, for when Hezekiah was sick (as it is thought) of the pestilence, he was healed of his sore by figs: “For Isaiah had said, let them take a lump of figs and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover,” Isa 38:21. True, some would have this to be only a sign, of his recovery, and not as if figs had such a powerful virtue in them. But others upon good ground conclude, figs have an excellent virtue in them for breaking a hard swelling, though a greater blessing might then attend that plaster than usual.

Ask physicians, and they will tell you of the quality of one sort of figs.

Brethren, the fruit which believers bring forth, is most choice and precious fruit in the sight of God. For,

1. Faith, O! what an excellent grace or fruit of the Spirit is that, it is called “precious faith, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us,” &c., 2Pe 1:1, more precious than gold, it is sweet to the taste, nay, it makes such things that are very bitter in themselves, to be very sweet and pleasant to the soul; as bitter afflictions, trials, and temptations.

2. This fruit revives and comforts the fainting spirits of a poor Christian. “I had fainted, unless I had believed,” &c., Ps 27:13.

3. Without faith we cannot taste any sweetness in God, we cannot taste how good the Lord is, nor how precious Jesus Christ is, for he is only

precious to them that believe; to you that believe he is precious, not to others.

4. No man can have any true peace in his own soul,* without he hath saving faith in Christ; we must first have grace, and then peace.

5. No changed heart, no true brokenness of heart, no cure for the plague of a hard heart, no cleansing the leprous soul, without faith, “they shall look unto him whom they pierced, and shall weep and mourn,” Ac 15:9; Zec 12:10; they shall look, &c.; that is, they shall believe in Christ, and then mourn and greive for sin; all godly sorrow for sin proceeds from faith in Christ.

6. No communion with Christ without faith, there is not any fitness in unbelievers for that divine fellowship; the heart of man naturally is full “of enmity against God,” Ro 8:7, and can see no cause of joy or rejoicing in him; such cannot savour the things of the Spirit, who believe not.

7. Faith is an earnest of glory, and therefore it is a most excellent fruit.

8. Such who hear this fruit may know that God loved them from everlasting; it is one of Christ’s love-tokens, all that have saving faith, have Jesus Christ, or an interest in him, and shall certainly be saved.

2ndly. What excellent fruit is love, love to God, love to Christ, and love to his people, as also humility, patience, temperance, this fruit pleaseth Christ; grace breaks the hard heart, and a heart puffed up, and swelled with pride and vain glory; grace cures the plague of sin, the plague of unbelief, and earthly-mindedness.

V. Fig-trees bear fruit all the year, when some figs are ripe, other are green, it is seldom but fruit may be found on some fig-trees; so the saints and people of God bear fruit continually in the summer of prosperity, and in the winter of adversity, they cease not bearing fruit: “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: For he is like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in tears of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit,” Jer 17:7-8.

Again it is said, “the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon, those that are planted in the house of the Lord

shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God, they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.” Ps 90:12-14.

VI. There are some fig-trees barren, they are not of the right kind, but are a bastard sort of plants, which only have the name of fig-trees; not the nature of fruitful fig-trees.

So there are some professors, though they are planted in Christ’s vineyard, yet they are barren or fruitless persons, they are not indeed true Christians, true believers, but mere counterfeits, professors, that have the name of spiritual fig-trees, but not the nature, never were made good trees, and therefore never produce or bear good fruit, but are like some branches in a vine, that bear no fruit, for though these are grafted into Christ’s mystical, i.e., into his visible church, and so are said to be in Christ, that is by a visible profession, yet never had any internal union with Christ, nor ever received the Spirit, the bond of that union, from whence faith proceeds, for faith properly is the fruit of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit is infused, and faith is produced, or springs up as the flowers from the seed which is first sown.

“Planted in his vineyard,” it is not said who planted this fig-tree in God’s vineyard. The Lord Christ planted it not, because it was utterly void of fruit; “Trees of the Lord are full of sap, and they do and shall flourish in his vineyard, to show that the Lord is upright, he is our rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him,” Ps 90:15.

Note, ministers may plant trees in Christ’s vineyard, that God never planted there: they through ignorance of men’s hearts and states, or through carelessness, may take into the Church such persons that never were truly converted, but these will not stand long there, “Every plant my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be plucked up,” Mt 15:13.

2. Yet this word planted, denotes that this person was got into the church and looked like a true spiritual fig-tree, i.e., a true believer, or like a godly Christian, or was in show and appearance a saint; ministers and churches may be deceived, and baptize and receive hypocrites into the church, cursed Judas was once planted in God’s vineyard, and a Simon Magus was baptized by Philip, Ac 3.

Some profess themselves to be what they are not, but deceive themselves and others. Satan is subtle, and he craftily teaches some persons to counterfeit the true Christian.

“And came and sought fruit thereon.”

1. God takes notice of every particular person that is planted in his vineyard, there is not one member of the church but his all-seeing eye is continually upon.

2. God expects fruit in such that are planted in his church. He looked that it should bring forth grapes, not wild grapes, not the fruit of the flesh, but the fruits of the Spirit; not to see them lay the reins loose on the neck of their lusts, and inordinate affection, not pride, ambition, gluttony, backbiting, whispering, &c., not feeding themselves without fear, not the daubing themselves (as one observes) with the lust,* provoking fashions of the times, to walk with stretched-out necks, naked breasts, frizzled foretops, wanton gestures, gorgeous apparel, mixed with gold and pearl, or decked with costly array; not earthly mindedness, covetousness, strife and envy; but love, faith, meekness, humility, temperance, liberality, brotherly kindness, charity, and abhorring all iniquity, even avoiding all the appearances of evil, and discharging all pious and holy duties.

3. If there be but one soul, one member in the church that is fruitless, God will soon find that person out; “he saw there a man that had not on a wedding garment,” Mt 22:11.

He came to see the guests, he looks this way and that way; “all the ways of men are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all their goings,” Pr 5:21; no person can hide themselves from his sight.

Thou fruitless fig-tree, thou barren professor, dost thou hear this and not tremble? God is come seeking fruit; will thy bare profession, thy knowledge of the principles of religion, satisfy the great God? will the notions of truth in thy head, thy talking and disputing serve thy turn? thy hearing the word, or this and that minister preach, sit as a judge to censure them, and catch at any mistake; or to commend their sermons when they please thee; I say, is this all the fruit (think you) God looks for? God will have fruit, precious fruit from thee; it is this he comes to seek and find on thy branches.

But found none, sad case! Hearken, O thou barren soul, God says he found none; what none at all? I must tell thee, if thy fruit be not right fruit,

God looks upon it to be no fruit; if it be not such fruit that spiritual fig-trees should bear, it is no fruit in his account.

It is not the fruit of good words only, but the fruit of good works; not the fruit of discoursing well, talking well, but the fruit of walking well, having a holy and pious conversation.

2. May be some hasty fruit thou didst bring forth, thou mightest have a fair and promising beginning, didst show much zeal, and much love and affection for, and to Jesus Christ for a short time, but thy goodness was “as the early cloud, and as the morning dew, it passed away,” Ho 6:4, &c., 13:3, at first thou seemest hot, but are soon cold.

3. There is a fruit, saith honest Bunyan, among professors that withers, and so never comes to be ripe, a fruit that is smitten in the growth, and comes not to maturity; and this is reckoned no fruit, &c., some make a show of a promising crop, they blossom well, but the blossoms drop off, or it is blasted with the east wind; I mean by Satan’s temptations they decay, or a worm breeds in their blossom that eats out the heart of the flower and blossom of profession, i.e., some cursed sin or another gets into their hearts, and they presently wither, and die away.

4. There is the fruit of common grace and spiritual gifts, the gift of knowledge, the gift of prayer, perhaps the gift of prophesying, or preaching; this fruit they may bring forth, but God accounts these no fruit.

5. Or perhaps there is in these the fruit of morality, but not the fruit of regeneration; something which looks like grace, saving grace, but it is no such thing; for this fruit is often found on wild fig-trees, such that grow in the common field of this world, many heathens have brought forth such as this, and many persons who never were planted in God’s vineyard, do bring forth the fruit of good manners, i.e., they may be just and faithful in their dealing or trades in the world, and not guilty of any gross acts of immorality, but this God accounts as no fruit; this is nothing but what the ground may bring forth naturally, I mean no other fruit but what a mere natural man by the help of the light of nature, and by the power of natural knowledge, and natural conscience may produce, who never received a principle of saving grace.

6. Or they may bring forth untimely fruit, fruit that falls off before the proper season, “as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs,” Re 6:13, so these are

like the stony ground, they “hear the word with joy,” Mt 13:20-21. And anon, or before they are well rooted, then fruit falls off as soon as the sun rises and shines hot, or as soon as tribulation, and reproaches, and persecution arises because of the word, they are offended, moreover, perhaps other of this sort may delay bringing forth fruit until the season of grace is over; some sow the seed so late, that it never comes to perfection; so some repent too late, defer believing, and closing with Christ, till the summer is ended; and so their fruit is untimely fruit; the foolish virgins went to buy oil when it was too late; before they were ready the Bridegroom came,* and they and their fruit were rejected.

“Then he said to the dresser of the vineyard, these three years I come seeking fruit, but find none.”

Some by these three years, understand the beginning of the promise made to Adam, and the preaching under the law, and the giving out of that ministration.

2. The second year, the preaching of the prophets.

3. The third year, the preaching of Christ and his apostles; but I think this is far fetched, and not meant by these three years.

Others by these three years, understand the whole time of our blessed Saviour’s preaching and confirming his doctrine by miracles, which was about the space of three years; but this also I shall pass by.

By three years I understand is meant that time God is pleased to afford to a people, or to a single person; a certain time being here mentioned, to denote an uncertain.

1. The first year may denote the beginning of the means of grace which God affords to men and women.

2. Year the proper time that fig-trees bear fruit, if not the first year then it is expected that it brings forth fruit the second year.

3. Or it may imply, that God expecteth sinners should bring forth quickly after they sit under the means of grace.

4. Moreover it may denote that the means of grace may not be of long continuance.

5. Also it may signify God's patience, he waits one year, two years; nay three years, and yet finds no fruit; some divines note that usually three years after any person are under the means of grace, they bring forth fruit, or else there is but little hopes of them.

“Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground.”

God will not always bear with fruitless professors, this cutting down may refer to several severe acts of God's justice.

1. God may direct his speech to his Church, and to the subordinate vine-dressers.

Cut it down, by excommunication pass the righteous censure of the church against this barren, carnal, and unprofitable professor; deliver him up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

2. Or God may speak unto Jesus Christ, the grand vine-dresser smite his root, let him wither, and his seeming fruit die away, even as our Lord smote the barren fig-tree, and said, never fruit be on thee any more for ever.

3. Give him up unto his own heart's lust, leave him to himself, withdraw all motions of the Spirit, and convictions of conscience, and let him perish for ever.

4. Leave him to delusions, God sends some strong delusions, that they may be damned, because they received not the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved.

This is a fearful way of cutting down, O how many have in this nation of loose and barren professors been thus cut down, they having had no more than a bare profession of religion, the mere shell; have been left to cast contempt upon the blessed ordinances of Jesus Christ, calling them low and carnal ordinances, carnal forms, and empty shadows.

5. Or Christ may cut them down by death, or cut them off in the midst of their days. I should now proceed to the reason why the Lord commands

this unfruitful tree to be cut down, why “cumbereth it the ground; this is the cause, it is a ground cumberer, but shall now close with a word of use.

1. Let such who are planted in God’s vineyard, tremble who are not fruitful in grace and holiness, the church will be no sanctuary to such persons.

2. We may infer from hence, that some persons who are in Christ’s vineyard, were never planted therein by the hand of God, for such whom he planteth are fruitful trees, trees full of fruit.

3. Men may have leaves upon their branches, nay, some seeming fruit, and they may seem to grow and flourish for a time, and yet nevertheless may not bring forth the true and saving fruits of the Spirit.

4. We may also infer from hence that though men may take some professors to be sincere, whose hearts are not right with God; yet long it will not be before God discovers them, and his wrath manifested against them. The barren soul shall not stand long in God’s vineyard.

SERMON VIII

He spake also a Parable, a certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, &c.
— Lu 13:6-9.

I closed the last day with these words, “cut it down.” I shall now proceed to the reason which seems to be given why this barren fig-tree is cut down, viz., “Why cumbereth it the ground.”

1 Doct. God is greatly offended or displeased with barren professors, nay, with all unprofitable persons, who under the means of grace, cumber the ground.

2 Doct. That the evil and danger of barrenness is very great.

A little to the first of these,* God is displeased because it is a fig-tree, it is not a bramble bush, but a fig-tree, though not of the right kind, i.e., a professor, but no true believer; it is not a thorn nor a thistle, from such God looks for no such fruit, he expected no spiritual fruit from profane persons; do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. What fruit can God look for from swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, carnal worldlings, or the like, nothing can be expected from these and such as these are, but the grapes of Sodom, or cursed and abominable fruit.

3. God may be displeased because it is a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, possibly a fig-tree may be found in a hedge, or to grow wild in a common field, (as our Saviour saw a fig-tree by the way he went) but this was planted in his vineyard: there may be many professing persons amongst the ungodly; in the field of this world, I mean in the false church, that may not be as yet transplanted into God’s vineyard, and perhaps such that may not be so barren of good fruit, as some members of a true church of Christ, where no barren tree, or fruitless professors ought to be; now God finding such a one in his vineyard, he is greatly displeased.

3. Because they seem to frustrate his expectation (to speak after the manner of men) “I looked that it should bring forth grapes,” Isa 5:3-5. Doth a husbandman look that such plants, such trees which are planted in his vineyard should be fruitful, on whom he bestowed much pains; and is it not a great disappointment to him to see any barren or fruitless there?

4. God may be displeas'd because such barren persons are a disparagement to his vineyard. What, such a fig-tree in the king's vineyard, he doth not use to plant the worst sort of plants in his vineyard, but most choice and precious plants; such that are of the right kind, and of great worth and value. That one tree may not disparage another, nor the whole vineyard, it being a vineyard well manured, weeded, watered, and pruned; where also a multitude of choice trees are, that bring forth fruit plentifully.

5. Because it abuseth his patience also, this may be another reason why God is offended, "These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, but find none." I have long waited to see whether it would bring forth fruit or not, and I am now quite wearied out, I have exercised much patience and long suffering, towards this man, and this woman, but all is in vain.

6. To come to the reason which seems here laid down, why cumbereth it the ground, this denotes,

I. It is good for nothing, it yields no profit; so this barren professor brings no honour to God, no credit to religion, nor to the church; but is a shame and reproach to God, his ministers, and vineyard.

II. But this is not all meant hereby, it cumbereth the ground, i.e., another good tree, a good plant might grow where this tree stands.

Unfruitful trees, or unfruitful professors, such which are scandalous in their lives, may hinder some hopeful plants from coming into the church or vineyard of God; their barren and scandalous lives may prevent them.

O saith one (that may be is well inclined) what a proud man, and proud woman is that? See after what manner they go, what a dress the woman wears, and how conceited the man is; are these saints? are these members of such a church? I see no difference between them and others.

Again, what a vain and frothy sort of persons are others that are amongst them; seldom any pious, or gracious words proceed out of their mouths, but they seem as loose and wanton as any people; do you not hear how full they are of idle jesting and frivolous talk, God deliver me from such professors as these, I will not come amongst them.

And, saith another, see how others among them indulge their children in pride, idleness, and vanity, and connive at their sin, and they regard not their

parents, but are disobedient; and yet are horn with others (that they look upon to be of the world), who have their children in more subjection, and educate them better than these do.

And saith another, there is such and such men that are members of such a church, and behold how earthly, how covetous, and worldly they are. They pursue the world like other men, as if their very hearts were in it; away with them, for there is no difference, I will not come among them, they are cruel to their poor servants, and make more slaves of them, and let them not have what is necessary and convenient for them, have no mercy nor bowels; also see what a father that man is to his poor son, he would have him work, but hardly will allow him either meat to eat, or clothes to wear.

And then there be others among them who are deceitful and false in their dealings, there is no trusting them, for they will gripe and pinch you in their trading, if you are not aware of them, they will break their words and promises at every turn.

And there are others also that are idle, and negligent in their callings, and so bring themselves and their families to want and poverty, that they become a charge to the people, and because the church will not uphold him in idleness, they vilify the congregation.

Saith, another and I know some others of them that pray not in their families, and perhaps not in private either, their religion is all abroad in the church, there is none at home; shall I come into such a church, into such a vineyard: thus they cumbered the ground; but God forbid there should be such among you, my brethren, I hope better things of you, though I thus speak; yet it is well if there are none such in this and other churches; for no doubt where no barren trees are in God's vineyard, but it is thus, and this is the sad effect of their evil lives.

And as they cumber the ground in general, so they cumber some part of it in particular.

I. They cumber poor ministers by their cross and peevish spirits, alas, they cannot tell how to carry it towards them, this too often they find as the sad effect of their spirits and behaviours.

II. They also cumber and grieve the spirits of their pious parents; how do they mourn to see their children that profess religion, walk unsuitable, and

not as becomes the gospel; what is a greater joy to godly parents than to see their children walking in the fear of God, as John speaks of his spiritual children, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth,” 3Jo 4. But on the contrary, what a perplexity is it to them when they walk loosely and are vain, and carnal; what grief was it to Isaac and Rebecca his wife, to see their son Esau to act like a profane person, and taking to wife one of the profane Heathens, and “Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, which were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebecca,” Ge 26:34-35; they were grieved at his marriage, foreseeing the sad effects of it; besides knew it was a breach of God’s law, and for which he punished the old world; but afterwards we may see it was a sore encumbrance to these godly persons, “and Rebecca said to Isaac, I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth, if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, &c., what good shall my life do to me,” Ge 27:46; also what a cumber was it to the mind of Eli to see his sons who were priests, to act and do so wickedly in Israel, and how did God trouble him, because he did not restrain his sons from those abominable deeds of darkness. See 1Sa 2:30.

III. These barren fig-trees also are grievous, and do cumber the minds of all pious and serious Christians, members of the same church; they are even ashamed to hear of their pride, passion, earthliness, idleness, and of their woeful omission of religious duties, and frequently neglecting God’s public worship, and of their undue hearts, fallings out, and abasing their fellow members, or of their whisperings and backbiting of one another, and thus some part of the vineyard is most lamentably encumbered with these persons.

IV. But this is not all, these barren fig-trees are a sad encumbrance to the whole congregation, or the whole vineyard, what troubles do they bring upon the church in their discipline; were it not for this sort (I mean barren professors) what sweet peace and concord would there be in all the churches of the saints.

V. Moreover, and besides all this, they are cumbersome unto God himself; what saith the Lord, “they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them,” Isa 1:14. I am able to bear, suffer, or endure them no longer; God speaks after the manner of men, they are a burden or cumbersome to him. “I will ease me of my adversaries,” I will cut them down, they afflict and encumber my mind, they have worn out my patience, my goodness, my long-

suffering, “behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves,” Am 2:13.

VI. They are troublesome to the Lord Jesus Christ, they grieve and afflict his Spirit, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you,” it is said he “looked upon them, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts,” Mr 9:19; doth it not (think you) trouble a vine-dresser to see such plants, such trees that he hath dug about, dunged and pruned, still to remain barren and fruitless; why so it troubles the Lord Jesus, the spiritual vine-dresser to look upon thee, O thou barren fig-tree, O think of it.

VII. They are also barren to the Holy Ghost, they also cumber or grieve the Holy Spirit, they quench the Spirit, nay, vex the Spirit of God; “In their afflictions, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them, and carried them all the days of old; but they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them,” Isa 63:9-10. The Holy Ghost strives with them, but they resist his motions, and rebel against the light, and instead of bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, they bring forth the fruits of the flesh.

Lastly, (as to this) I might add, they cumber the family, if it be a godly and pious family where they live; if the wife be a fruitless tree, or barren of that which is spiritually good, being froward, peevish and passionate, how is the mind of the godly husband cumbered, and prayer neglected, and hindered by the means of those incumbering thoughts that afflict him upon this account, so it is if the husband acts unbecoming a man professing godliness, the godly mind, and spirit of the wise is sadly encumbered.

If it be a servant that professes religion that is unfaithful, how doth he encumber the spirit of his master or mistress, or if the master or mistress who are professors, and yet walk in an evil way, (which perhaps is only known to their servant, who is a godly and gracious person) what a trouble is it to such a servant, putting him or her upon a temptation to conceal his master’s or mistresses wickedness for his peace sake, though may be thereby he comes to loose his peace, by conniving at sin, which he ought not to do.

And as the barren fig-tree thus encumbereth the whole vineyard, and each part thereof, so also it cumbereth the ground, in that it keeps off the influences or the sun from other trees which grow next unto it.

Even so the barren and unprofitable professor hinders or keeps off the sweet influences of joy and comfort of communion from gracious persons, they being grieved and disquieted at their carnal, scandalous, and unfruitful lives; for as nothing tends more to greaten and sweeten the communion of godly persons, than the satisfaction they have in each others true piety, so nothing tends more to embitter and spoil their comfortable communion, than the thoughts (and just cause of fear) that some amongst them are unsound, barren and unprofitable persons, having no sincere love to Christ, nor to his dear children.

VIII. Moreover, the barren fig-tree cumbers the ground in that it sucks, and draws much of the moisture of the earth which might tend to feed and nourish some fruitful trees.

So some barren professors who are poor, and cannot live without the charity of the church, do rob or draw away part of that supply from the godly poor who (though they are industrious according to their ability) yet by reason of age, sickness, or some other distressing providence, cannot subsist without the charity of the church, (I charge no person, neither let any think in my public speaking after this manner, in this, or any other like case I direct my words particularly to them,) for if I knew any guilty, I should take another way, even lay their evil directly before them: but as there were some in the primitive churches that worked not, but were idle drones, that lived upon the honey which the painful bees gathered, taking up a profession for bread, or following of Christ for loaves, so it may be feared, that there are too many such who get into churches in these days.

“And he said, Lord, let it alone this year also.”

1. Note that barren souls are spared through the prayer and intercession of Jesus Christ, “he made intercession for transgressors,” Isa 53:12. How did he pray for those that put him to death: you barren souls hear, and take good notice of these words, see by what means you are spared, and who it is that keeps off the fatal blow, when the axe of divine justice is ready to cut you down. O hold, justice hold, stay thy hand, Lord let yet this sinner alone, and that sinner alone, one year longer, saith the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Note that God is slow to anger, or slow to wrath, not willing presently to cut down barren and unfruitful persons; how long did he wait on Israel of old, even forty years (saith he) “was I grieved with that generation,” &c., and

it was some hundred of years before he cut them down, and cast them utterly off.

3. Observe that Jesus Christ intercedes for a little longer time before God cuts down barren persons, one year more after three years were gone and no change, no fruit found, but as loose and as carnal, and unprofitable as ever.

4. We may also infer that there is cause to fear that some who have been unfruitful for several years under gracious means, or under the labours of a painful ministry, will never become fruitful fig-trees; you heard, that bare not the second, nor the third year, seldom ever are fruitful, yet upon the use of other means, such that Christ can, and sometimes doth use, it may be made fruitful.

5. Moreover, it appears from hence that Christ spares no cost, nor pains, in an ordinary way, to make barren persons fruitful; “what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it,” Isa 5:4. He speaks of digging about it, and dunging it: he will use the most likely means in order to make it fruitful; he will open the root touch the sinner’s conscience, he will see to remove the earth or worldly spirit which lies too close to the heart or root of this tree, and perhaps thereby also discover the worm that is at the root, or some beloved lust that spoils its growth, and makes it barren.

6. But if after all means that Christ useth, fruitless persons remain still barren, are still unbelieving, still impenitent, still unholy; justice will at last in wrath cut them down; vengeance will at last overtake all unprofitable and fruitless professors.

7. Moreover, we may infer that God will leave all persons who sit under the means of grace, under the sweet shinings and waterings of heaven, especially such who are planted in his vineyard, without excuse; they of all men shall justify God when he executes his judgments upon them; what will such have to say, when God deals with them here whilst in this world, in his displeasure, or in the great day when he brings them to the tribunal of Jesus Christ?

“Lord, let it alone this year, this one year also.”

O what a kind, patient, and compassionate an intercessor is the Lord Jesus Christ, and what love and affections hath he to such sinners whom he

sees are in a perishing condition; where the axe of God's wrath is up, Christ steps in to hold God's sin-revenging hand. O my father, let this and that man live one year longer, O turn away from this thy anger, I will yet see what may be done. My brethren, Moses in his praying for barren Israel, was a type of Jesus Christ. "And the Lord saith unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great people," Ex 32:9-10. But how did Moses plead with God to turn his anger away. "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people;" nay, he cries, "If thou wilt forgive their sins; if not, blot me I pray thee out of thy book which thou hast written," ver. 32.

Certainly our blessed Mediator far exceeds in compassion the typical mediator, whose love to God's glory, and the honour of his name, and the good of his people, was very great; O my Father, let this sinner be spared a little time, if it be but one year, and I will try what fresh corrections may do; may be, the rod may work more upon them than my word hath hitherto done, and tend to make their barren hearts to become fruitful. I will also stir up my servants to awaken them by a more sharp and searching manner; but if after what I purpose to do, by the strivings and operations of my word, Spirit, and rod, they are made fruitful, well, but if not, thou shalt cut them down.

"And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down," verse 9.

I will when all I purpose to do, is done, intercede for those unfruitful persons no more, and then be sure, my brethren, such persons are undone for ever: if Christ once will stand up to plead with God no more for them, and exercise no more patience towards them, nor use no more means to do them good, but leave them to divine justice to cut them down, they must perish for ever.

Thus I have briefly opened the parts of this parable.

Secondly, I shall observe one or two propositions, from one or two of the principal parts thereof.

"Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none," &c.

Behold! This is a word of admiration, as well as a word that calls for attention and observation: and also a word of lamentation, and of commiseration.

Behold! wonder! I, even I, the mighty God have taken pains with this and that person; I have found means to humble them to discover their sins, evils, and barrenness to them, and then come year after year, to see what fruit they bring forth, and behold, this I have done and yet I find no fruit. From hence note,

I. Doct. That it is matter of wonder, and cause of grief and lamentation, to see men planted in God's vineyard, or sit under the blessings of his house and ordinances, and yet be barren or unfruitful, and not cut down. In speaking to this I shall,

1. To prove the truth of the doctrine.

2. I shall show wherein this wonder lies, or in what it consists, and why it ought to be observed with lamentation.

I. As to the proof of this truth, see what God saith on the like occasion by the prophet. "Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," Isa 1:2-3. God would have the heavens and the earth wonder and be astonished at the sins and barrenness of the Jews, or church of Israel, and to weep, lament, and mourn over them, "Why should ye be stricken any more? why should I use any more means with them to make them fruitful, who after all I have done, bring forth nothing but wild grapes," ver. 5.

Moreover, it is said that our blessed Saviour marvelled at the unbelief and hardness of the hearts of the Jews, to whom he preached, and among whom he wrought such mighty miracles. "And he marvelled because of their unbelief," Mr 6:6; his divine doctrine being delivered with such power and authority, and his miracles and works so amazingly glorious and wonderful. And in another place it is said, "he looked about with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts," Mr 3:5. Here both the admiration and sorrow of our Lord himself is expressed, because of the sins, unbelief, and barrenness of these persons.

Many such like texts I might mention, but what I shall speak under the next general head will further prove this.

Secondly, I shall show you wherein this wonder doth lie, and the cause of observation and lamentation doth consist, viz., that such God takes so much pains with, and waits so long upon, that they may become fruitful, and yet after all are barren.

1. Is it not strange it should be thus, considering the barren earth which is digged up, and dunged, and watered with rain from heaven, becomes fruitful, and answereth the pains and cost of the husbandman. Moreover, trees which are planted in a fruitful soil, being well pruned and purged, commonly become fruitful. But many professors and members of the visible church, though they like ground dug, and dunged by Jesus Christ and the blessed God, remain barren; and though they are planted in the vineyard, on a very fruitful hill, and abundance of gracious means used, and much patience exercised, in order to make them fruitful, yet after all, are like a barren fig-tree, or a vine that brings forth wild grapes. Sirs, is it not strange that God should plant “a noble vine, wholly a right seed, and yet any should be turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine,” Jer 2:21. The Jewish church was of God’s own constitution, and the first plants choice plants, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, &c. But what strange plants were found in it in after times, how barren and unlike those first planted? the like might be said of the gospel church, and gospel plants. The many showers that fall from heaven, makes the hard and barren earth fruitful and tender, but all the divine showers of the world, and heavenly doctrine, makes not the hearts of many professors fruitful or tender, but they abide as hard and as barren as ever. Again the inanimate creatures answer the pains used, so do irrational creatures also they readily obey and yield to the wills of their owners, they in their kind do what can be expected of them; but mankind rebels against, and refuseth to comply with the will of God, and answereth not his cost, pains, and expectation. “The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”

2. Is it not a strange thing, and to be wondered at, to see men value a name to live above life itself, or to esteem a cabinet of very small worth above a jewel that is of an inestimable value? or to see men professing themselves to be wiser than others, or excelling in wisdom, to value or prefer the shell above the kernal, or it is not strange for men to hear that sentence of death is passed upon them, and know not but it may be executed in less

than four-and-twenty hours, yet fear nothing, and though they have a pardon offered them, yet slight it, will not take hold of it.

3. Is it not strange that men should sow tares, and yet believe they shall reap wheat? the barren professor sows to the flesh, and yet thinks to reap to the Spirit; notwithstanding, what Paul positively affirms to the contrary;* or is it not strange to see men rather believe the devil and their own deceitful hearts, than to give credit to what the holy God and Jesus Christ, say and testify.

Wonder, O ye heavens! to behold the creature to abuse the Creator, abuse his infinite wisdom, grace, love, patience, and long suffering, yea, and contemn the sweet enjoyment of his love and favour, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away, for the sake of an empty world, or mere vanity.

5. Behold, the king courting a beggar, and is denied! Behold a physician, who shed his own blood to cure the wounds of his enemies, waits at the door, and yet the miserable wretch there lets him stand all night, and refuses to apply that blood, the virtue of that blood to heal his wounds; but chooses death rather than life.

These things are to be considered with great wonder, and all the folly and evil hinted, meet in much persons mentioned; whom the holy and jealous God useth most gracious means to make fruitful, waiting upon them year after year, but still observing they bring forth no right fruit; he at last cries, cut them down, and yet they fear him not, but go on in the evils of their hearts and ways, until they are indeed cut down and sent to hell.

But to proceed to another proposition.

2. Doct. That the reason why some barren professors are no sooner cut down, is by virtue of Christ's intercession; but yet at last when no means will do, but the signs and plagues of barrenness remain upon them, they are cut down with dreadful vengeance.

1. In speaking to this, I shall show that barren persons in the church of God, with other sinners that are borne with so long, is through the intercession of Jesus Christ.

2. Show why Jesus Christ intercedes for barren and unfruitful persons.

3. Show who they be that are in danger to be cut down with dreadful vengeance.

4. Apply the whole.

Some say it is Christ that only is the chief vine-dresser, that says, stay yet this one year also; but others think it refers to his faithful ministers, who are employed under him to be his vine-dressers.

But certainly the Lord Jesus is chiefly meant hereby, though it may comprehend his ministers also, who with Moses of old, entreat God to exercise patience towards unfruitful professors and impenitent sinners.

That our blessed Lord doth intercede for sinners (as well as for believers) this parable fully doth evince; besides it is said, he prayed for such (or leastwise for some of them) that put him to death, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," Lu 23:34.

Moreover, it is said, "he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for transgressors," Isa 53:12.

Secondly, why doth Christ intercede for sinners.

1. Because he died for them; he that laid down his life for them, be sure will not refuse to pray for them; he that bled for them, will no doubt plead for them.

2. Because he ever lives to make intercession with the Father, and it is by virtue of his intercession that the merits of his blood are applied, and become effectual to poor sinners; he intercedes, that faith may be given to such that believe not, as well as that it may be increased, strengthened, and not fail in such in whom it is already wrought. "Them I must bring," &c., Joh 10:16, that is, all that are given to him, and one way (I have elsewhere showed) he useth in seeking his lost sheep, is by his intercession.

Aaron, when he went into the holiest of all, bore the names of all the children of Israel upon the breast-plate of judgment, and intercedeth also for the people, when guilty of great offences; and this signified the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath before him, and in his memory all the names of God's elect, whether called or uncalled.

3. Because Christ knows that if he intercedes not for sinners, or pleads not for them, one sinner could not live a moment longer; indeed, the lives of all men are continued as the fruit or effects of his interposition and gracious mediation, and when he ceaseth interceding for any people or particular person, vengeance falls upon such a people and person immediately, and no doubt but many temporal judgments are kept off, and prevented by Christ's gracious intercession.

4. Because without Christ's intercession, the gospel is neither given to a people, or nation, nor continued to them; nor is, or can the gospel (or means of grace) become effectual to any person or people, without Christ intercedes in the case: for as all grace, my brethren, was purchased by Christ, so it is given forth by virtue of his intercession to the Father. The Lord Jesus doth not only say, Lord, let this and that sinner alone this year (but if they belong to him) he also prays and intercedes for grace, or a blessing upon the word and ordinances, that so they may believe and be renewed, and eternally saved.

5. Because some barren persons the Lord Christ knows are in the election of grace, indeed who of them were not vile and barren before quickened, called, and made fruitful; and hereby also he leaves all men without excuse. My brethren, the sins, unbelief, and barrenness of wicked men, is the material cause of their damnation.

Thirdly, I shall show you who they are, that are in danger to be cut down with dreadful vengeance.

1. Such barren persons are in danger who have had great favours showed them; yea, more cost spent on them, and labour taken with them, than many others ever had; and yet after all remain barren, carnal, and unbelieving. What wonderful favours did God show the Jews above all people in the world? He gave unto them his covenant, the law, ordinances, and promises; nay, I may say all he had to give, or bestow under the dispensation to such who were a people constituted a national, and typical church. Pray read the 105th Psalm. The apostle shows also, that unto them were committed the oracles of God, &c., Ro 3:2; and, saith the Psalmist, "He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel, he hath not dealt so with any nation, and as to his judgments they have not known them," Ps 147:19-20.

And hence the Lord said, "What could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? and yet after all God did to them, and

for them, they were barren, and brought forth wild grapes, and therefore at last were cut down with vengeance.

Moreover, what cost and pains was Christ at with them, to whom he preached, and among whom he wrought such wonderful miracles; these were said to be exalted up to heaven, but they remaining barren, see what our Lord says; “And thou Capernaum which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell,” Mt 11:23. Compare this with what the apostle saith, for the “Earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursings, whose end is to be burned,” Heb 6:7-8.

2. Such are in danger who wear out the patience and forbearance of God, when the Lord having waited long, as he did on the old world (a hundred and twenty years) and yet they are barren, abominable, or unbelieving, these are near cutting down. God waits not only one year after three were gone, but many years, and all is in vain, well “now (saith he) I will arise, I will devour at once, I will exercise patience no longer, I have used great means, and have borne so long that my patience is now worn out, “cut them down, why cumber they the ground.”

3. When God withdraws all means of grace from a people or person, when his Spirit being grieved, nay vexed, will strive no longer with them, but they “are given up to their own heart’s lust.” He sometimes says, as he said to Ephraim of old, “Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone,” Ho 4:17. You, my ministers, let those sinners alone, your words shall have no effect upon their hearts, and my Spirit let them alone, do not reprove them, nor move them to repentance, nor to seek after Christianity more, and God may say to conscience also, let the reins lie loose upon the neck of their lusts, and rebuke them not when they sin; certainly when God deals thus with any sinners, they are near cutting down with vengeance. God threatened his people of old, that “He would not punish their daughters when they committed whoredom,” &c., Ho 4:14. What can be a worse sign of God’s wrath, than quietly to let men alone in a sinful and Christless state? For,

That which follows or attends this judgment is,* “hardness of heart, blindness of mind, and a seared conscience,” 1Ti 4:3; the Holy Spirit being utterly withdrawn, they fall under the plague of hardness of heart, and it is then impossible that they should be renewed again to repentance, being left to judicial hardness, these fall upon this into a deep sleep, yea, sleep the sleep

of death; and it is much, if this sort do not become enemies to the people of God, and mock at religion, being filled with malice and spite against Jesus Christ, and tread under foot the blood of the Son of God.

APPLICATION

You that are barren professors, tremble. O how dismal and dangerous a thing it is to be a sinner in Sion, or to be in a dying and withering condition; you know not where your partial apostasy may end.

Be exhorted to try yourselves, and prove your own work, O know if possible how things are between God and you; it may be God's axe is up, and Christ yet cries, Lord, let it alone this year also; you may have but one year left to get an interest in Christ, to get faith and a changed heart; nay, may be much of that year is also gone; what will you do when God begins not only to shake the tree, by stretching out his hand by sickness, but proceeds to give the fatal blow, and cuts you off by death, "or take thee away with his stroke, then a great ransom cannot deliver thee," Job 36:18. Fruitless vines and fig-trees are fuel for eternal burning, they shall be thrown into the fire.

3. Comfort, to you (though you are decayed,) who are true believers; there is notwithstanding all that hath been said, a word of comfort to you, God will revive you, and restore your souls, and heal your backslidings, and love you freely. You shall take root downwards, and bring forth fruit upwards; you shall be purged, to be made more fruitful; you are not of that sort "that draw back to perdition, you are ordained to go, and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain," Heb 10:39; if therefore any that hear me this day are not under barrenness or decay, but to revive, they have cause to praise and magnify God for ever.

5. V. Parable, Matthew 21:28 Of The Two Sons Bid To Go Into The Vineyard

SERMON IX

But what think you, a certain man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not, but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise, and he said, I go sir, and went not, whether of them twain did the will of his father, they say unto him the first. Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.—Mt 21:28-31.

To open the scope of the parable.

1. I shall explain all the parts of it.
2. Note one or two things from thence.
3. Apply it.

1. The scope of this parable, it is evident it is to show what deceit and hypocrisy was in the Pharisees, and that some great sinners were in a better state and condition than they, see ver. 31. “Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.”

2. To discover that self-righteousness in persons seem to promise fair, and to be ready to do the will of God. who only do but pretend to do it; and such who are great sinners, who by their profane lives declare an averseness to God and religion, and so seem to say they will not go into Christ’s vineyard, yet God’s grace soon changeth their thoughts and purposes, and they repent, and go.

Or it may refer to the Jews and Gentiles; the first sought after righteousness and found it not, the other sought not after it, yet found it.

1. By the certain man is meant the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. By the vineyard is meant the church. Why the church is compared to a vineyard is explained in other parables.

3. By the first son is intended the publicans, or such who are great sinners, gross and scandalous sinners, or according to some, our Lord means the Gentiles.

4. By the second son is meant the Pharisees, or moralized and self-righteous persons, or the Jews.

5. By coming to the first and second son is meant God's gracious approaching unto them in the dispensation of the gospel, and offers of pardon and free justification by faith, or the tender of Christ.

6. By bidding them to go and work in the vineyard, is meant their doing the work, and will of God, or accepting of Christ, and entering themselves into a church.

7. To-day, refers to the present time, not to delay the doing of it.

8. The first that answered I will not, but afterward repented, &c., refers to the publicans and harlots, or profane persons, or of those of the Gentile nations, who by their evil lives, and horrid wickedness, say they will not enter into covenant with Christ, or obey his voice, nor go into his vineyard, or believe and do his will, and work; for though none perhaps, will say thus with their mouths, yet all ungodly persons speak thus by their work, and in their hearts; but afterwards being convinced of their great wickedness, they repent of their folly, and do believe in Jesus Christ.

9. The second son said, I go, sir, namely the Pharisees, and other hypocrites, and formal professors, by their outward profession, and fair pretenses to religion; these seem to say, we go sir; they promise fair, but their hearts and lives being unsanctified, they do not what the Lord doth require, and look for at their hands.

10. By the kingdom of heaven here may refer both to the gospel church, and to the kingdom of glory; some conclude the last only. "Verily I say unto you, that the Publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you.

Our Saviour doth not hereby intimate that the Pharisees, and such like persons, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven afterwards, or as if great sinners go to heaven first, and that they shall follow after, but by these words he means,

1. That some publicans and profane sinners should go to heaven, and not many of these Pharisees, and self-righteous persons.

2. It doth imply that great and notorious sinners are more likely to be prevailed with to receive Jesus Christ, or are sooner wrought upon than self-righteous ones are.

Question, why are they called sons, both sorts being in their natural state?

Answ. Metaphors and parables, I have told you often, do not run on all four: yet all men by creation are the sons of God, and upon that account, they may be so called.

Thus having briefly opened the several parts of this parable, I shall take notice of one or two points of doctrine.

1. Doct. That Pharisaiical and all self-righteous persons are in some sense in a worse condition than the open profane, the latter being sooner brought to believe in Christ than the former.

Two things I purpose to do in speaking to this proposition.

1. Show the character of a Pharisaiical person.

2. Give you the reason, why open and profane sinners are sooner brought to believe in Christ, than self-righteous ones, who have a sober, and moral honest life and conversation.

1. They are such that think better of themselves than they think of others.* “And he spake a parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that the were righteous, and despised others.

They are such who have a marvellous opinion of the goodness of their own hearts and state, they trust in themselves (or have much confidence in respect to the safety and happiness of their condition) though never changed, or renewed by the Spirit and grace of God; and hence the Pharisee broke forth and said, “God, I thank thee I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican,” Lu 18:11; and therefore,

2. The Pharisees were the most precise and devout sect that was among the Jews, and were esteemed by all men generally godly and holy persons; brethren, to be a Pharisee was not then a name of reproach, but rather an honourable thing, as appears by Paul's words, when he was charged before the council; "after the most strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee," Ac 26:5. Also at another time he cried out in the council, "I am a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee," Ac 23:6. Had it been a name of reproach, he would not have pleaded thus for himself; even so all pharisaical persons may be generally looked upon to be very good and godly men and women, and be much esteemed of by the people; they may not only commend themselves, praise themselves, but others may commend, and praise them also; it is not enough that a man may pass among others for a devout and good Christian, who only judge by appearance. O say some people, if this man be not a godly man, and doth not go to heaven, "Lord have mercy upon us." What, not this man, that prays morning and evening; that hears and reads sermons, and is very charitable, and is guilty of no horrid crimes, as others are. And shall open profane persons, or publicans and harlots, go into the kingdom of heaven before such?

3. The Pharisees, notwithstanding all their seeming religion and godliness, were corrupt in the matter of God's worship, and had also corrupted the commandments of God by their traditions, Mt 15:3,6. They had a great veneration for their own rituals and traditions of their fathers, yet rejected the law and precepts of the law, and the doctrine of the gospel also; they were like some now-a-days among us, who cry up such service that is of human composition, (as more divine and secret than any part of God's holy worship) of such things that God hath directly commanded. It is noted that some of the Jewish robbers said, that he sinneth as much who eateth with unwashen hands, as he that lieth with an harlot.

4. They were very proud, hypocritical and self-confident, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men," &c., Lu 18:1. But yet in seeming they would be thought to ascribe all their pretended attainments to God, though they held the power of man's will, yet would not own it, or appear to assume the glory of their holiness unto themselves; as the Arminians at this day seem to ascribe all to God, when their doctrine leads them directly to glory in themselves; they made their boast of God, as such that knew his will. See Ro 2:18. "Behold thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God. "And knowest his will, and approves the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law."

“And are confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness,” ver. 19.

“An instructor of the foolish, and teacher of babes,” &c.

They would be thought to be the only true minister of God’s word (like some in our days) who account all other foolish teachers, yet are very ill men, and a covetous generation, as the Pharisees were.

“Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you devour widow’s houses, and for a pretense make long prayers, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation,” Mt 23:14.

Secondly, I shall show you why self-righteous persons are not so soon brought to believe in Christ, as those who are openly profane or scandalous sinners.

But let me promise one or two things before I proceed.

1. Let it be considered that in respect of God nothing is hard, he can as soon, and as easily convert a Pharisee as a Publican, or an honest, civil and sober woman, as a common harlot: it is all one to God with whom all things are possible, to change the heart of a rich man as a poor man; yet our blessed Lord saith, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mr 10:23.

2. Therefore let it also be considered that our Saviour speaketh after the manner of men, in respect had to the subject to be wrought upon, who are so woefully blinded through self-love, pride, and conceitedness; that there is more probability of the conversion of a great scandalous sinner, than of a sober, moral, and self-righteous person.

3. It is also so in respect of the revelation of God’s word, Christ saith, “Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before such,” or rather than such, because God leaves such proud, and self-righteous ones, as a just judgment, to themselves; great sinners are converted when the other sort are left to themselves, and fall into hell, and so perish for ever.

4. Moreover this appears to be so by our own experience, we see now (as it was in the gospel days) that many great sinners are converted and do

believe in Jesus Christ, whereas multitudes of sober and self-conceited persons are never moved to seek after Christ and salvation by him.

Quest. Well, but what is the cause of this, and why is it thus?

Ans. It may be occasioned from that great blindness and ignorance of these Pharisaical persons, it is hard to persuade them that their state is nought, or that they are in no better a condition than the vilest sinner in the world; what pray often, read, hear sermons, give to the poor, pay all men what si their due, are no swearers, liars, adulterers nor extortioners and yet say that their condition is nought, nay worse than the condition of publicans and harlots, how can this be?

1. I answer, are they guilty of no sin, have they not broken the holy law of God, or violated the precepts thereof? is there no lusts in their hearts, no covetous desire, no wrath, anger, or malice against their neighbours; it is plain that the Pharisee principally refers to the duties of the second table, when he boasted of his own righteousness; can that law justify that person whom it accuseth and condemns, and lays under its fearful curses?

Besides have not these very persons violated the precepts of the first table also, and that in a lamentable manner.

Have they no other God but the Lord? do they worship him only? viz., believe in him, trust in him alone; do they love him with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their strength? do they love him above father and mother, son or daughter, gold or silver? alas, if they do not thus, they are transgressors of the law, and are found guilty by it before God, and will God, do they think, destroy the sanction of his holy law, and make himself a liar to acquit such guilty ones? hath he not said “he is cursed that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them,” and that he will by no means clear the guilty?

2 Can man’s own moral, legal, or inherent righteousness justify him at God’s bar, or is there any one who can be justified in the sight of God by the righteousness of the law? O how blind are these poor wretches, that they see not the necessity of one to fulfill the righteousness of the law for them?

2. This brings me to the second reason why these people are so hardly brought to believe and be converted.

It is because they see not that absolute necessity of Christ to save them. Can you persuade a man that feels no sickness, no disease, to go to a physician presently lest he dies? for what saith he, I am not sick, I feel no pain, no illness, I ail nothing.

Can you persuade a rich man who hath his bags full of silver and gold, to go a begging to his neighbor's door? no, no says he, let the poor go a begging, such who having not to supply their wants and necessities; as for me I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;* I know not that I am poor; miserable, wretched, and naked, neither will I be persuaded to believe such is my condition, I am not like this publican.

3. It is because Satan, the god of this world hath blinded their eyes, so that the gospel is hid from them. The devil, my brethren, hath more power over these to blind their eyes and to deceive their souls with vain hopes of heaven, than he hath over such who are notorious sinners; O how easy is it for him to sway and turn them the way the bent and bias of their hearts leadeth them.

Mankind being born under a covenant of works, is persuaded naturally that it must be by his own righteousness he must be raised, since his fall was by his own unrighteousness; that which we have in ourselves an inclination to do, we need not much persuasion to perform.

4. Because self-righteous persons, whilst they so continue, are not called to believe or to come to Christ, and because such that Jesus Christ calls not, will find it hard, nay impossible to come to him. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Mt 9:13. No, no, they are sensible sinners which Christ is to be offered unto. "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost," Lu 19:10. And who are they? even publicans and harlots, or such who are convinced of their woeful condition, or such who find the weight and burden of their sins, and are undone in themselves; this was spoken concerning the conversion of "Zacchaeus, the chief of the publicans," Mt 11:28. It was the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son that was sought after, they are the sick who need a physician, the hungry soul that needs food, and the thirsty soul that needs drink, and the naked soul that wants clothes, and the polluted and filthy person that needs the fountain to wash in; so it is the poor, lost, sin-sick sinner, who sees his filthiness, that wants a Saviour, and to such only ought Jesus Christ to be tendered to; and indeed none else will receive him.

Not that I suppose any can come to a thorough sight of their sin and misery until they are convinced by the Holy Spirit.

So much shall serve to show why self-righteous persons are so hardly brought to believe in Christ.

Secondly, I shall in a word or two show how it comes to pass that open, loose, and scandalous sinners are sooner wrought upon, than the proud Pharisee.

But by the way, let none of these think themselves to be at present in a better condition than the sober or civilized person; I mean, whilst they remain wicked, or continue in their sin, for damned they will be, unless they are born again, or are regenerated, see 1Co 6:9; Lu 13:3. Nay, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all such. O what is more abominable than open wickedness; moreover such wretches oftentimes pull down national judgments, are the same of any people who profess Christianity, and ought to be punished by the judges. God encourage our reformers, and perfect the reformation that is happily begun. But why do these then go into the kingdom of heaven before the other sort?

1. I Answer, because these have no such seeming grounds to deceive them, or false foundations to build upon, they cannot (I mean, pretend to any righteousness of their own, seeing their consciences condemn them (as guilty of horrible crimes) before God; the law cannot (they must needs think) relieve them who break it every day, therefore it is easy for these to be convinced that they are lost and undone sinners; hence Satan hath other baits for these.

I. He persuades them that God is merciful, and will, if they acknowledge their sins, forgive them, though they daily live in those sins which they do confess, and seem to bewail.

2. He tells them also that Jesus Christ died for sinners, and they need not doubt but they shall be saved, though they find not, experience not, the fruits and effects of his death in their own souls; thus are great sinners deceived by these, and such like suggestions?

3. But if neither of these baits will catch them, then he persuades them that they may find mercy at the last moment, and from thence they defer (many times) the work of faith and repentance till sickness and death comes;

and though these baits are not so powerful and prevalent as those are (I before mentioned), yet were it not for these cutting snares and devices of Satan, we might hope to see more of this sort to embrace Jesus Christ, than indeed we do. But how to counterwork Satan as to those baits and devices of his, I purpose to show in the application; but to proceed, great and scandalous sinners are sooner wrought upon than self-righteous persons.

II. Because it is the design of God, and apparently his absolute purpose, to magnify his own sovereign grace in calling, pardoning, and saving of great sinners. Christ commonly acquainted or made known himself to this sort, hence the Pharisees reproached our blessed Saviour for keeping company with publicans and sinners. "This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," 1Ti 1:15; that is, great sinners, the chiefest of sinners. David doubtless well understood the design and purpose of God in forgiving great sinners, which made him cry, "Lord, forgive mine iniquities, for they are great," Ps 25:11.

III. Because deep convictions of sin are more likely to seize upon these notorious sinners than others, when made sensible of their abominable evils, and how they have violated and transgressed the law of God, and then also considering how Jesus Christ is offered to sinners as sinners, and that God's arms stand wide open to embrace such "that have done as evil things against him as they could," Jer 3:5; this must needs tend to melt them into tears of godly sorrow and grief for their iniquities. Brethren, conscience cannot be so soon blinded in these, as it is in sober and moral persons; when a pardon is freely offered to a self-condemned and abominable traitor, and stout-hearted rebel, that hath conspired the death of his gracious Sovereign, this tends to break him into pieces. Conscience being made use of by the Lord in conviction, will flatter no man so far as it is enlightened by the word and Spirit of God.

IV. Because God will magnify his grace in the free pardon of sinners in their own sense and feeling, shame and self-abhorrence; this is one reason doubtless why the Lord is pleased to work upon great sinners; they shall see their filthiness, and loathe themselves in their own sight, when God receives them into his arms of mercy, that they may admire his infinite grace and goodness to them, and know it is not for any goodness or worthiness that is in them, that he doth vouchsafe pardon upon them. "And they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations," Eze 6:9. And again, saith the Lord by the same prophet, "then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not

good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations,” Eze 36:31. “Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you, be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel,” ver. 32. People that are proud and exalt themselves, or have high thoughts of their own worthiness, are left of God; but great sinners are brought quickly to shame, confusion, and self-abhorrence, and deep humiliation. But so much at this time.

SERMON X

But what think you, a certain man had two sons, and he came unto the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not, but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise, and he said, I go, sir, and went not.—Mt 21:28-31.

I shall now proceed to a second point.

2. Doct. “And he said, I go, sir,” &c., note from hence, that some persons seem, pretend, or in appearance do obey God’s call, and close with Christ, but really and truly do it not. In speaking to this truth.

1. I shall show you who these are, or how they may be known. 2. Apply it.

1. They are such that pretend to religion, and that make a profession of it, like as the Pharisees did; these seem to say, we go, sir, but it is but in show or appearance only; they are not truly religious, they do not those things which God requires of them; it is not every religious duty which a man may be found in, that demonstrates him to be a true Christian; no, not the discharge of every external duty commanded of God. Religion lies not simply in an outward profession, but in faith and the love of God; it doth consist in a holy trust and dependence upon Jesus Christ, and in having the heart brought into a blessed conformity to the power of true godliness; having the image of God stamped upon the soul; therefore all that say they go, and yet do no more but make an outward profession of godliness, or subject to some external precepts, do but pretend they go to work in Christ’s vineyard, for really they do it not.

2. Such that come under some convictions of sin, and upon it reform their lives, do many things; thus it is said of Herod. “For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and holy, and he observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly,” Mr 6:20. They may reform their lives as to some gross acts of sin, and have a reverent esteem of Christ’s true ministers, and hear the word with some seeming joy, but still harbour in their hearts some principal lusts which they will not part withal; they like Herod keep their Herodias, are never brought to loathe, and leave their darling sins; but so far as they act in a reformation of life, they seem thereby to say, Sir, I go, but they in truth go not.

3. Such go not that only act, and do many duties under legal terror, or fear of present or of future wrath; who, when the storm is over that was raised in their souls, their seeming zeal and affections presently cool in them, and in a little time become as bad, or worse than they were before, as we find in the same Herod, who did not only cut off John Baptist's head, but did deride our blessed Saviour when he was brought before Pilate.

4. Such that act in religious duties for life, or according to the tenure of the covenant of works, thinking by their own performances and obedience to obtain the favour of God, not being ever convinced of the necessity of the righteousness of Christ; trust not, depend not, or believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they might be justified by faith only; but from a principle of self-love, cleave unto their own righteousness, or trust in themselves that they are righteous. The people who act thus, do but say, we go, sir, but go not. The Pharisees were those who said, I go sir; these, no doubt, our Saviour means by this son.

Some say they go sir, but it is but a little way, so far as suits with their interest, &c.

Moreover, all such say, we go, sir, but it is no farther than will suit or stand consistent with their own carnal hearts, ease, and self-interest. They may be convinced of the doctrine of free-grace, and that it is by Christ alone that they must be justified, that is, by his obedience, (as it is apprehended by faith alone,) yet never received Christ by an act of saving faith; they are willing to receive him as a priest to atone and make their peace with God; but are not for receiving him as a king, so as to subject in heart and life to his authority, and yield universal obedience to his holy precepts. These seem to present Christ with a paper wherein their own terms are contained, viz., how far they will go, or how far they will follow him; this sort cannot so deny themselves as to receive Christ as a prophet, to hear him "in whatsoever he says unto them," Ac 3:22-23. They cannot deny themselves, and "take up their cross and follow him," Mt 16:24-25, fully, and suffer reproach or outward loss for his sake; for alas, the world still is the great idol which is in their hearts, which they fall down before, and are therefore great idolaters; for to love ourselves, our own honour, gold and silver, or anything above Jesus Christ is idolatry.

6. Such that take up a resolution to follow Christ at another time, it is not to-day when Christ calls, but they say we go, *i.e.*, we will believe, we will

repent and follow Christ, and become religious when we have a more fit and convenient season, or have got rid of some worldly business and incumbrances; there is something of greater moment in their eye at present, than to close with Christ; they are like unto the man that our Saviour bid to follow him. “But he said. Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father,” Lu 9:59. Let me live at home and please my father, (as if he should say,) and stay until he is dead, that I may not be dispossessed of my inheritance; but after my father is buried, and I am possessed of my estate, I will follow thee.

7. One said unto our Saviour, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” Lu 9:57. This man was a Scribe, see Mt 8:19. “And Jesus said unto him, foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”

Here is a person that seems to offer his service to Christ;* he says I will go, I will follow thee, but it was no doubt before he had well weighed the matter, and considered, or counted the cost; this man takes up a sudden resolution unadvisedly; may be, he met with some heat in his affections, or transport of joy by hearing of Christ’s gracious words, and beholding the wonderful miracles he did. Doubtless, by our Saviour’s answer, his heart was not right, his resolution was either bottomed upon some sudden flashes, or from his curiosity, or hopes of meeting with some outward advantage, but saw not the difficulties he might expect to meet with, if he did indeed follow Jesus Christ.

Thus some say we go, *i.e.*, as soon as their affections are warmed under an awakening sermon, they with much seeming zeal may become members of a church, but after a while finding what they are likely to meet withal, they faint, and are sorry they make such a rash profession, or perhaps they have stately houses, and are honoured among men; but when they find Christ hath no house, no land, no outward preferment for them, but contrariwise do see they are like to lose the love of their friends, and have all that is dear unto them in this world exposed to loss, they repent, and though they said, we go sir, go not; they hold not out the whole journey, but look back.

APPLICATION

1. How do many persons deceive themselves, thinking they do that which they do not, and are that which they are not, and say they go when they go not; believe, or think they are Christians, when indeed they are no

better than mere carnal worldlings, and utterly without one saving dram of grace in their hearts.

2. Let such that are sober, and that in all moral virtues seem to excel others, look to it, since so many of this sort, do but thereby deceive themselves, saying, we go sir, but go not; they, it may be feared, do not know what it is to go into Christ's vineyard, like some servants, who, when commanded to do such or such a thing, say, I will do it sir, but through ignorance do something else of a quite contrary nature to what was commanded. Christ bids them believe, that they may be justified and saved; but they either rest upon a false faith, or upon a sober and moral life, not knowing what true faith is, nor the righteousness of God is.

3. We also infer from hence what a woeful condition they are in, who deceive their own souls by present promises of what they will do, and what they will become hereafter, whereas, alas! they know not what a day may bring forth.

4. Let ministers and churches learn wisdom from hence, and take care who they receive into communion, lest they take some in who are only under some sudden convictions, and raised and warm affection, and so unadvisedly offer themselves for communion; who never received Jesus Christ into their understanding, nor came to be of a sound judgment; for this is but like a sudden land flood that soon glides away; they, in heat of affections, say I go sir, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, but do not first sit down to count the cost; are quickly cooled in their love, and return again to folly.

But to proceed to another point of doctrine, from the answer of the second son, who said "I go sir, but went not." I observe from hence.

3. Doct. That present promises touching future faith and holiness, seldom end in real performance.

Three things I purpose to do here.

1. Show you from whence it is that some persons do make present promises, touching future faith and holiness.

2. Show you why, or from what cause it is that these present promises seldom end in real performances.

3. Apply it.

1. They may make these present promises from those common convictions and illuminations of the word and Spirit of God; the light of convictions may be so great in their hearts, in respect of sin, as to the guilt thereof, and their present danger thereby, that they can do no less than purpose and promise what they will do hereafter. We read of some that “were once enlightened, and had tasted of the good word of God,” &c., Heb 6:4-5; who never were savingly enlightened nor renewed by the grace of God

1. These may be convinced by the law of God that sin is a great evil, and that they are great sinners; certainly Judas saw this, the guilt of sin may lie heavy upon their consciences.

2. They may see that if they die in this condition, they are likely to be undone for ever, and therefore from hence they may come under great terror for fear of wrath and eternal punishment, and they may have some abhorrence of sin in respect of the guilt thereof, but not abhor the act, nor the filth of sin.

Now from hence secretly they resolve, purpose, and promise to close with Christ, and become new creatures before they die, therefore an accusing conscience may stir up men to say, we go sir.

3. They may make these promises from the nature of an accusing conscience, for when a man’s conscience is awakened, it will terrify him fearfully, yea, it will never let him rest, but lay on such lashes, and gripe him so sorely, that unless he doth something to appease and still his offended conscience, he cannot well bear it. Conscience, brethren, will spare no man when it is awakened, according to its light, though it is true, it is very subject to be misled for want of a right guide, or true light in the understanding, and from hence may perhaps be pacified, and become more still and quiet by those promises a poor sinner may make conversion unto God hereafter; it is therefore to still and quiet conscience, more than to please God. It is not because sin is against God, contrary to his holy nature, and a breach of his holy law; but because it is against them, disquiets and torments them, they find it is against their present ease and future happiness, exposing them to eternal wrath and vengeance. And from hence they promise they will leave and forsake it, and become new creatures.

4. It may be the effect of some sore affliction or judgment that these persons may be under. God may lay them on a sick-bed, and seem to shake them over hell, and then they like some seamen when in a storm, may promise what they will do, and how well they will live for the time to come if God will spare them at this season; but when they are raised up and delivered from their present fears or dangers, they forget all their promises which they before, when distressed, made to God; so much as to the first thing.

Secondly, Why do these promises seldom end in real performances? What should be the reasons of it?

1. I answer, it is from the grand agent that stirs them up to make these promises, which is the devil no doubt. Satan fearing he is in some danger of losing them, by finding what fear and trouble doth attend them, that he might blind their eyes, and deceive their souls, puts them upon the making of these promises of amendment of life hereafter.

Brethren, the devil cares not what promises sinners make to become good and virtuous hereafter, if he can hinder them from closing in with Christ at present.

Beloved, pray remember that to-morrow is the devil's time, I mean it is the time he chooses for sinners, but God's time is to-day. "Go work to-day in my vineyard," to-day if you will hear my voice harden not your hearts," Heb 3:7-8.

"While it is called to-day," ver. 13. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow," Pr 27:1. "Behold, this is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation," 2Co 6:2. But this time Satan likes not of, he is for another time, it is too soon, saith Satan; indeed he is for no time, he would have the sinner in hell before he sets about this work, and therefore strives to deceive the soul, by putting it upon resting on promises to close with Christ hereafter; certainly such promises will come to nothing that the devil stirs up men and women to make.

Secondly, Present promises, resolutions, and purposes, touching future faith and regeneration, seldom end in real performance.

Because the end and design of such persons that make them is abominable.

1. For evident it is, their design and purpose is to be wicked and ungodly at the present, for what can be the purport of these promises else? certainly they who do not resolve to turn to God till to-morrow, purpose to abide enemies to God to-day; now if this be so, it appears that these people sin at present with full purpose and resolution of soul. Brethren, that rebel that tells his sovereign he will lay down his arms hereafter, doth thereby positively declare that he will at present remain in his rebellion.

This being so, can any think that God should ever bless or succeed such promises, since the design and purpose of the man that makes them is so vile, abominable, and hateful to him? what can be a greater aggravation of sin, than to sin with full purpose and resolution?

2. Because it argues that these persons have but a partial work upon their hearts, their hearts are divided;” for though their judgments and understandings may be somewhat enlightened, yet their wills are not bowed nor subjected to the obedience of Christ, nor are their affections changed. Balaam no doubt had much light in his understanding, (though not savingly enlightened) “He hath said which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a truce, but having his eyes open.”

“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel,” Nu 24:4.

Hence he desired to die the death of the righteous, but it is evident he was a wicked man, his affections being never changed; the apostle saith, “He loved the wages of unrighteousness.” Brethren, this discovers these men to be hypocrites, and these promises and purposes arise from their base and filthy hypocrisy. Conversion is never fully wrought until the whole soul in all its faculties is brought under the power of Divine Grace; but alas, how often is it that the conscience of men may be convinced, and much enlightened, when their wills and affections remain under the influences of sin and Satan.

3. These promises seldom end in real performances, because they are made directly in opposition to the divine precept, and holy will and command of God, who says, “To-day if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts; go to-day and work in my vineyard,” Heb 3:15.

“Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day will bring forth,” Pr 27:1.

Certainly God will never assist a man to perform such promises that are made in contempt of his authority, and in opposition to his express command. Shall men presume to contradict the Almighty God; besides he hath positively declared, that such whom he called, and they refused, and would have none of his counsel, that when they call upon him, he will not hear? Pr 1:24-25.

4. Because such promises and purposes are made only in the strength of the creature, for surely they must needs suppose they have power to do those things at any time, that trust in their own purposes, promises, and resolutions what they will do hereafter; and do not presently, or in God's time go, whose assistance they may expect if they come in his time; but that help and aid which he hath promised them to-morrow, or for the time to come; and what is any creature able to do of himself? True, the Arminians by their doctrine intimate men are endowed with power to repent, without any special or supernatural grace; which notion may put people upon undoing temptations, even to delay, or defer the great work of regeneration until sickness, or death comes, or until they are grown old; for if they have such ability or power as they say, men are subject to conclude, that they may have the same power to-morrow, which they have this day. But O take heed, it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps; "without me you can do nothing," Joh 15:5. Faith is not of ourselves, "it is the gift of God; it is if God, peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth," 2Ti 2:25. But God hath said, he will not give them that grace, who did refuse to hearken to him when he called, nay, and God doth often withdraw the influences of his Spirit from such that reject his offers in his own time; and evident it is, that they resist and grieve the Holy Spirit in its motions, strivings, and operations to-day, and put him off with vain purposes and promises: we may do well to observe what the Lord saith, "My Spirit shall not always strive with men." And what can a man do when the Spirit of God hath done striving with him?

5. Because the life of man is so uncertain, and the most of these persons are cut off if wrath before that time is come, when they purposed to make good their promises of faith and repentance. O how; many are lost, and are now in hell, who made such promises as these are? It is just with God to cut them off, they wilfully rejected his great and gracious tenders of grace in the proper season thereof.

APPLICATION

1. From hence we may perceive what the reason is, that so many people are left of God, who content themselves with present purposes and promises touching future holiness. I am persuaded the devil this way, I mean by this subtle device, destroys more souls than by any other whatsoever. Therefore for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of your precious and immortal souls, beware of him; O take heed that you rest not satisfied with such promises; say, sinner, in thy heart when such thoughts rise in thy mind, this is Satan, it is he that puts me upon making these promises, thereby to deceive my soul.

2. This may serve also to reprehend, and sharply to rebuke, all such persons who flatter themselves with such purposes, who say. "I go sir," when they go not, or who think they do the thing which Christ commands them, when it is far from it; he commands them to believe for righteousness, and they rest upon doing, or upon a sober moral life. Christ says, "he that believeth not, shall be damned," Mr 6:16, but though they believe not, do not go out to him, and rest upon him, yet by their works and inherent holiness, they doubt not but they shall be saved, and that they fully thereby answer his requirement.

3. Let me exhort you all that are yet in your sins, to close with Christ this day, and not to delay it until another time; and that I may the better prevail with you, take a few motives.

MOTIVES

1. Consider the shortness and uncertainty of your lives; you are not lords and keepers of your times; no, no, your times are in the Lord's hands; many a candle hath been put out before half burned, many a fair flower cut off before its withering time was come; what a multitude of short and small graves may you see.

2. Now you have an opportunity in your hands, "Why is there a prize in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it," Pr 17:16. If you had an opportunity to-day to get one or more, thousand pounds, and you are told this is the time, it is to-day, would you defer the looking after it till to-morrow? or would a condemned criminal that hath a promise of a pardon, if he looks after it to-day, delay it to another time? O that sinners from hence would see their folly.

3. It is great folly, and very dangerous, to defer the matters of our eternal happiness. Because if you neglect the present time, you may lose the day of

your visitation; the day of grace may be shorter than your lives, as appeareth concerning Jerusalem. "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thy eyes," Lu 19:42. Sirs, your days in this world may be lengthened out, and yet the day of grace may be past with you.

4. Because moral indisposition to close with Christ, may be more increased tomorrow than it is to-day; sin is of a hardening nature; if a man as soon as taken sick, looks out for, or sends for a physician, there may be more hopes he may be cured, than if he should neglect any means until this distemper hath got greater power, and his natural strength is wasted. It is easier to break a colt and bring him to the saddle, than it is an old horse that runs wild in the wilderness; a young plant is sooner plucked up than an old tree. To speak after the manner of men, all know that these things are so, though it is true God can as soon subject the rebellious will of an old sinner as one that is young; yet since this is the Lord's time, viz., even to-day, from what I have said, you may learn wisdom.

5. Delay not the time, in regard of Satan; for if you put Christ off with flattering and deceitful promises to-day by the devil's instigations, he knows what great advantages he may thereby gain; that devil that binds you to-day with withs, may bind you to-morrow with cords and fetters of iron: the old man increases in his strength in sinners, as well as the new man doth so in believers.

6. In regard of spiritual judgments, which may make the new birth not only difficult, but impossible, open sins God usually punishes with visible judgments, but willful neglects of the day of grace he commonly punisheth by spiritual judgments. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and convert and he healed," Isa 6:10. Which terrible passage (as one observes) is no less than six times repeated in the New Testament. See that fearful text, "In thy filthiness is lewdness, because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee," Eze 24:13. Because I have purged thee, that is, I have made use of means to purge thee, or I have purged thee from some gross acts of wickedness; but still thy heart abides vile and filthy; all future means to cleanse thee shall be taken away, no sermon, no conviction, no affliction shall ever have any effect to humble thee. "I the Lord have spoken it, and it shall come to pass, and I will do it," ver. 14, as you have it expressed in the very next verse.

Quest. What shall we do to prevent this great danger, of delaying or resting on present promises, touching future faith and repentance?

1. Answ. I answer, be persuaded and made sensible that it is the devil which stirs you up to make these promises, and so to put Christ off, and grieve the Spirit; know assuredly it is Satan out of a design to ruin your souls, by cheating you of the day of your visitation.

2. Consider that he that puts you upon making these promises to-day, to repent and turn to the Lord hereafter, will put you upon making the same promises, and resting on like purposes to-morrow, and so till death overtakes you, and your souls are lost for ever, for be sure the devil to-morrow will never come, it will be still to-morrow.

3. Consider that thus to delay this work, is rebellion against the Lord, nay, and that you do secretly resolve and purpose in your hearts to continue in your rebellion, and that these promises (as you have heard) do imply no less; therefore you sin with a resolution and purpose of heart.

4. Consider that it is not in your own power to believe and turn to the Lord; it must be done by the Spirit of God, by his help and by his assistance; and therefore it must be done in his time, and before his Spirit hath done striving with you. Call to mind that text, "My Spirit shall not always strive with men," Ge 6:8,

5. Pray earnestly. "A man cannot receive anything unless it be given him from above," Joh 3:27. Look up to heaven, remember God's absolute promises, "I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh," Eze 11:19. This is a promise made to such that are, and have been great sinners: it is not made upon any conditions to be performed by them; therefore how do you know but God may do this thing for you, therefore plead this promise with God.

6. Labour to be sensible of the corruptions of your nature and polluted hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Jer 17:9. It is perverse, and it will supplant you if you take not heed. There is nothing so false and so deceitful as the heart of man, and in many ways doth deceive: and this way also, even by your making of these false and deceitful promises.

7. Endeavour to observe the motions of the Holy Spirit; “The wind bloweth where it listeth.” Mariners observe the wind, and when it serves, they hoist up their sails. Do not quench nor grieve the Spirit, because he is the only Agent in your conversion; all that are born again, “they are born of the Spirit.” A man may reform his life by the power of natural light; but no man can thereby change his own heart, nor form Christ in his soul; regeneration is a new creation, not the work of the creature, but of the Creator. “Not born of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

8. Attend diligently upon the word of God, and upon all the means of grace; it is good so be there where God usually worketh upon men’s hearts; faith comes by hearing, and hath not God that way wrought upon many sinners that were as bad as thou art?

Consolation. This may tend much to the comfort of such that would not rest contented in making promises to work in God’s vineyard, but as soon as called, immediately they obeyed that call.

They did not delay, but made haste to keep God’s holy commands. It is a sign they were beloved before time, because drawn by love to Christ in time; the gospel came not to them “in word only, but also in power,” 1Th 1:4-5; which shows that they were elected to salvation. So much to this parable.

6. VI. Parable, Mark 4:26 Of The Man Casting Seed Into The Ground

SERMON XI

And he said, So is the kingdom of heaven, as if a man should cast seed into the ground. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up he knows not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of itself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.—Mr 4:26-29.

The Evangelist Mark only hath recorded this parable, and if in opening it, we have respect to what goes before, it may hold forth,

1. That such persons who would not be deceived, ought to take care what doctrine they hear. “Take heed what you hear,” ver. 24. Or what seed it is that is sowed in your hearts, and also they ought to take heed into what ground the seed falls, for according to the nature or quality of the seed will the product be; if the seed be not good, or of the right kind, the fruit will not be good.

2. Moreover, take heed what you hear, as to the measure or quantity of your hearing; for if God sows plentifully, or measure forth abundantly unto you, he expects increase accordingly; and likewise to the frequency of your hearing. “With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you, and you that hear shall have more.” O see that you are much in hearing; if we measure unto God much of our time, in hearing with all care and diligence, (provided it be his own word) and receive it into our understanding, wills, and affections; God will measure forth full mercies and divine blessings unto us, for it is doubtless the improvement of our time, and the means of grace our Lord doth here refer unto, “For he that hath, to him shall be given,” &c.,

2. Therefore one design of our Lord in this parable considering what precedes, is to show the great blessing that attends a faithful and diligent attendance upon the preaching the gospel.

3. To show how insensibly the seed of the word takes root, and springs up in the hearts of such that receive it, and also to discover unto ministers that they should not be over concerned if they see not the fruit of their

labours presently, the whole success of it being from God, and to assure them, and those that hear the word in a right manner, a blessing shall attend them in the end.

4. Moreover, to show his disciples that the gospel should have success, and prosper in the world, and prepare all where it came for the great harvest-day.

“So is the kingdom of heaven.”

By the kingdom of heaven is meant God’s providential dispensation, or ministration of the gospel.

“If a man should cast seed on the earth.”

A man, the man may primarily refer to the Son of Man, for it is Christ “who sows the good seed,” Mt 13:8. But since the Lord Jesus sleeps not, I conclude our Saviour refers here to his ministers; for the man that casts seed into the ground, is said to sleep night and day, and rise. Besides, the Lord Jesus knows how it grows and springs up, though ministers do not.

“Into the ground.”

By the ground is meant the hearts of men, as is showed in the parable of the sower, which I have opened.

“And should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up,” &c.

By sleeping and rising, I understand is meant ministers taking their natural rest, waking and rising, night and day; like as a husbandman, when he hath sown his seed, he is not over concerned about its rooting and springing up, but leaves the success of his cost and labour unto God.

“A husbandman knows not how the seed he hath cast into the ground springs up, it is a mystery in nature; as no man knows how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child, so ministers know not how, or after what manner the word of God takes rooting, and springs up in the hearts of sinners. The secret and hidden operations of the Spirit are known by us, but are mysteries of grace, and known only unto God.

“For the earth bringeth forth of itself.”

That is, without the help of the husbandman, or any human power, yet not without the influences of heaven; both in respect of the shining of the sun, and the falling of the dew and rain from above. Man adds nothing to its growing up, nor should be solicitous about it. So Christ’s ministers having done their part, they may (with other men) sleep or take their quiet rest, though not without looking up to God for a blessing upon their ministry, nor without an expectation of increase.

“First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn.”

The blade first appears, but it takes root before that, for where the seed takes no manner of root, no blade ever appears to spring up; by this we may perceive how gradually the work of God’s grace goes on upon a sinner’s heart, that receives the seed thereof. A minister cannot quickly discern it, no, nor the person himself; he fears the work may not be begun in his soul, there is so much corruption and filth in his heart, and such great darkness in his understanding, but yet he bears up in a visible profession, and in that the blade doth consist, for what is the blade of the seed, but a profession of religion?

“Then the ear, and after that the full corn,”

In the ear is the substance of the corn, though at first it is tender, yet there is the fruit, though not yet come to maturity; so grace is wrought in a believer’s heart, in whom the seed is sowed, though yet it is but weak, and wants time, or the heat of the Sun of righteousness, to strengthen the habits and exercise of that grace, that so it may come to a farther maturity, or by degrees perfected like corn in the ear.

“But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle because the harvest is come.”

When the fruit is brought forth, that is, when it is fully ripe, then the husbandman, viz., the blessed God, by death gathers his saints unto himself; for by putting in the sickle, I understand death is meant; and as the harvest in another place is called the end of the world, so the end of the world may be said to come on them that God takes away by death; God will not cut down any of his people until they are fully ripe, and fit to die. Thus having briefly

opened the several parts of this parable, I shall observe one proposition from the whole, viz.,

Doct. That the seed of the word sown in the heart of a hearer, insensibly takes root, and springs up, and gradually grows to full maturity.

In speaking unto this,

1. I shall lay down one or two explanatory propositions by the way of promise.

2. Show how or after what manner the seed springs up, and grows in a sinner's heart.

3. Show why, or by what means it is in its springing up not quickly discerned.

4. Apply it.

First take two previous propositions.

I. First, that the seed of the word doth not take root in the hearts of all persons that hear it; the seed that fell on the high-way side took no root, and our Lord told the Jews, "And ye have not my word abiding in you," Joh 5:38; and again he saith, "My word hath no place in you," Joh 8:37, or no rooting in your hearts.

The reasons why the word takes no root in some may be,

1. Because they watch not against Satan, who is said to catch it out of some men's hearts, "Then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart," Mt 13:19. The devil hath many ways to catch the seed out of the hearts of men that hear the word (as I have showed in explaining the parable of the sower.)

1. He sometimes puts the word out of their hearts, by filling them with earthly thoughts; many perhaps whilst they hear the word, have their minds and thoughts running upon the worldly concerns, and they give way to Satan in those suggestions, to such a degree that they can give no account of what was delivered by the minister.

2. Satan may also catch it away by keeping them ignorant of the word; they understand not what they hear, neither do they know the necessity of endeavoring to understand it; and that they are this sort that Satan steals the word from, is evident by what our Saviour saith, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then comes that wicked one and catcheth it away," Mt 13:19. He understandeth not the doctrine of the gospel; he knows not the end and purpose of the ministration thereof, nor the necessity there is of receiving Jesus Christ, nay, knows not it is the word of God, but looks upon it to be no more than the word of a poor man by whom it is delivered.

3. By persuading them that they have received the word already, and that it is rooted in them, that the person need not trouble himself any farther, but only to hear the word preached in order to edification or farther growth, and not in order to the implantation of grace in his heart; now from all these certainly Satan catcheth the word away, so that it never takes root in them.

4. The devil doth thus chiefly keep such that hear the word from believing in Christ, who is the sole object and chief treasure of the world; Satan cares not how often men hear the word preached, if he can keep them from believing or flying to, or depending upon the Lord Jesus, by an act of true and saving faith: he will never hinder a man from hearing; let him go and hear a sermon every day, if he finds the person propounds no more to himself than only to hear and to rest upon that, and sees not, knows not the necessity of faith, to receive or embrace the Lord Jesus in the promises.

II. Prop. That some persons in whom the word hath taken some rooting, and the blade also appears, yet in a little time it dwindles away and comes to nothing; and the reason of this our Saviour shows is because the ground was not good, but either stony or thorny, (as you have formerly heard). My brethren, a heart not thoroughly broken or ploughed up by the conviction of the Spirit; or where the weeds are not rooted up, nor the evil worms destroyed; the seed brings forth no fruit unto perfection, for in them the love of riches and cares of this life, choke the word.

Secondly, I shall show you how, or after what manner or by what means the seed springs up. So insensibly it springs up and grows, that not only ministers may not know the seed hath rooted in this or that person's heart; but (as I hinted,) it may not be quickly discerned by themselves, yet their seed appears to have taken rooting.

1. As to the means by which it is known, most evident it is, that the word preached, in the first place, lets the light into their dark hearts about the spiritual state of their souls, and the way by which they came to be lost, and how recovered out of that woeful condition; so that the things of another world take up their thoughts, which before they regarded not. "The entrance of thy words giveth light, understanding to the simple," Ps 119:130.

2. Though the rooting is insensibly done, and not known to them, and yet the springing up appears, by the Spirit's creating in their hearts good desires and inclinations, even such that they never found or experienced before in such a nature, nor in such a degree; they now love the word, love to hear it; before a short sermon seemed long to them, they had no love to it, nor a desire after it; but now it is otherwise, they have spiritual inclinations, thoughts, purposes, and desires in their souls, and talk of heavenly things, yea, love to discourse about Christ and the things of Christ, their minds beginning to be spiritual. "They that are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit," Ro 8:6. They also grow weary of their old company, and choose to converse and keep company with holy and pious persons, or such who fear God; and by this it appears the seed of the word springs up in their hearts.

3. It gradually grows up, and further appears by the sense they have of the great evil of sin, and corruptions of their hearts, the longing after a thorough change both of heart and life. Certainly, where this is found and experienced, the seed hath taken root and springs up, (whether it be discerned by them or others, or not,) as the effects of their receiving the seed, and of the rooting of it.

4. It is, or may be farther known by that vehement thirst that comes upon them after the word. "I opened my mouth, and panted for thy word." The word is certainly received, if the person prizes it, thirsteth after it, and longs for it, and rejoiceth when he meets with it, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that hath found great spoil," Ps 119:162. It is beyond mountains of prey to them, and well may such rejoice that find the pearl of great price, or find life, find a discharge from death. "I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food," Job 23:12. Or that food that sustains my natural life, (which is more valued than food that tends to make life comfortable to us,) therefore I love this commandment above gold, yea above much fine gold, and not only so, but the word is sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb," Ps 119:162; 19:10.

5. Nay, when the word is rooted and springs up in the heart, that soul cries out for Christ, being fallen in love with Jesus Christ. My brethren, there are two things that clearly show the word is rooted in the soul of a sinner, and begins to spring up.

1. When the person is fallen out of love with sin, with all sin, and as it is the plague of his heart, and the greatest evil, and will never be reconciled to it anymore, but can say, I hate vain thoughts; and with Paul, "The evil that I hate, that do I. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Ro 7:14.

2. When he is fallen in love with Jesus Christ, and cries out, I must have Christ or die; what is my life to me if I have not Christ? the rooting of the word, is the rooting of the sinner in love to Christ. "If ye see my Beloved, tell him I am sick of love," Song 5:8. If you know Jesus Christ, or meet with him, or pray to him, pray for me; pray tell Christ, one that you know longs for him, pants after him, will die or swoon away if she have him not to be her Christ. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night," &c., Isa 26:9.

6. When the soul embraces Christ in the arms of faith, even by that faith which works by love, and resteth wholly upon him and hath no confidence in the flesh, but throws itself as an undone and heavy-laden sinner upon Christ, and finds inward peace, or rest and satisfaction.

7. And also upon this he takes Christ's yoke upon him, as he is directed to do, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Mt 11:28-29; well, and what more? "take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," ver. 29. That is the yoke of obedience. Some pretend they obey Christ's invitations, they come to him, rest upon him, they receive Christ as a priest, who hath atoned for their sins, and paid their debts, but they do not obey his precepts, or will not take his yoke upon them. In these the word may have no rooting; but if the person readily yields universal obedience unto Christ, or takes him not only as his Saviour, but as his Sovereign; and because he loves the Lord Christ, will keep all his commandments; deny himself, and taking up his cross, and follows him whithersoever he goes; no doubt but the seed of the word is rooted, and springs up in that person's heart.

Thirdly, I shall show you why the seed of the word sown in the sinner's heart, may not be presently discerned by a minister of Christ, that it is rooted

in his heart. He may not know it, but may be ready to say, I have laboured in vain, &c.

1. It may live (as other seed oftentimes doth) under the clods the soul hath received it, but the world is as a great clod of earth, and it hinders the man from discovering what Christ hath done for his soul; or perhaps some corruptions bubble up, which makes him think there is no saving work begun yet upon his soul; but he is ready to say (with Rebecca in another case) "If it be so, why am I thus? O I am a vile creature, what a polluted heart have I! what base thoughts, nay, blasphemous thoughts have I! there is certainly none so bad as I, and thus corruption (or the sense of it) keeps the seed of the word or faith from being discerned by the person himself, who also keeps all to himself, and will not discover what struggles he has within, for some time.

2. The seed of the word may be rooted, but the person's soul may fall under some sore temptation of Satan, which fills him with fears and doubts; for commonly when first a sinner receives the word, Satan sets upon him; it is one of the principal times or seasons that he waits for. How many young converts hath he assaulted and furiously set upon. As he was at Joshua's right hand to resist him (when he was engaging in a great work for God) so he opposeth and resisteth all that first set their faces Sion-ward.

3. Perhaps a cold pinching storm may come upon the seed soon after it is sown, and make the very blade to wither (as oftentimes is observed); so a storm of opposition may be raised against a person in whom the spiritual seed is sown; the poor sinner is awakened, and begins to make a visible profession of Jesus Christ; but lo, on sudden a wife raises a storm of opposition against the husband, to hinder him from proceeding any farther, or parents upon an awakened child, son or daughter; or an opposition may be made by some evil and unbelieving neighbour, who may not only reproach him, but dissuade him as much as possible, and may lay such stumbling blocks in his way that may stop him for a short time from declaring what God hath done for his soul.

4. Besides the operations of the Spirit are compared to those of the wind, which are sometimes very indiscernible. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but knowest not from whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit," Joh 3:8. Sometimes the wind blows very strong, and hath strange effects, most visible effects; but at another time it blows so insensibly, that you can hardly

discern it at all: so how strongly did the Spirit operate on those Peter preached his first sermon unto, upon the coming down of the Spirit, when three thousand were converted, and presently cried out, What shall we do? But at other times the Spirit blows like a small breath of wind, and its operations are not soon discerned.

5. May be the blade of profession may not appear quickly, or be presently discerned, by reason the person's faith is small and weak, like a grain of mustard-seed, and the soul from hence wants courage to tell others what God hath done for it. "Come to me all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul," Ps 66:16. But God hath in a wonderful manner appeared to him and wrought in him, he had a strong faith; but saith a weak believer, I would gladly tell the minister, (under whose ministry God hath wrought upon me,) my experiences, but I am ashamed; I fear I shall be able to say nothing, my faith is so weak, and my fears and doubts so great and strong in me.

6. A minister may not be able to discern that the seed is rooted, and that the blade that springs up, is the product of the seed sown in good ground, or in an honest heart, because the blade sprang up in the stony and thorny ground, and showed at first to be the right blade, (or that which springs out of the good ground). Well, says he, I know not what to think nor what to say, I hope the work is a saving work that is begun on this and that person, but I must wait and see whether it will abide the sun's scorching beams, and cold storms of winter; for hypocrites may say as much as they have said, I must see what the walks, and the humility, and constancy of these persons will be, and how they carry it under those changes they may meet with, or pass under, in the course of their lives. I I have known, saith he, some when apprentices, very zealous, who have come to nothing; when they came to set up their trades and were married, they soon withered, and lost all that religion they made a show of.

APPLICATION

This parable may be of use. 1. To ministers. 2. To sinners. 3. To believers.

1. We may infer from hence, that the faithful ministers of the gospel are Christ's seedsmen, they cast the seed into the ground, and must not regard either wind nor weather, but preach the word in season and out of season. Moreover, according as they sow, they may expect to reap; if they sow

plentifully, are very laborious and constant in their work, they may see increase through the blessing of God accordingly.

2. They also may learn from hence to be satisfied in a faithful discharge of their ministry, let the effect thereof be what it will; they may sleep and rise night and day as other men, and not be over solicitous about the success of their labours, the issue of all lying in the special blessing of God, and God accepteth of them. "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." God will be glorified in such who hear and believe, in respect of his free grace; so that unto them they are a savour of life unto life: And to each that believe not God will be glorified in his justice, to whom they are a savour of death unto death, for thereby he will leave them without excuse in the great day; and to themselves they may say (with their great Master) "Though Israel be not gathered, I shall be glorious;" God will glorify them, they shall shine as the stars for ever.

3. They may also expect success, though it does not appear presently, and therefore in the morning sow the seed, and in the evening not to withhold their hand, because they know not which may prosper. However, it shall not be in vain, "for as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not hither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, &c.; so shall my words be that goeth forth out of my mouth: It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the things whereto I send it."

Secondly, to sinners,

1. Let them see what sort of ground they are, and cry to God to make their hearts tender, and fit soil to receive the seed.

2. Also consider what it is they propound to themselves in hearing the word, and also what the cause may be why the seed takes no root in their hearts.

3. They may likewise learn from hence to be much in hearing, and also to look up to God, or cry to him to open and prepare their hearts to hear and receive the word. Thirdly, to believers.

1. They ought to bless God that hath given them an hearing ear and seeing eye, and an understanding heart, when others in hearing, hear not, and seeing see not, neither do they understand, "it being given to them to

understand the mysteries of kingdom of heaven, but unto others it is not given," Mt 13:11.

2. Also you ought to try and examine yourselves, and see whether the seed revives and grows, yea or no in your hearts, if not, to enquire what the reason of it may be; it may be feared that some grow more in the head than in the heart; more in pride than in humility.

3. Also let us all remember the harvest day will come, and since God affords us ripening weather, the warm shineings of the sun, and showers of heaven; what cause have we to praise and magnify the riches of his grace, for many nations have not the word at all; the seed is denied them, and others have not fruitful seasons: the sun shines not on them, nor have they such fruitful showers as we in this city and nation have. But woe to them, whether professors or others, who oft received this rain, &c., and yet bring forth nothing but briars and thorns.

7. VII. Similitude, Matthew 15:13

The Simile Of Every Plant God Hath Not Planted

SERMON XII

But he answered and said, every plant my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.—Mt 15:13.

The occasion of this simile rose from what precedes in ver. 12.

“Then came his disciples and said, Knowest thou not that the pharisees were offended after they heard that saying,”

So the design of our Saviour herein is,

1. To show the sad state of the Pharisees, who, though they were so nice and strict as not to eat with unwashed hands, yet had unwashed or filthy hearts and lives.

2. That what plant the blessed God hath not planted, though they may remain for a time, yet they shall be rooted up in the end. In speaking to this,

1.1 shall open what our Lord may mean by plants.

2. Raise some points of doctrine from hence.

1. Every plan. By every plant may be meant.

1. Every doctrine. 2. Every practice. 3. Every person.

1. Every doctrine, that is not of God or a truth of God, though asserted and maintained with great confidence by men of corrupt principles, though it hath stood a long time, and thought to be an undoubted truth, yet at last it shall be rooted up, and be manifested to be an error, and so be cast off and disowned for ever. The Pharisees held many pernicious doctrines, “Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” Mr 7:7. But all their evil notions and traditions were in a few years rooted up; and so in the end shall all the evil plants of false doctrines, and errors of these perilous times; the glorious

light of the gospel (which will shine forth in the latter days) will root out all the Popish, Socinian, and Arminian errors, with Quakerism, and all other evil plants of false doctrine whatsoever.

2. Every practice, i.e., whatsoever is practised as a truth of God, or as an ordinance of Christ, or whatsoever he appointed not, as are ceremonies introduced into the worship of God; that are none of his institution but is merely human, shall be rooted up. Together with all acts of voluntary humility, such as Paul speaks of, “which things have a show of wisdom and humility, and neglecting the body, not in honour to the satisfying the flesh,” Col 2:23. Many of which acts of pretended humility, are in several orders of men in the Popish Church, and have appeared in others also in this nation; Roger Crabe is not forgot. Not long since this Crabe strove to delude divers poor people, taught them to abstain from eating of flesh, and to feed his herbs and roots.)

3. And every person, that is, every one who seem saints, or profess themselves to be Christians, or plants in God’s vineyard, that are not sincere or true believers, or plants of God’s planting, shall be rooted up; though they may have stood and gone for good Christians a great while, yet they shall be cut down, and cast into the fire at last. From hence note.

1. Doct. That there are some plants that God never planted, which shall be rooted up.

2. Doct. That those plants that God hath planted, shall never be rooted up. In speaking to the first of these.

1. I shall show what is meant by planting, and also show who planted them, and where those plants may be planted.

2. Run the parallel between natural and mystical plants.

3. Show why those plants which God hath not planted shall be rooted up.

1. Planting is setting or putting things into the ground, whether they are trees, herbs, or flowers. So mystical planting denotes the transplanting (in a spiritual way) this or that person.

1. From a course of open profaneness into a visible profession; they leave their old course of life, their old company or companions, and also they leave the people and their worship among whom they before walked.

And they may be planted in a visible church of Christ, or be set in God's vineyard, and be called his plants. "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plants," Isa 5:7. True, these were plants of the national church of the Jews, they grew up by generation as they sprung from the loins of Abraham by Isaac, lineally, and were none of them transplanted to a better soil, during the time of the standing of that church-state; but some of them were removed when the gospel congregational church took place, and was constituted by our Lord and his apostles in the primitive time.

Quest. Who is it that plants people in the gospel church?

1. Answ. If they are gracious men and women, God planted them there. Our Saviour shows some are planted by his heavenly Father, who is called a husbandman, &c. Joh 15:1. "And the Lord added to the church daily such that should be saved." Ac 2:47.

2. Gospel ministers may be said to plant them also, "I have planted, and Apollos watered," 1Co 3:6. God honoured Paul to be a great planter in his gospel church; ministers are said to plant by preaching, when God gives the increase, or blesseth their ministry to the conversion of sinners. But,

II. I shall run a parallel between an external planter, planting; and a spiritual planter, and spiritual planting.

1. A planter, is one instructed into the mystery of that art, he has wisdom and skill in planting which others have not; so a minister of Christ is one God hath taught the mysteries of the gospel unto, and hath endowed with wisdom, spiritual and ministerial gifts, and graces which others have not. Paul shows when Christ "ascended on high he gave gifts to men," Eph 4:8, that is, to fit and qualify them to be spiritual planters, or preachers of the Gospel. Human learning and knowledge of the tongues cannot make men ministers of Christ, but they may be ministers of man's making only, or be national ministers, but not be Christ's ministers. Though the knowledge of the tongues are very useful to ministers, and such learning is not to be condemned, provided no stress is laid upon such learning, rendering it

absolutely necessary, or that it is sufficient to make men ministers of Christ. It is a good handmaid, but a bad mistress.

2. A planter must have a call by the owner of the vineyard, or be in an orderly way empowered by the chief and great Planter, before he is allowed to plant in his vineyard; so every minister must be called and regularly empowered, or ordained a pastor or a planter by the rules of the gospel, before he is, or ought to be allowed to preach and plant persons in God's vineyard. "How shall they preach except they are sent," Ro 10:15; that is, unless they receive a regular call and authority from Christ so to do.

2. A planter must have fit and proper instruments to do this work; so ministers have the gospel, which is an instrument of God's power in the hand of the Spirit, by which they work and plant sinners into Christ, and in his church. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation unto all that believe," &c., Ro 1:16. The gospel is also called "the ingrafted word, which is able to save the soul," Jas 1:21. Sinners by it through the Spirit are grafted into Christ, or obtain union with him; it is done instrumentally by the word preached, but efficaciously by the Spirit.

4. A planter doth not know infallibly the difference there is in plants, he may think a plant is of the right kind, but may be mistaken; so a minister knowing not the hearts of men, may think this and that person is a true person, is a true plant, a sincere convert; but may be deceived as Philip was in Simon the sorcerer, who (it is said) "Believed, and was baptized," Ac 8:13.

5. A skilful planter knows that a wild, ungrafted tree never bears good fruit; no, it must be removed and grafted with a better kind, so ministers know that an unregenerated man, who only grows out of the wild olive tree, I mean the first Adam, cannot bring forth good fruit; every sinner must therefore be transplanted, by being renewed, and must by the Spirit be grafted into Jesus Christ; and as every twig a planter designs to graft, must be cut off with a sharp knife, and presently grafted in the new stock, so must sinners by the word and Spirit (which is sharp as a two-edged sword) be cut off from sin, the love of this world, &c., and immediately be grafted into Jesus Christ. "They were pricked in their heart," Ac 2:37; this is the work of the Spirit in conviction.

6. A planter observes the proper season for planting, as when the ground is prepared and made soft by the showers of heaven; so do ministers observe the season of planting and sowing the seed of the word, even when

God hath prepared the hearts of sinners, and made their spirits tender by the divine rain.

VII. A planter doth not only plant,* but also water. So ministers do not only preach for conviction and conversion, but also for consolation, and building up, that believers may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

VIII. A planter greatly rejoices to see his plants grow, thrive, and bear much fruit, but he knows this is from God alone. So a minister rejoiceth greatly to see the saints (that he hath instrumentally planted in God's vineyard) to grow in faith, love, in humility, in knowledge, and in all the fruits of righteousness; but all the increase of his labour he says, with Paul, is of God, "but God gave the increase," 1Co 3:6.

So much as to planters; I shall speak a little farther as touching plants.

1. Plants must be well rooted that bring forth fruit; so must Christians be well rooted, "Ye being rooted in love," Eph 3:17, there must be a rooting in Christ, rooting in faith, rooting in love, rooting in humility, rooting in the doctrine of the gospel, or else they will be soon plucked up, or blown down by every wind of doctrine.

2. Plants must be pruned and purged also, though this is chiefly God's own and more immediate work. "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth that it may bring forth, more fruit," Joh 15:2. By mortification and sanctification God purges his saints, he purgeth their conscience from dead works. "He purgeth the filth of the daughters of Sion." By his word he purges them, and by his Spirit he purges all; by the rod, or by trials, losses, and crosses, and persecution, he purgeth them also.

3. Some plants who promised well, prove barren and good for nothing: so some spiritual plants prove naught and barren like the fruitless fig-tree, they seemed to have much zeal, love, and faith for a little time, but lo, by-and-by they are offended, and "whither away," Mt 13:21, and come to nothing.

4. Plants that wither, proving utterly barren after waiting three or four years, are rooted up or cut down; so such church members or professors, who prove loose, carnal and utterly barren, after long patience, God roots up or cuts down. "These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and

found none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? Again, it is said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away;" Joh 13:2. And then they being withered, are cast into the fire and burned.

Secondly. Why shall every plant God hath not planted be rooted up?

1. Because they are wild plants, plants never transplanted out of the evil and corrupt root, I mean the first Adam, but remain dead in sin and trespasses; being of the works of the law, and so remain under the curse, and being not made good trees, cannot bring forth good fruit.

2. Because all plants that God hath not planted, have no right to be planted in his vineyard; the gospel church consisting (or ought to consist) only of renewed or regenerate persons, they are only such God adds to, or planteth in the gospel church. True, in the legal and typical church of Israel the carnal seed of Abraham were planted, and had a right of church membership, and privileges as such; but that church-state is dissolved, old things being gone, and all things now are become new. The gospel being congregational, ought wholly to consist of such who are made new creatures.

3. Because they do but cumber the ground, (as is showed in the parable of the barren fig-tree) they are prejudicial or injurious to God's vineyard, and a great reproach and scandal to religion, exposing the name of God to contempt, with his ways and ordinances; is it not an unbecoming sight to see a crab-tree grow in a king's vineyard, or briars and thorns planted there? would he endure to behold them set and grow up amongst his rich and costly plants and excellent flowers, that are of great worth both for pleasure and profit? why these are like "crab-trees, briars and thorns," Heb 6:6,8; and therefore it is a shame they should be suffered to grow in the vineyard of the King of heaven and earth.

4. Because they are good for nothing but for the fire, or to be burned, being rotten- hearted hypocrites. "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but transgressors shall fall therein," Ho 14:9.

USE

This may inform us what just rebuke such will one day meet with from God, who bring in or plant the carnal seed of believers in their pretended gospel churches; be sure such plants, of which the New Testament congregations do not, nor ought not to consist, are plants that God never

planted, but the carnal seed of believers, as such, I mean little babes, according to the constitution of the gospel church ought not to be admitted as members thereof; though some of the children of believers are in the election of grace, and of such belongs the kingdom of heaven; yet it is not known which of the children of believers are elected to salvation; besides baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of mere positive right, and none but such who do believe, and make a profession of their faith, being regenerated persons, ought to be received or admitted to either of those ordinances, or be members of the church of Christ. Faith and repentance being required of all that ought to be baptized and planted in the gospel congregations, by virtue of Christ's great commission,* and the practice of the apostolical churches.

They must be such that are dead to sin,* and raised by the operation of God, to walk in newness of life; all that are to be baptized ought to have the inward spiritual grace, who have the outward sign or symbol of it given unto them.

2. Let hypocrites (or such persons who are not sincere) who are planted in gospel churches,* tremble; for since God planted them not there, they must and shall in a short time be rooted up.

3. This may also show what care ministers and churches should take about planting peo in their congregations, lest they receive such persons who are none of the plants of the Lord, nor such that bring glory to him: but contrariwise, greatly dishonour him, and are a reproach to his churches, and to his ways and ordinances.

But to proceed to another proposition.

2. Doct. All the plants which God himself hath planted, shall stand and never be rooted up. This truth, my brethren, is clearly implied in this simile.

In speaking to this, I shall briefly do to two things.

1. Show what kind of plants they are that God hath planted.
2. Show why they shall never be rooted up.

First show what plants they be.

I. The plants God hath planted are truly grafted into Jesus Christ, they are united by the Spirit unto Christ, who is a living stock; it is one thing, my brethren, to be planted into Christ's vineyard, and another thing to be planted or grafted into Christ, who is the true olive-tree.

II. The plants of God's planting have the Spirit of God in them,* the Spirit is indeed the bonds of our union with Christ, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Ro 8:9; from hence also they are quickened, they have life in them, as well as they are united to a living stock, and not only life in them, but are spiritual and lively also (all other plants I showed you are dead).

III. The plants God hath planted, have holy habits planted in them, and thus they become good trees, good plants, their vicious habits are rooted out, they have changed hearts or are regenerated persons, or such that are born again; they are "new creatures," Joh 3:3,5: have new qualities, new desires, new affections, and so are holy and heavenly plants. Every grace of the Holy Spirit is planted in them, as "Faith, love, hope, humility, patience, temperance, sobriety, meekness, and brotherly kindness," 2Co 5:17. And these things render them to be lovely plants, and plants that God's own right hand hath planted, which shall never be barren nor unfruitful, 2Pe 1:8.

IV. And from hence it appears, they have the root of the matter in them, from whence all their fruit springs up, and grows in them, even all the fruits of obedience and good works. "Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in him," Job 19:28. Our Lord shows that the stony ground hearers, "had not root in them," Mt 13:21. But believers have Christ in them, who is the root of the matter, the root of faith, love, &c., they are rooted in Christ: but note from that passage in Job, to censure a godly man, is a kind of persecution. "Why do you persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" Job 19:22. God hath power to judge and censure us, he knows our hearts; but man doth not and therefore ought not to pass any rash judgment, or not judge any good man's state, as to censure him as an hypocrite, though many great afflictions and unusual trials, and manifold infirmities may attend him, yet they may be good plants, holy persons in God's sight.

Question, What is meant by the root of the matter?

Answer. Christ primarily, as I hinted, is the root of the matter, Christ, as God is the original root and Mediator, the root in whom we are planted by

the Spirit; yet, as Mr. Caryl notes, habitual grace may be said also to be the root of the matter, or that first grace that is infused into the soul; or, as others, sincerity the root may be uprightness of the heart; be sure such have the root of the matter in them.

Why it is called a root

Question, why is it called a root, or the root of the matter?

Answer, because a root is a hidden thing, it lies deep in the earth, and out of sight; so the Spirit and the habits of grace are hidden things, and lie out of the sight of men; we read of the hidden man of the heart, our life is a hidden life.

2. A fruitful root tends to make a fruitful plant, and greatly feeds and strengthens it: so we being rooted in Christ, borne by this root, springing up out of this root, we are made fruitful Christians, and obtain strength: it is for want of being rooted in Christ, or want of the habits of grace, that other plants are soon rooted up, wither, and come to nothing.

3. It is hard to root up a tree that hath a deep root, but yet that may be done; but a believer being rooted in Christ, he is such a deep and hidden root; none, neither sin, the world, nor devil can root up this root, nor hinder the sap from feeding those plants that grow out of this root.

V. The plants of God's planting are full of heavenly juice; "the trees of the Lord are full of sap, the Cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted; they are full of the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, of faith, zeal, &c., they are fruitful plants. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit," Joh 15:5. They are holy men and women, they are called trees of righteousness; not carnal, proud, covetous, contentious, or quarrelsome persons; no, such show they are not plants of God's planting. Gracious persons are known by their holy lives, as trees are known by the fruit they bear, "That they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified," Isa 61:3.

VI. They are plants that never cease bearing of fruit, their fruit fails not, their faith, their love, their zeal, their good works, their obedience, their piety, shall continue, and also they shall bring forth fruit in due season, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither &c., Ps 1:3. Some bring forth fruit for a

short time, but their fruit fails, and their very leaf withers, i.e., they falter in their outward profession, and cannot keep up in outward duties of religion; but the plants of God's planting, "They shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in years of drought, neither cease from yielding fruit," Jer 17:8.

Secondly, why shall not the plants of God be rooted up?

1. Because they are ordained to bring forth fruit; what man will root up a very fruitful tree that always is fruitful. Now, as you hear, such plants are the plants of God's planting; neither indeed can it be otherwise, by virtue of Christ's ordination, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain," Joh 15:16. How should such plants be ever rooted up that are ordained to eternal life, and also are ordained to bear fruit, and that their fruit shall remain.

2. Because they are (as you heard) planted in Christ, united by the Holy Spirit to the Lord Jesus, and so grow out of the root and offspring of David, "Because I live, ye shall live also," Joh 14:19. Only Christ ever lives, their root lives, their head lives, and therefore the trees, the plants, that grow out of this root shall ever live also; and the members of such a head must live; for shall the head live for ever, and the members die; abhor the notion that some men assert; Christ lived on earth that we might live; he died also that we might live, and rose from the dead that we might live, and now lives, in heaven, to intercede for us that we may live; and therefore none of these plants can be rooted up, but must live for ever.

3. Because the love of God is everlasting and unchangeable to all these plants, nothing "can separate us from the love of Christ, nor from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord," Jer 31:3. Besides, (as I hinted) they are members of Christ's mystical body. Can he lose a limb of his body, a member of his body; no, certainly, he shall have a perfect body, and therefore they cannot be rooted up, Ro 8:35,39.

4. Because none can pluck them up, no enemy can root them up, as God will not, so sin, the flesh, the world, and the devil cannot, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither can any pluck them out of my hand. My Father that gave them me, is greater than all and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my father are one," Joh 10:28-30. Doth the Father love them with an eternal love, and hath Christ bought

them, redeemed them with his own blood, and hath the Spirit renewed and sanctified them, and shall they after all this be rooted up? will God suffer sin to do it, or Satan to do it; no, sure, if they sin, “they have an Advocate with the Father;” their sins are satisfied for, and are forgiven for ever.

5. The prayer and intercession of Christ prevents their being utterly rooted up.* “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Our Lord hath prayed that all that the Father gave him, may be where he is, &c., and he hath undertaken also to bring them all to heaven, and must lose not one; therefore they cannot be rooted up, and finally perish.

APPLICATION

1. I infer that no doctrine is more comfortable than the doctrine of final perseverance. See you that are believers, that you are not drawn away from the belief thereof by men of dark minds, who understand little of the nature of the covenant, of the love of God, nor of the suretiship of Jesus Christ.

Exhort. But, O, see you show forth the praises of this God, who with his own hand hath planted you in a fruitful hill.

Trial. Examine yourselves lest you should not be plants that our heavenly Father hath planted.

That you may not be deceived, have you received the Holy Spirit?

1. It is a soul-illuminating spirit, what light have you?
2. It is a soul-humbling spirit.
3. It is a grace-implanting spirit.
4. It is a soul-assimulating spirit, it forms the image of God in the soul.
5. It is a soul-sanctifying, and sin-mortifying spirit.
6. It is a soul-rooting, and a soul-establishing spirit.

Comfort to believers,* or to these blessed plants. My brethren, the corruptions of our own hearts cannot, shall not root us up; Satan by his temptations cannot root us up; poverty, necessity, reproaches, nor persecution cannot root us up; deceivers nor delusions cannot root us up; “This our Lord shows is impossible, for if it was, they would deceive even the very elect,” Mt 24:24. The habit of grace can never be lost; though you fall, yet you shall rise again; notwithstanding your fears, your doubts and deceitful hearts, and the snares of the world, you shall stand. I will conclude

with the words of the Psalmist, “the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon, those that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright, he is our Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him,” Ps 92:12,15.

8. VIII. Parable, Luke 16:1-3 Of The Unjust Steward

SERMON XIII

And he said unto his disciples, there was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he said unto him, how is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.—Lu 16:1-3.

The main scope of this parable only is to be attended to, or what our Saviour chiefly designed hereby. Many ungodly and atheistic persons have vilified our Saviour, and contemned the holy Gospel, from what is said by our Lord, in commending the unjust steward, through their ignorance, not considering for what he commended him. Our annotators say that Hierom thought this a very obscure parable, and that Julien, the apostate, and some of the Heathen philosophers, from hence cast reproach upon our blessed Lord and his holy doctrine, as if he commends an unjust action of a wicked man.

Parables, my brethren (I have often told you) have their disparities; our Lord doth not commend the unjust steward for his injustice (whom he brands with the odious character of an unjust steward, in which no doubt he refers to his last acts of injustice, as well as to any of his former acts) but for his care, or great wisdom in providing for himself for the future time, when put out of his stewardship.

In speaking to this parable I shall,

1. Show the chief design of it, and wherein it is full of instruction unto us.

2. Show the divers disparities that are therein.

3. Open the parts thereof, and also what follows about what our Lord speaks, concerning the mammon of unrighteousness.

1. One chief thing (as I hinted) I conceived is to show, that it is part of great wisdom in men to provide for the time to come, or for an endless

eternity, by the example of the unjust steward, who took care to provide for his future subsistence (when turned out of his stewardship) whilst he was in this world.

2. To show that his disciples and all men are but stewards of all the good things they have, whether they are spirituals or temporals.

3. And to let us also know that we must all be called to give an account of our stewardship, and if we are unfaithful, we shall have a sad account to give one day.

4. Moreover, from what follows in this chapter, our Lord shows what a great duty it is to improve worldly riches to our own profit, or to the advantage of our souls, and that such who are unfaithful in and about a wise improvement of such things (which are the less) should God give them true riches, they would be unfaithful in and about the things which are the greater.

Secondly, I shall show you, that there are several great disparities, so that this parable much differs from several others.

1. There is a great disparity in that the Lord and his steward, had distinct, particular or separate interests to carry on; the Lord's interest was one, and his steward's another; and whilst the steward sought to advance his own interest, he injured his master, or prejudiced his; for whilst he made use of his master's goods for his own profit, he could not in so doing add to his master's advantage, but the contrary.

But the Lord Jesus, and all his servants have but one spiritual interest, to manage or carry on in the world: and whatsoever we do, or can do truly tending to enrich our souls, doth also tend to advance Christ's interest and his glory; and that which tends to Christ's honour, or to the advancement of his interest, cannot tend to enrich us, but rather to undo and ruin our souls.

2. The men of this world many times get riches and grow great in an unjust and unrighteous way (which our Lord here condemns); but no person can get true spiritual riches in an unjust way, or by using any unlawful courses. Some are overmuch righteous, denying themselves of the use of God's good creatures, and neglecting the body, under a pretense of righteousness and religion, and this is to seek to be spiritually rich in an undue or unlawful way, as the Papists vow a single life, and their Friars beg

and go barefoot, &c. Moreover, in our time there arose a sect that lived upon herbs and roots, and would wear no woollen garments, nor hats, unless made of straw, and all under the show of righteousness, religion, and self-denial. But these things being but a-piece of voluntary humility, and not commanded of God, is the ready way to become miserable for ever, rather than to be truly spiritually rich, and can no ways tend to make men truly happy.

4. The friends that the unjust steward made for himself, was by his own craftiness, and in an unrighteous way meriting their friendship; but no man can any way, no, not by the highest acts of justice or mercy, merit any thing of God, or deserve his love and favour, or procure his friendship, for all we are and have is the Lord's.

5. Nor can any friend which a wicked man can obtain, or make for himself, receive him (when he fails or dies) into everlasting habitation. But he that obtains God to be his Friend, and Christ to be his Friend, when he fails, they will receive them into an everlasting habitation, or dwelling-place in heaven; so that in these respects consisteth vast disparities.

Thirdly, I shall open some of the chief parts of this parable that seem most obscure.

“And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.”

Some think these words refer to the Lord of the unjust steward, who when he heard how craftily his servant had acted for himself, commended him; but certainly the words refer to our blessed Lord, he spake these words and commended him; not for his injustice, or for defrauding his master, no (as was hinted), for that act he utterly condemned him, by calling him an unjust steward; but for his taking care in providing for a time to come, when turned out of his stewardship, or when he failed and foresaw a time of need would come, and he being not brought up to hard labour, “could not dig,” and “to beg was ashamed;” but would notwithstanding provide for a future time of wants and straits, and to provide for such a time he commended him; but the way he took to do it, he condemned, saying, “the children of this world,” &c., that is, earthly men, who regard not eternity, or wicked men, such as this unjust steward was, who make no provision for their souls, “are wiser in their generation, than the children of light;” that is, than the children

of God, who are called “the children of the day,” or of the light, being born from above, and called “out of darkness into marvellous light.”

How wiser? our Lord shows, i.e., “in their generation,” that is, in their business or about earthly things, they are more wise (as if our Lord should say) in providing for the body, or how to live in this world, than the children of light are to project ways, and so endeavour to promote the glory of God, and the profit and comfort of their own souls.

“And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.”

1. By mammon of unrighteousness, (I conceive) is meant worldly riches, called unrighteous mammon, because of those manifold evils, snares, and temptations they expose men unto that have them.

“Make to yourselves friends of,” &c.

The friends who we are bid to make unto ourselves, are such (it appears) that are able when we fail, to receive us into everlasting habitation; and evident it is, that none can do that, but the “Glorious Three in One,” the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or ever adorable Trinity.

“When ye fail,” &c., that is, when ye die; for it is then that all God’s faithful servants are received into that eternal dwelling-place above.

But the difficulty seems to lie in these words, i.e., “make unto yourselves friends.” Can any make God and Jesus Christ their friends? no, not that any can merit his friendship, or by doing any thing to deserve such friendship, that is impossible, because “when we have done all we can do, we are unprofitable servants.” Besides, by bestowing our earthly goods or treasure on the poor, we do but give that which is our Lord’s own, we are but stewards of all things we have, and therefore cannot oblige God, or make him our friend thereby, “And of thine own have we given thee,” 1Ch 29:14. But nevertheless in distributing of earthly riches to the poor saints, or to further and promote the interest of Christ our great Master, God declares how well he accepts it at our hands, and it is so well pleasing to the blessed Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit, that they will show themselves our friends in the time of our necessity, even as our Lord shows that such who lose all for his sake, or part with all they have in love to him, that such that have “an hundred fold in this world, and in the world to come everlasting life.”

Though not in specie, yet in worth or value; that which is an hundred-fold better than that we part with; and this as an act of friendship, or an act of love and infinite kindness, though not of merit: God hath promised to reward all the services of his people, though they are not rewards of debt, but of grace.

Christ calls them that do the will of his Father, his brother, his sister and mother, not that we can make him to esteem us as his friends and dear relations, by procuring such favours as one man may procure or purchase kindness of another, but only to show it is as acceptable to him as if we could deserve at his hand: so that one great design of our Saviour in this parable, is to press his disciples to charity, by showing that nothing they lay out, or part with of their substance, will redound to such advantage and profit to them, as what they part with for Christ's sake, either to the poor, or for the promoting of his interest in this world.

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful in much,” &c., ver. 10.

The riches of this world are the least of our Master's goods, and such that are not faithful in distributing them as God requires, our Lord shows will not be faithful in improving of spiritual gifts and endowments; such that neglect his poor, or will not improve their external talent of worldly riches, to the glory of God, and good of his church and people, will not improve their time, and the opportunities the Lord gives them in his service and holy worship, in order to his honour, the credit of religion, and their own spiritual profit, peace, and comfort, or that he who loves not his brother whom he sees daily, loves not God whom he sees not.

“And he that is unjust in the least is unjust in much.”

Though among men it be not universally so, yet commonly it is so, and all men conclude that he that is unjust in small matters will be so in greater things were they intrusted in his hand; and who will trust him with great things that proves unfaithful in small things; therefore he that is unfaithful to men, or to his poor brother, will not be faithful to God in discharge of his duty in the great things of his worship, name, and glory, by improving those gifts or spiritual talents received.

“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”

1. Unrighteous mammon is here opposed to the true riches. Some think by true riches is meant the gospel and the ministration of it, which Christ will not commit to men, who are not faithful in distributing of their earthly riches to those great ends God hath commanded, or that will be only for themselves or love themselves, or not regard the church of God, nor to feed the bellies of the poor. Will Christ commit the treasure of the gospel and care of the souls of his people unto such? No sure, for if they improve not worldly riches that way he has appointed, who can think they will be faithful and full of thought about the improvement of the true riches, and in taking care of the souls of his people.

But others rather think by the true riches, our Saviour means special and effectual grace, which, say they, is of all the true riches; and if taken so, then it teacheth this truth, that God is justified in the denying of his special grace to those who do not make use, or duly improve those common gifts and graces they are entrusted with, and so the damnation of men will be just, because they do not make use of that light, gifts, knowledge, and abilities they have received of God. Our annotators seem to take it thus, but not as if God will try all men about the improvement of common grace, before he will give special, as some corrupt persons have imagined; and hath obliged himself to give special grace to all them that faithfully improve common gifts, grace, and abilities, and that the only cause why some have not the one, is because they improve not the other; as if grace were procured by natural improvements, or grace depended upon nature or God's will, upon the will and the faithfulness of the will of the creature. This error I have in opening other parables sufficiently detected.

How many great sinners hath God suddenly, as an act of sovereign grace, effectually called, who never improved any of those common favours and abilities God entrusted them with. Nothing that sinners can do can oblige God, or be a motive to him to give his special grace to them; no, he only acts from his own love and sovereign pleasure, in giving himself and his Son unto poor sinners. I shall leave my reader to take which sense of these he best approves; perhaps there may be another sense given, that differs from both these.

“If therefore ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own,” ver. 12. Some read, “If you have not been faithful in things that are without you, which are little, compared with things that are within you.”

But I conceive our Lord in these words,

1. Shows that the riches of this world are not ours, or not his disciples; they are more properly another man's, that is, the earthly man's; they are his riches, his portion. The riches of this world were not purchased for the saints, nor promised to them as part of their inheritance; no, but the true riches, spiritual riches and righteousness: and if God gives us some of the earthly man's portion, which is not our own proper riches, and we are unfaithful in improving that, what ground have we to expect God will give us more and more of our own riches, *i.e.*, more faith, knowledge, peace, and joy in believing, though purchased for us. It is no doubt mentioned here, as a powerful argument or motive to distribute freely, or plentifully part with our worldly riches to the uses God calls for.

“That which is another man's.”

2. It may refer to the poor, for wealth put into the hands of rich saints is the poor's. (1.) They are Christ's stewards, into whose hands he hath put all the relief he designs for his poor members, as the proverb is, “The poor man's belly is the rich man's barn.” Rich men must not say their gold and silver is their own, no, it is Christ's poor; they by his ordination have right to it.

2. Riches for the sake of the poor are given to them that have them; our Lord foreseeing many of his people would be poor, and not have to supply their own necessities, puts a supply for them of what they need into this brother or that sister's hand, that so they may have what they need. (3.) Our Lord commands the rich to hand out of what he hath entrusted them with unto the poor, and tells them also they are but his stewards, and that he will call them ere long to give up their accounts; and thus worldly riches in the hands of Christ's stewards, may be said to be other men's, and not that which is their own.

Now having according to the small light received, opened what seems difficult in this parable, I shall proceed to take notice of one or two propositions from the scope or chief design of our Lord herein.

1. Doct. That the servants of Christ are but stewards of all the good things that are in their hands, whether they be temporals or spirituals, which

they ought to improve; and shall be called to give an account of their stewardship.

I shall very briefly in speaking to this truth.

1. Show what things they are intrusted with that are not their own.

2. Show why they ought with care to improve whatsoever they are intrusted with.

I. All earthly good things as riches, health, time, parts, opportunities, or any outward accommodation, saints are stewards of; and must improve to the glory of God, their own good, and the profit of others. "Both riches and honours come of thee," 1Ch 29:12. These are our Lord's goods, of which you are stewards, and of which must give account.

2. All spiritual goods, viz., the gospel and ministration thereof, spiritual knowledge, gifts, grace, the worship of God, and his ordinances, promises, providences, and care of God's holy temple or vineyard; all these things we are intrusted with, and must be accountable to Christ for, as his stewards.

2ndly. Why must we carefully improve all things that are in his hands. And first of earthly things.

1. Because whatsoever we have put into our hand, (1.) Of temporal good things, it is to advance the honour of our great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, and to refresh, comfort, and support the whole household where we are placed; like as Pharaoh made Joseph the steward of his house to feed them all with bread, or to hand it unto them.

2. Because we have (as I said before) nothing that is their own, but it is our Lord's goods. "The gold and silver are mine (saith the Lord); therefore I will return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax," Ho 2:9.

See here how the Lord lays claim to all outward good things, and threatens his people to take what he had put into their hands of these things, because they kept back from his use, through covetousness, what they ought to have given, may be they let his poor, or ministers want what was necessary for them.

3. Because (as you have heard) if we are not faithful in the least, it may stop the hand of Christ from giving the greater things to us.

4. It will be otherwise a wrong and great injustice to the poor, or to such for the sake of whom they that are rich are entrusted with earthly wealth, or outward good things, in withholding that which is theirs by Christ's appointment, from them; and so a clear demonstration of unfaithfulness both to God and man; and it may provoke God to take away from them what they have, or to blast them in their trades and callings, or outward substance.

An account must be given to Christ what care we have taken of his church, of his gospel, his poor, and his ministers

5. Because we must in a short time be called to give an account of our stewardship about this matter, we must expect to hear Christ say what have you done with my gold and silver, my corn, my wool, and my flax? How is it that my poor have wanted bread and clothes, and my ministers have been neglected and put to many great straits, and forced to run into debt to buy them necessaries to support their families? and my church has been in debt, and my interest hath been not regarded, but sinks in your hands, for want of such supplies of money that was necessary; whereas I put enough into your hands to make the lives of my ministers, and my poor, comfortable to them, and that also whereby young men I gifted to preach, might have been encouraged and improved to the advancement of my glory, and spreading of my gospel in dark parts of the nation where you lived? How is it that you have converted my goods to your own proper use, and only taken care of your own house and your children, and feed and clothe them richly, and left the rest of your substance to your babes, and regarded not those great ends for which I put so much riches or earthly things in your hands? May we not expect Christ will charge some of his stewards after this manner, and convict them of unfaithfulness, when he calls them away by death to give an account of their stewardship?

Because if these good things be not rightly and faithfully improved as Christ commandeth, his poor, and his ministers also, may be exposed to great temptations, and their souls borne down and sorely discouraged, and Satan may get advantages against them, for many snares and dangers attend poverty or outward want; moreover, the name of God and religion may also thereby be exposed to the contempt of the world; who can believe we are the people of God, when they cannot see that love to one another among them,

which always is the character of such that are true Christians? or how should they think that we believe the way we are in, is the true way and worship of God; whereas the very Heathen and papists show more zeal in supporting their idolatry, superstitions, and false churches, than we show to support the gospel, the truths of God, and the true church? Besides if the poor be not fed by us, they may be starved and perish, who should provide for them but we? shall we send the children of Sion to others to be fed, or matter not what becomes of them? if so, what a sad account shall we have to give at the last day.

Secondly, we must also improve all spiritual things which we have received, or Christ hath put into our hands.

1. The gospel and the ministration thereof, because it is given to the end that we may profit thereby. (2.) And it is Christ's chiefest treasure, and that which he entrusted very few with. (3.) And if not improved, he may take it away from us, as he hath formerly from others. (4.) When that goes, God goes, Christ goes, and all good goes, and all evil will come in.

2. Spiritual gifts, knowledge, and ministerial gifts, because given for the use and profit of the church, and they that have them, are but stewards of them, which they are commanded to improve. "As every man hath received the gift, even so let them minister one to another, as good stewards of the manifold graces of God," 1Pe 4:10. (3.) All the graces of the Spirit," Ro 12:6-8, are also to be improved and daily increased by exercise. And (1.) Because Christ expects his own with increase. And also (2.) because thereby we do bring glory to him. (3.) And shall receive eternal advantage to our own souls thereby also.

USE

O get your accounts ready, you know but this night Christ may say, "Give an account of thy stewardship, thou mayest not be any longer steward."

SERMON XIV

And the Lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.— Lu 16:8

You have heard that our blessed Saviour did not commend him for his doing unjustly, but for his thoughtfulness about his future state, or in providing for himself for the time to come; though not the manner he took in doing of it. He was told of his being put out of his stewardship; and foreseeing a time of great straits and want might soon overtake him, he therefore thought timely how to prevent perishing at such a time, and it was for this our Lord commended him, saying, “The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.” From hence note.

1. Doct. Some wicked men are more wise how to provide for themselves, or in contriving how to live in this world, than the saints and people of God are to contrive and seek ways how to advance the glory of God, and their own spiritual interest and comfort here, and happiness in the world to come.

O how subtil and crafty are the children of this world, what ways will they contrive to enrich themselves? or to prevent want, poverty, and extremity, they will not leave one stone unturned; if one way fails them, they study another; and think no time, no pains, nor any danger or difficulties too great to enrich themselves, or to prevent perishing for want of bread, and other earthly things, they see an absolute necessity of while they are here, (for the things of eternity, or of another world, they mind not) but earthly things they will have, though it be by cheating or base and horrid injustice. But (saith our annotators) that which was knavery in this unjust steward, is honest enough in those who are stewards of our heavenly Lord’s goods, for no man can improve his parts, his riches, his honour, his health, his time, or his abilities, or his whole life to his own true spiritual advantage; but, in so doing, he advanceth the real interest and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, their interest being not divided, or two, but only one and the same (as I showed you)

Were we, my brethren, as wise for our souls and internal profit, as the men of this world are for their bodies and external profit, what rare Christians should we be? Had we but as many lawful projects, and spent as many serious thoughts, or took as much time, and spent as great pains to

increase our true substance, and to grow and increase in grace, and in providing for a time of need, as they have projects and thoughts how to get the world, and spend their time and strength in providing for themselves here; religion would flourish at another manner than now it doth in our hands, but they are wiser in their way and generation than we are in ours. How few devise ways, study and spend their time and strength to grow spiritually rich; and for our failing herein, we arrive to no greater strength in faith, love, joy, peace, and comfort, and likeness unto Christ; “Whose meat and drink and whole business was to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work,” Joh 4:34.

2. Doct. That it is part of true wisdom, and highly commendable, for a man with the greatest care and thoughtfulness to provide for hereafter, or for the future time, when he fails or must die, and for an endless eternity. This is the main thing I humbly conceive that our blessed Lord would instruct us in by this parable. And in speaking to this point of doctrine, I shall,

1. Show how this appears to be such great wisdom, and is so commendable a thing.

2. Show what future times it is such wisdom to provide for.

3. Show wherein this wise and prudent care and endeavour in providing for the future time doth consist.

Now to demonstrate it is part of great wisdom to provide for the future time, appears (1.) by the care and practice of all wise, rational men. (2.) By the care and labour of irrational or mere animal creatures.

1. All rational men look upon it a great point or part of wisdom to provide for themselves against a time of need, or for the future time, and condemn such for fools who do not thus do; nay, and this is also the counsel that all wise parents give to their children, viz., “O, think of the time to come (say they), how to live in the world hereafter, or another day; he content with mean things now, or to endure a hard apprenticeship, or venture to go into another land; though you are exposed to many dangers, if you have a fair prospect that it will raise your estate in the world, and he for your future well being so long as you live on the earth; nay, how oft do parents send this or that son to India, with hopes of getting riches, and to provide and lay up wealth against the future time; so that it appears from the general and universal practice of all men to be a great part of wisdom to provide for a

time to come, and that it is very commendable; and such who take no care in this respect but only for the present time, are laughed to scorn, as being mere fools, or such as want common reason.

Now if it be such wisdom to provide for the body for the time to come, how much more wisdom is it to provide for the future well-being of the immortal soul? Or, if it be great wisdom to provide for our future days on earth, that are so few and uncertain, how much greater wisdom is it to provide for all endless eternity?

2. Every man thinks that it is his main business in health to provide for sickness; and in summer to provide and lay up for winter, and in youth to provide and lay up against old age; and to do these things is really wisdom, and very commendable; and if it be so, what wisdom is it to provide while health and strength lasts for a sick bed, nay, a death bed; and, whilst the summer or day of grace lasts, to provide for such a winter that may come, when all hopes of gathering will fail; and in youth to remember no time is so proper, nor more acceptable to God, as to fall in love with Christ, espouse him, for so they will he provided for ever.

II. Nay, poor irrationals, or mere animal creatures, by an instinct of nature provide for the winter, or future time.

1. The bees, though a small creature, yet how wise are they; how do they labour to store the hive with honey in the spring and summer season, how will they venture out amongst their enemies, nay, and go a great way from home, and in gathering wax and honey, how will they lead themselves, and how industrious and wise are they in working to make their curious combs to lay up their food against the time they can gather no more? and it is also observed that such that will not work, but are drones, the painful bees will turn out of the hive; nay, fall upon them that are idle (and live on their labour) and kill them: and now, my brethren, shall these little creatures be more wise than mankind, whom God hath endowed with such an excellent rational soul, and who believes also such a future state, and yet take no pains nor care to provide for it.

Also the ant or pismire, a very small and contemptible creature to look upon, yet how wise are they in this respect, even to such a degree, that Solomon (by the Spirit) sends slothful persons to learn wisdom of them; "Go to the ant thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise, which, having no

guide, overseer, nor ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest,” Pr 6:6,8.

Having no guide, no overseer, intimating that as man is a rational creature, and so endowed with much wisdom, which the ant hath not, so also he hath a guide, viz., the word of God, and also God affords him his ministers to be his overseers, to excite, stir up, and warn to holy diligence for to provide for the future time: and yet, for all this, the poor ant acts more wisely than multitudes of men and women, for they neither regard the reproofs from this silly animal, nor the warnings and checks of their own consciences, nor the daily warnings given by God in the ministration of his word, and the loud alarms of his rod and impending judgments, but go on, and think not, or, at least, provide not, for the time to come.

III. This appears to be a piece or point of great wisdom, because God himself even bewails the folly of his people of old upon this respect, and wisheth they had more wisdom. “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end,” De 32:29. How doth the holy God by these expressions commend the wisdom I am speaking of; it appears that men do not understand what wisdom consisteth in this matter; if they did they would consider it; lay it to heart or ponder it more seriously in their hearts, and take more care than they do: I know some think the Lord wisheth that they would consider the state that his people Israel would be in through their sin, in the latter end of the world: suppose he doth partly refer to that, yet much more, because they provided not for the eternal happiness of their precious and never-dying souls, or what was like to be fall them to eternity.

IV. It must needs be great wisdom to provide for the future well-being of our souls, because all that were ever esteemed to be wise persons, before, or above all other thing preferred this matter; all holy patriarchs and godly men of old confessed themselves pilgrims on earth, they were dead to this world, they sought another country, that is an heavenly, they knew this was not their rest; and hence Moses contemned all the glory of Egypt, and of Pharaoh’s court, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense of reward;” Heb 11:25. It was not his present state in this world, but his future state and happiness that was in the eye; and to this purpose our apostle speaks also, “While we look not on things that are seen, but on things that are not seen, for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen, eternal,” 2Co 4:18. We regard not (as if he should say) present

things, earthly things, our eyes, or our hearts are set upon future things, things to come, those things that are above, or on eternal things: why, now if these were the wisest men that ever lived, and their chiefest wisdom lay in this, in that they set their hearts upon God, and on eternal enjoyment of him in heaven, and parted with all things here, to have that future portion; then this is one great, nay, the chiefest point of true spiritual wisdom; therefore nothing is more evident than this, or to provide for an endless eternity is our greatest wisdom.

V. Because there is no avoiding our entering into an endless state of joy or sorrow; the unavoidableness of all men's failing; I mean dying and passing into a future state, shows that this is a point of the chiefest wisdom.

When you fail they may receive you, &c., after a short time you must fail, shall die, it is impossible to prevent it; and therefore it was their wisdom to provide against that time. Should a rich man be told of a certain truth that in a very short time he should fail in the world (or as it is called, break,) and be turned out of all he hath, sure he would be full of thoughts how he should live in after times; it would put him upon thoughtfulness for the time to come. Why, sirs, I am come this day to tell you every one, young and old, rich and poor, that after a very short time you will all fail, there is no avoiding it; you that are rich, your riches will fail; and you that are strong and in health, your strength and health will fail; and you that think you are wise, your wisdom will fail; and you that are beautiful, your beauty will fail; and you that have the means of grace, the means of grace will fail; and you that have nothing but false hopes of heaven, your hopes will fail, and be like the spider's web; and you that live now, and are brisk and lively, your life will fail. And is it not then your chiefest wisdom to labour for such friends that will not fail, or get an interest in Christ, and have your accounts to give up with joy, that you may be happy at death, and for ever.

VI. Because if the worth of the soul far exceeds in worth the body and all things in this world, then it must be our greatest wisdom to provide for our souls before all things: what hath God the Father done, and Christ done for our souls? and shall we take no care of them, but live as if we had no immortal souls, but were only animal creatures.

VII. Because God from all eternity studied the future good, sought the future good, and provided for the future good of our souls and bodies for ever, the early care God hath taken, and the wonderful love he hath showed, that we might be happy for ever; together with what Christ had done and

suffered to save us from future wrath, and to prepare a place of future glory for us, should be a mighty argument or motive to stir us up wisely to provide for ourselves to all eternity, in improving the means God directs us to to so great an end: God from all eternity thought of the future state of poor mankind, whom he foresaw would fall, and how did his wisdom work or contrive to make us again and for ever happy in the other world.

VIII. Consider how soon either you or I, or any in this congregation may fail, how soon may the youngest here like a flower fade away; it may be this year, this month, this week, nay, this night; as God spake to the rich man in the gospel, "Thou fool this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall those things be that thou hast provided," Lu 12:20.

IX. If you are not provided for your future state, consider how dismal at death your state will be; is it not the highest wisdom to prevent or seek to escape the greatest evil? what is worse than God's future wrath, or that wrath to come? or what is better than the glory that shall when Christ comes be revealed?

X. Consider that God hath found out a way to make us happy for ever, and observe what promises he hath made to such who before all things seek the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness; if there was no hope, no way to escape eternal vengeance, this would make a man desparate, or else fall under utter despair, and say with them of old, "But there is hope in Israel concerning this thing."

XII. Lastly, how have many thousands bewailed their great folly in not providing for the time to come, until it was too late; how have some cried out, when death approached for one year longer, nay, for one month; but when that would not be granted, for one week, nay, day, O think of this, now, whilst it is called to-day.

Secondly, What future time is it such wisdom to provide for?

1. Against that time, when the means of grace may fail, or all provision for the future time may utterly cease, or be cut off, or our understanding fail; God hath deprived many of their reason; indeed some sin it away, and act more like brutes than rational creatures; also it is to provide before the time comes that the Spirit of God will strive with you no more, or God gives you up to the hardness of heart, to blindness of mind, and to a seared conscience, or before the evil days come, and sorrow and anguish come upon you.

2. The hour of death, this is the future time, no doubt, our Lord refers to in those words, when you fail, &c., no escaping death, there is no discharge in that war. And death (may as you have heard) be near, and woe to him it comes upon before he is provided for it, not having God a sure and certain interest in Jesus Christ.

3. The dreadful day of judgment, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in this body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,” 2Co 5:10.

They that are prepared to die are fitted for the dreadful day of judgment; but they that die in their sins, or are miserable at death, will be more miserable at that day; for then body and soul both shall be cast into hell.

Thirdly, the last thing that was proposed was to show you wherein a wise and prudent care to provide for the future time doth consist.

1. We ought to think of our future state, into which we shall and must pass when the soul shall be separated from the body; it seems it is great wisdom to consider, to think upon, or to ponder this matter; let us think of death and eternity every day. (1.) Think of the certainty of a future state of joy or sorrow. (2.) The nearness of it, or how soon we may be in eternity; we know not what a day may bring forth; many of you that hear me this day may soon see what it is to be or not to be provided for death.

2ndly. If you would be provided, or would know wherein this wisdom doth consist; consider the necessity of your knowing Christ, or of being united to him by faith, for without you truly believe in Jesus Christ, you cannot be prepared for the time to come. “He that believeth not, shall be damned,” Mr 16:16.

Nay, “He that believeth not in Christ, is condemned already,” Joh 3:18. You must get the Son. “He that hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life,” 1Jo 5:12.

3rdly. This wisdom consisteth in a careful and due making use of the proper means that God affords, and hath ordained, in order to faith, or a sinner’s believing in Jesus Christ.

1. Prayer, O be much in that duty, cry to God for faith and for a changed heart, cry for understanding to see and know Jesus Christ.

2. Hear the word preached, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” Ro 10:17. That is by the word of God preached, “Hear, and thy soul shall live,” Isa 55:3.

1. But know it is not a bare hearing that is sufficient; no, you must hear it for the future time. “Who among you will hear this, who will hearken for the time to come,” Isa 42:23,

Answer. 1. To hear for the time to come is to lay up the word in our hearts. (2.) To believe or receive Christ in the promises. (3.) It is to find the transforming power of the word. (5.) To obey the word, or to be doers of it, and not hearers only.

4thly. This wisdom in providing for hereafter is therefore to close with Christ, to be united to Christ, and feel the work of regeneration wrought in us, and to contemn this world; or to be dead to it, and to be always ready and prepared to die. And to live every day as if it was our last, or as if we were this night to be called to give an account of our stewardship.

USE

1. This reproves such who pursue the world as if they came into it for no other end, but to eat and drink, and heap a little white and yellow earth, for what is silver and gold else; it is but to load ourselves with thick clay.

2. It reproves such who prefer the world above the word, and the body above the soul.

3. Such that put the evil day afar off, as if we spoke of things that will be long before they come.

Exhort. O improve your present time, and have continual thoughts of death, judgment and eternity.

Lastly, it commends them who are heavenly, it shows the saints only are truly wise, O let us try to equal, nay, to out-do the men of this world, viz., be more zealous for the honour of God, and to promote his interest, and the interest of our souls, or wiser for another World, than they are to gain the

things of this present evil world; why should they in their generation be wiser than the children of light? And thus I end with this parable.

9. IX. Parable, Luke 16:19 Of The Rich Man And Lazarus

SERMON XV

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, &c.—Lu 16:19.

OUR annotations (and some other writers) seem to question whether this be a parable, or a narrative of matter of fact. Some lay down arguments, to prove that it is not a parable, but that there was such a rich man of the Jewish nation, and a poor man whose name was Lazarus.

And since the learned cannot agree in this case, I shall leave it to every man's own conceptions; yet I am most inclined to believe it is a parable, though my reasons I shall not here give.

But let it be matter of fact or a parable, be sure it is full of instruction, or may be of manifold use to the godly and ungodly, to the rich and to the poor.

First, I shall observe the main scope and design of it.

1. Considering what goes before where our Saviour exhorts his hearers to make themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness we may gather abundance of those worldly things which they possess; they may live in great and plenty, that his design in this parable, is to show the danger that attends rich men, who have their hearts set so upon their riches, that they have no pity on the poor, though help persons; or to convince all men of the great evil covetousness, or of an inordinate love of earthly vanities.

2. To show that men may be very rich, great and honourable in the eye of the world, and yet be in a miserable condition; and that the happiness of man consisteth not in the plenty and splendor a little while and in a moment go down into hell; moreover, there is no judging of the love, or hatred of God, by any outward occurrences, or what befalls one man or another in this life; a man may be very rich and prosperous in the world and yet be hated of God, or in a wretched state; and, on the other hand, a man may be very poor, and seemingly miserable here, and yet be beloved of God or in a blessed condition as to his soul.

3. To show that the soul of man is immortal, and that when a wicked man dies, his soul goes to hell, or into torments; and that the soul of a godly man at death goes to heaven, or into joy, and that as the pain and anguish of the one will be easeless, intolerable, and endless; and so the joys and comfort of the other, will be sweet and inconceivable, as well as eternal.

4. To show, that God's word or the writings of the sacred scripture (in the ministration thereof) are the more effectual means to bring men to believe, repent, or receive Jesus Christ, "than if one should rise from the dead," and discover how it goes with good and bad men in the other world.

II. As to the parts hereof, it contains the character of two men.

1. A rich man, who is described three ways.

1. By his clothing, or what he wore.

2. By his diet, or what he did eat; viz. (1.) He was clothed in purple and fine linen, (2.) That he fared sumptuously every day.

3. By his spirit he regarded not a poor man at his gate, nor showed him any pity though a godly person. It is provable our Lord refers to a nobleman, saying, he was clothed in purple, &c., not that rich clothing, or rich array in noble persons is hereby condemned; but men's living in splendor, outward grandeur, in pride and haughtiness, forgetting God and their own souls, and without compassion and bowels to the poor. This he condemns, and herein lies their sin and danger, the simple wearing of gold and silver, and rich ornament, in people of high rank and quality, is not sinful in itself, provided it be not immodest array, exposing themselves to shame, or others to temptations, yet no people should exceed their state and ability, in respect of their garbs, dresses, or attires.

Doct. Pride and luxury prevails upon rich men, by what they enjoy, and that they are in danger thereby of eternal misery.

Riches in themselves are blessings, but being abused to gratify men's lusts they become, a snare, and curse to such; men may be clothed in rich robes, and eat the fat, and drink the sweet of the creature; provided they do it with due moderation, and not "To make provision for the flesh to fulfill the

lusts thereof,” Ro 13:14; nor forget according to their abundance to do good, nor to be “rich in good works,” 1Ti 6:18, and charitable to the poor.

1. I shall show you how it cometh to pass that rich men are so subject to abuse what they enjoy.

2. Show how it appears that pride and luxury prevails upon them, and they are in danger hereby.

1. It cometh to pass through the corruption of a man’s own heart; the heart is naturally, earthly, and carnal, and minds only such things that suit or agree with it, and as the heart exceeds all due bounds naturally, in desiring riches and outward grandeur, so when those things are obtained the same evil heart leads them forth to abuse them to the gratifying their inordinate lusts, there are “Seven abominations in his heart,” Pr 26:25. Enough to make men fully miserable, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” Jer 17:9.

2. It proceeded from the deceitfulness of riches,* by means of reason of the corruption of men’s hearts, they being both present and pleasant things to the flesh; the deceitfulness of riches do not only choke the word (as I have elsewhere showed) but they do also strangely ensnare, and bewitch all unconverted persons; riches tend to exciting to pride and luxury; they put a knife (as it were) into such a man’s hand, to murder his own soul, or cause him to forget God; and from hence God gave such a charge to the people of Israel, when they came to abound in riches, peace, and plenty in Canaan, that they did not forget him; and from hence it is also so hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

3. How are the poor ready to bow before the rich and honour them that are high and great, in the world, and this feeds, and strangely takes with a carnal heart.

4. It is no doubt, also, partly from Satan, the God of this world; he that was so bold to attempt (this way) to ensnare the Son of God, be sure will not fail after the same manner to assault silly mortals (who being not aware of his bloody design) are caught presently with his golden bait, “All things will I give unto thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me,” Mt 4:9. Satan knows there is nothing like the glory and grandeur of this world to catch and overcome mankind.

5. Moreover, men are naturally so blind, that they see not, know not, that there is any higher good, than what is in the riches, honours, and pleasure of this world; besides they have no power (until they obtain the Spirit and grace of God) to put bounds to their unruly lusts and carnal appetites.

2. How it appears that pride and luxury prevails upon them that are rich.

How it appears pride and luxury prevails against wicked that are rich

1. In that they eat drink to a base, evil and shameful end, even to gratify the flesh, and make themselves like “pampered horses, every one neighing after his neighbor’s wife,” Jer 5:8.

2. In that they care not what they spend or consume on their lusts, whilst their bowels are so shut up to the poor that they will hardly give them the crumbs that fall from their table; this shows how they give way to a luxury of life.

3. In that they vaunt and boast of their high station; and in their obtaining the desires of their hearts, they admire their happiness, “The wicked boasteth of his hearts desire,” &c., Ps 10:3. They glory in their greatness like Nebuchadnezzar, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and the honour of my majesty,” Da 4:30.

4. It appears in that they forget God, “God is not in all his thoughts,” Ps 10:4, or in none of his thoughts; there is in these men’s heart’s no room for one serious thought of God, nor of Jesus Christ; they being overcharged with gluttony and drunkenness, and love to their vile abominations. “The heart of the fool is in the house of mirth,” Ec 7:6; though God calls to mourning they are feasting.

5. In that by this means they say to God, “Depart from us;” nay, they contemn God, as if he could do them no good at all. “They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ, they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave; therefore they say to God, depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,” Job 21:13-14. May be some are so bold and impudent to say thus with their mouths, but all profane worldlings say it in their hearts; they that love not God would be rid of God; riches and worldly pleasures and prosperity are an occasion to

wicked men to cast off God, and to have slight and contemptuous thoughts of Him; through their pride they cannot endure the presence of God, when he draws near to them by the lashes and accusations of their own consciences; and this shows the danger of riches to an unsanctified heart, “What can the Almighty do for us;” yet he fills their houses with good things. Some read it, “What can the Almighty do against us?” Job 22:17. They neither value the good God can do for them, neither fear what hurt he can do to them, and this is the effect of their riches, and earthly delights, and pleasures.

6. It appears also in that they neglect, nay, oppress the poor, yea, persecute the saints, and are without any compassion or sympathy, they being so glutted with their earthly fulness; revenge is sweet to them, and they vent it on those who fear God, and reprove their lewd and luxurious lives.

7. It appears, in that through this means they also forget their souls, death, and judgment; they live as if they were mere brutes, and had no immortal souls, nor should ever be called to God’s bar; they do not believe God sees them, and observes all their doings, and thoughts of their hearts, or will ever bring them to an account for them.

8. In that they thrust out the word and cast it behind them, pronounceth curses, wrath, and hell against them. Nay, their pleasure and outward grandeur makes them to contemn the word, and cast reproach upon Christ’s faithful ministers, and to seek their ruin if they come once to touch their Herodians, or as Herod serve “John the Baptist,” Mt 14:3-5.

Lastly, In that it causes them not to regard the works of God, nor to tremble at the near approaches of dismal calamities; “The harp, the viol, and flute, and wine are in their feasts, but they regard not the works of the Lord, nor consider the operations of his hands.” Isa 5:12.

APPLICATION

1. We may from hence infer the wicked have but little cause to glory in their portion, “They have their consolation,” Lu 6:24,26. Their heaven here, and must have hell hereafter.

2. And we may also infer that riches to a carnal man are very pernicious and hurtful to his soul, and makes his salvation hard and difficult; he is in more danger than the poor of perishing eternally.

Exhort. 1. And therefore let such that are rich carefully watch their own hearts, and see that they are neither carried away by covetousness on the one hand, nor by pride on the other hand.

2. You that delight to go in brave and rich array, see that you exceed not, nor waste that on your lusts, that you shall allow to Christ and his poor saints; be moderate in your clothing, in your eating and drinking, and in your lawful pleasures: remember Lazarus, who lies at your gate, rather take care to feed your souls than your bodies, that must in a short time be feasts for worms.

3. You that are poor, be content with your present state and desire not riches, since they expose men to such great temptations.

“And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores,” ver. 20.

“And desiring to be fed with the crumbs, which fell from the rich man’s table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores,” ver. 21.

We have an account here of another man, who seemed as miserable, as the former appeared happy.

2. His impotency; he was laid, not able to come of himself thither, being either sick and lame.

3. We have an account of the place, where he was laid, i.e., at the rich man’s gate; perhaps he had some friends that brought him thither, though they could not relieve him, yet they brought him to an house where one dwelt that could do it.

4. His condition: he was a beggar, one very poor, also full of sores may be such that were not only painful, but incurable.

5. His desire: which shown wherefore he was brought thither, he wanted food, and desired not the best and rich man had, “but only the crumbs that fell from his table,” he would put him to no charge. Yet we find not that he had so small a favour showed him; wicked rich men will sooner feed their dogs than the poor saints; some men are without any bowels of pity.

6. It is said “The dogs came and licked his sores:” these churlish animals showed more kindness to poor Lazarus than the rich man; men without compassion are worse than dogs, and a poor child of God meets with more favour from one of the worst of brutes than from a gracious rich man; moreover, let us note that God can cause these creatures, that are fierce and cruel in their nature, to show kindness to such that he loves, as a ravin fed the prophet.

Doct. A man may be very poor, and in a distressed condition as to the outward man, and yet be in the love and favour of God.

But pray note, it doth not follow that every one that is poor, and outwardly distressed is by the Lord beloved; no, no, there are very few beggars that are believers, most of this sort are, it is thought the worst of men and woman: for where they truly godly in such a land and city as this; certainly God’s people would revive them, before they should beg from door to door. I have often thought, that these beggars are more earnest with people, for the relief of their bodies, than many good people are with God, for succour and comfort for their precious souls. (2.) Moreover, it is rare that any true believer is exposed to such want and necessity, as poor Lazarus was (or such, who are signified by him) but such an hour possibly hath been, and may be of common calamity, that a child of God may in such a state and needly condition.

Obj. David saith, he never saw the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Answ. 1. It might be so under that dispensation, for the promises of the old covenant were earthly, but those of the new are better promised, besides there was not to be a beggar in Israel. However this parable shows that a believer may be poor, and in great necessity as to beg. And now to proceed,

1.1 shall show how, or by what means, a child of God may be in such a low and poor condition.

2. Show why God doth suffer some of his children to be poor, and afflicted in this world.

3. Show how the poor may be supported under the poverty and distresses.

1. In the negative, it is not through idleness after the man is converted, nor by extravagant or riotous living; or a slothful, an idle, or a riotous course of life certainly is inconsistent with true grace: the ungodly became poor, many times by gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness, wasting what they have on harlots, and in wicked company, misspending their time, and by injustice, which provokes God to blast them in all they have or do.

As to the first, this must be granted, that divine providence disposes of all things and persons in this nether world, it is God that maketh rich, and that maketh poor; all is done either by his permission or commission.

(1.) In the affirmative, perhaps some believers had parents who were very and not poor, being able to put them to trades, nor give them learning, and not be fit or capable for hard labour, they might and so by this providence be very poor. (2.) Moreover some may become poor for want of worldly wisdom or skill to manage their callings, for the children of this world, in this respect, are oftentimes wiser than the children of light. (3.) Some godly Christians become poor by losses and badness of trade or by fire. (4.) By thieves. (5.) Some by wicked men through fraud and injustice. God in his wise providence permits such things as these to befall his own children as well as the wicked, but always it is designed for their good. We know not by what means the person here represented became so poor as to beg. (6.) God's people are sometimes brought to poverty by persecution, all they have had being taken from them, as it fairs with many Protestants now in France, &c., and with many but a few years ago among us in England.

Secondly, Why doth God suffer some of his children to be poor, and distressed in this world?

Answ. 1. It may be the Lord sees that riches would be hurtful to them, riches might choke them, or carry away their hearts from God. Agar desired not riches from thence.

2. It may be to show to all that the happiness consisteth not in the abundance of what he possesses of earthly things.

3. The Lord may suffer it to convince the ungodly world what little good is in earthly riches, and how little the value of gold, silver, or worldly grandeur; even no more than we do a bone we cast to dogs he gives these things to his enemies; the great Turk has these things; crowns and kingdoms may be given to the vilest of men.

4. God may do it to show, that as he himself is the portion of his own children, and their reward is above, so that his people can live upon him, and be content, though they are outwardly poor, and distressed whilst in this life.

5. Moreover, it may be to discover the sincerity of true Christians, and to convince the devil and wicked men they follow not Christ for loaves or earthly riches. “Doth Job fear God for nought?” Job 1:9, No, as if Satan should say, it is because thou hast given to him much substance, and made “A hedge about him, and about all he hath; put forth thy hand and take all away from him, and he will curse thee to thy face.” God did thus, and Job became as poor and distressed as Lazarus, and yet he held fast his integrity; he is the same Job when poor and full of sores as when he was rich and honourable.

6. Likewise, it may be to discover to themselves and others the excellency of grace; i.e., faith, love, patience, &c.; how do these graces shine forth in a poor, distressed, and afflicted child of God; this was one reason why Job was brought to poverty and misery in this world. How is faith in these believers magnified? They rest upon God, live upon Christ, and upon the promises with greatest satisfaction, being content with their condition; “Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine,” &c., Hab 3:17. “Yet they can joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of their salvation,” ver. 18. Moreover, a poor Lazarus can love God as well as a rich Abraham. Also, how doth patience shine forth hereby, when a saint under the greatest poverty, pains, and afflictions, bear up with a composed and quiet mind, rejoicing in and magnifying God in the want of all things, that is, of all earthly things and comforts whatsoever.

7. It may be to try the rich, “The poor you have always with you;” why, because Christ will try and prove the rich, and see whether they will supply the wants of the poor out of love to him, and to their brethren; riches are not given to God’s people only for themselves and for the sake of their children, but for the sake of God’s poor, and to support his interest in the world, they are but Christ’s stewards, and if they hand not out, as it is commanded, they will have a bad reckoning to make up at the last day.

Thirdly, How may Christ’s poor be supported under their poverty and distresses?

1. By considering, that they are made poor by the Lord's hand; it is their Father's good pleasure it should be thus with them; they may and ought to say with our Blessed Lord, "The cup my Father gives me to drink, shall I not drink it? I am not brought into want and poverty by idleness, nor by extravagant living, but by the providence of God my heavenly Father.

2. By considering, it hath been the condition of many choice and dear children of God, Job, Peter, John, and many others, though the first had been very rich, yet how poor was he made; and the other said, "Silver and gold have I none," Ac 3:6; nay, our Saviour himself was very poor, had nothing to eat, but what was given to him; hence the "Good women ministered to him; the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests (saith he) but the Son of Man hath no where to lay his head," Mt 8:20. Also when they sent to demand tribute of him it appears he had no money, but sent Peter to take a piece of money out of the mouth of a certain fish to pay the tribute, Mt 17; "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," 2Co 8:9. My brethren, Is it not an honour to be brought in this respect, into the like condition with our blessed Lord and Master? Therefore, let not ministers that are poor be troubled, since the Lord Jesus himself was maintained by the people; and also seeing God hath chosen the poor of this world to be his ambassadors, and "Hath ordained that they that preach the gospel shall live of the gospel," 1Co 9:14.

3. Because hereby God delivers his poor saints from the snares which attend them that are rich; though it cannot be denied but many cares and temptations attend poverty; but doubtless not so many as attend riches; for our Lord never said "Woe to you that are poor," Lu 6:24, but he hath pronounced a woe to them that are rich. Neither hath he said, It is as hard for a poor man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, as it is "For a camel to go through the eye of a needle," Mt 19:24; as he hath said of one that hath great riches; nor doth he say the rich receive the gospel: no, but they were the poor. Again it is said, "That they that will be rich fall into temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition and destruction," 1Ti 6:9.

4. By considering that the poor saints, though they "Have nothing, yet possess all things," 2Co 6:10.

Quest. How can they be said to possess all things?

Answ. 1. Because they have all things which God gives them without a curse, “The curse of God is in the house of the rich;” if they are ungodly they possess a curse with their riches.

2. Because poor believers have all things they have sanctified to them it is not only without a curse, but it is with a blessing, it is sanctified; “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the revenues of many wicked,” Pr 15:16. And again (saith Solomon) “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble with it. Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right,” Pr 16:8. Poor saints have all in quality, though not in quantity.

3. They have all things in promise, they possess all things by faith, “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,” 1Ti 4:8.

4. They have all things that have any substance in it, all the vast riches of this world are but a shadow, and pray what hath he that hath a shadow? See what Christ saith, “That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures,” Pr 8:21. They possess all things that are truly good, and hath substance in them, and therefore possess all things.

5. Because they have Christ, and he that hath Christ hath all things, “All are yours, ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s,” 1Co 3:22-23. They have all things that are best, or what God esteems good things, riches that God so calls, and honours which are honours in his esteem; if a man have much gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones, must he have also abundance of dung, or else hath he not all things? no, he values not that worth anything; so a believer having Christ, and gold tried in the fire, precious stones, and pearls, he values not those cart-loads of dirt which wicked men boast of.

6. Because they want no good thing, neither shall they, but they must leave God to judge in the case, for they may want many good things in their own judgment, which God sees would be hurtful to them. “The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,” Ps 84:11.

7. They are heirs of all things; “Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,” Ro 8:17. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things,” Re 21:7. Nay, he now possesseth all things in his head. We possess all things, even the glory of heaven in Jesus Christ, he hath possession of all things for us, and we

possess them in him; and at death we shall actually be possessed of all things ourselves. Moreover, poor believers shall be rich when the wicked shall be poor; we shall have all things at death if we die in Christ; when the wicked will not have one penny, for they all die beggars, they carry nothing out of the world with them, but wrath and a guilty conscience.

SERMON XVI

And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died.—Lu 16:22.

1. Note, Lazarus died. And,

2. He was carried into Abraham's bosom, *i.e.*, into heaven; even into the bosom of Jesus Christ; "He was," &c., that his soul.

3. We have an account of them who carried him, and they were angels; not one angel, but angels; as multitude of angels encamp about the saints, and minister to them while they live (Heb 1:14.) so an host of angels carry the soul of a believer when he dies in triumph through the air (the region of devils) into heaven, which no doubt is no small cause of rage in those evil spirits, but they cannot prevent it. "Into Abraham's bosom," Abraham was a type of Christ, but it may be not only called Abraham's bosom simply from thence but because the covenant of grace was renewed with him, and he believed in God; and Christ, therefore, would have all know that his soul was in heaven, whither likewise all the souls of his true spiritual seed (who depart this life) go at death, and perhaps to show also that there was another covenant made with Abraham's natural seed as such; and that some of that sort (or who were in that covenant) may go to hell. For this rich man represents one of Abraham's seed according to the flesh (or one of the Jewish church and nation).

"The beggar died and was carried," &c.

Note, The soul here bears the name of the man, so Paul saith, "I desire to depart, and be with Christ;" and again (saith he) "While we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord," Php 1:23. That is, while our souls are in our bodies and when we die [we] *viz.*, Our souls, "Are present with the Lord," 2Co 5. So our Saviour said to the penitent thief, "This day thou (that is, thy soul) shall be with me," (that is, with my human soul) in paradise. The soul is the inhabitant, the body the house in which it dwells. "For we know, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we (that is, our souls) have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2Co 5:1. The body is the cabinet, the soul is the jewel; and it being the chiefest and most noble part of man it bears the name of the whole person, or of the man.

There are four prepositions, I purpose briefly to touch upon.

Doct. I. That both rich and poor must die.

Doct. 2. That death is a great blessing to every godly man, or that a believer is happy at death.

Doct. 3. That there is a vast difference between the state of the godly and ungodly at death.

Doct. 4. That the souls of all men are immortal, and at death go either to heaven or to hell.

To the first.

1. All men must die: death is a debt all must pay, the rich as well as the poor; though men live long, yet they die; the noble as well as the ignoble. Methuselah “Lived nine hundred sixty and nine years, and he died,” Ge 5:27; the oldest must die, and the strongest also; Sampson was a mighty man for strength, but he died: the wise also die. “Wise men die, likewise the fool.” “What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death, can he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave,” Ps 89:48. Kings die as well as peasants; Caesar rides in triumph one day, and the next day stabbed to death. Alexander that conquered the world was conquered by death. Nay, grace itself exempts no man from death; the righteous die as well as the wicked, “The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart,” Isa 57:1. “The fathers, where are they? and the prophets do they live for ever?”

Quest. Why must all die?

Answ. Because all have sinned, death entered into the world by sin, though it is no curse to believers, but by sin all became subject to death, that which is mortal must die or be changed.

2. Because “It is appointed for men once to die;” the decree is past upon all, “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,” Heb 9:27.

3. A godly man dies as a demonstration of God’s great love to him, because this life exposeth the saints to many sorrows. Poor Lazarus here had his evil things, and this way, i.e., by death they are freed of all misery; also a

godly man dies, that God may raise his body to glory; “It is sown in dishonour, but shall be raised to glory, and shall be made like to Christ’s glorious body,” Php 3:21. The wicked likewise die, but it is as an act of God’s wrath; he cuts them off sometimes that they may be no more a plague to his chosen, and dishonour to his majesty, nor a curse to the creation.

Doct. 2. Death is a blessing to believers, or a godly man is happy at death

This appears,

1. Because death puts an end to all their miseries, sorrows, and trouble; Lazarns was poor and distressed, but death puts an end to all his misery. All the godly are afflicted many ways.

(1.) The world afflicts them, they are reproached, hated, and persecuted in this world. (2.) Sinners grieve and vex their souls, the sins of the wicked are the sorrow of the righteous, such that truly love God cannot but be grieved to see how God is dishonored. (3.) The evil and scaudalous lives of professors is no small affliction to them. “Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ,” Php 3:18. (4.) Their own sins, and the corruptions of their own hearts, make them mourn, groan, and to cry out. “O wretched man that I am,” &c. (5.) Satan also greatly distresses them by his continual temptations. (6.) Moreover their own children (many times) add great sorrow to them. (7.) Besides, worldly care and losses, and bodily distempers greatly afflict them. (8.) Likewise God ofttimes hides his face from them, but of all those evils and sorrows they are freed at death.

2. They are not only happy at death, in respect of negative good, or in respect of the evils freed from, but they partake then of positive good also; their souls (as you heard) go to Christ. O what a place is Paradise? and what joys are at God’s right hand? What is it to see and behold, and be with Christ?

Moreover, their bodies have sweet and quiet rest, they fall asleep in Jesus, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labour,” Re 14:13.

The rich man also died and was buried.

We read not of Lazarus's burial, he was buried too, but with no pomp; he was thrown into some hole or another. But observe what is said in the next place of the rich man.

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment.” And this brings me to the next proposition.

Doct. There is a great difference between the death state of the godly, and of the wicked at death. A little to open this,

1. Consider a godly man dies in Christ, the ungodly in the wicked one; the one dies in a state of grace, the other dies in his sins.

2. The wicked are forced from hence, against their will; “The wicked are driven away (saith Solomon) in his wickedness,” Pr 14:32; but the godly willingly yield themselves up to death; “I would not live always,” saith holy Job.

3. The wicked are driven away from their friends, from their houses, from their riches, from their vain comforts, and that day they die their hope perishes. Their souls are forced or torn out of their bodies, and cast into hell, but the soul of a godly man goes to Christ, “Having (saith Paul) a desire to depart, and be with Christ,” the soul of a believer is not driven away; no, he desires to be gone.

3. My brethren, as death puts an end to all a godly man's sorrows (he being freed from all evil) so death puts an end to all a wicked man's seeming joys and delights, and then begins also his sorrows; so that as the one possesseth nothing but good, so the other partakes of nothing but evil; and as the happiness of the one is inexpressible, so the misery of the other is inexpressible; and as the joys of the one at death shall never end, they being eternal, so the sorrows of the other at death will never end, they being also eternal.

5. The one is blessed in death, and the other cursed; the one falls into a sweet and quiet sleep, the other into a troublesome one; for though his spirit hath none, but is in eternal flames. This brings me to the last proposition.

Doct. 4. That the soul of man is immortal, and at death goes either to heaven or hell.

(1.) This I shall prove. (2.) And then apply.

1. I shall prove the soul is immortal, by plain texts of scripture.

2. By several arguments.

I. The first proof is in my text, Lazarus's soul went to heaven when he died, and the soul of the rich man went to hell, therefore the souls of all men at death go either to heaven or hell.

Object. But this is a parable, and what can you prove from hence?

Answ. To deny that the soul of Lazarus went to heaven when he died, or that the soul of the rich man went to hell, is in effect to say this parable is a fable, and so cast contempt upon our Lord Jesus Christ. For though parables are not so argumentative as other scriptures, and matters of controversy cannot so clearly be decided from them, yet may we not infer, from the parable of the pearl of great price, that Christ and the grace of Christ is exceeding precious, or of great worth: and from the grain of mustard seed, that the gospel-church was small at first, &c.

My brethren, that which is one main design of our Saviour in speaking of a parable, we may strongly argue from, and draw as concluding and as strong inferences, or arguments from, as from other scripture. Now (as I have showed) one main design of our Lord in speaking this parable was, to show the happy state of believers (though poor and distressed in this world) at death in regard their souls go immediately to heaven; and also to discover the fearful state of all wicked rich men at death, because then their souls go to hell, or to a place of torment; and this being so, it proves this truth as fully as if it had been a history, or matter of fact in respect of two particular persons.

Object. We will grant, it shows the state of good and bad men at the day of the resurrection.

Answ. Our Saviour speaks only of the state of both these persons spoken of at death, and not one word of the resurrection.

A citation of several texts of scripture, that prove the soul is immortal

2. Besides, according to the purpose and design of our Lord herein, it evident that he shows when the rich man's soul was in hell he had five brethren living upon the earth, who had also the means of grace afforded unto them, "They have Moses and the prophets let them hear them." Certainly all believe that after the general resurrection, there will be no more any means of grace afforded to any wicked men, but that all will be swallowed up either in an eternity of joy, or of sorrow. Another text which proves this great truth is that of Solomon.

"Then shall dust return to dust, and the Spirit unto God that gave it," Ec 12:7.

It appears from hence, at death the soul is actually separated from the body, and goes to God to be disposed of, as he sees good; either to be sent to joy or sorrow. Again, he says, "The Spirit of a beast goes downward to the earth, but the spirit of a man goes upward." Also, take that concerning the soul of the child. "And he cried to the Lord, and said, O Lord God, I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again. And the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived," 1Ki 17:21-22. Another text is that of our Saviour, "Fear not them which kill the body, but cannot kill the soul," Mt 10:28. If the soul was mortal, man might kill it; but man cannot kill the soul, therefore it is not mortal, but immortal. Moreover, that which Paul saith in 2Co 5:1,6,8, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have (that is, our souls have) an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Object. The apostle here refers to the resurrection of the body at the last day.

Answ. He speaks here of the state of the soul when the body is dissolved, and lies in its dusty crumbs, not when it shall be raised again. And from hence he adds, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we (that is, our souls) are absent from the Lord," 2Co 5:6. For further proof read, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Php 1:21. He doth not say to me to rise again is gain, but to die, or when I die death will be gain to me. And from hence he adds, "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," ver. 23. Compare this with that of the promise of our Saviour to the penitent thief, "I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise," Lu 23:43. And to these scriptures I might add, 2Co 12:1; 1Pe 3:19-20; Heb 12:23.

Secondly, I shall proceed to lay down several arguments, further to confirm this comfortable truth. But let this be considered before I proceed; viz. That by immortal, I do not mean simply and absolutely the soul in its own nature is immortal; or had a being from everlasting. No, for in this sense, God alone is immortal, or “hath immortality,” 1Ti 6:16. But, by being immortal, I mean, it was created so; God hath bestowed immortality upon the souls of all men, that they die not, they cease not to live, nor shall be reduced to nothing (or annihilated); the soul being a pure, simple, immaterial thing, or an unmixed being, where there is no composition or mixture found (saith one), no death or dissolution can follow. The very being of the soul is life, and it is also the vital principle of the body.

Argu. I. If the soul of man be a simple,* spiritual, immaterial and an unmixed being, not compounded of matter, as all mortal creatures are, the soul is immortal; but such is the being of the soul. Ergo, all mixed bodies, or creatures that come under the power of dissolution are mortal; matter and mixtures (say learned men) are the doors at which death enters naturally upon all such creatures; all matter hath its limits, bounds, and just measure beyond which it cannot be extended (saith reverend Flavel) but the soul is boundless, and its appetitions infinite; it rests not, but in the spiritual and infinite being, God alone being its adequate object, and able to satisfy its desires, which plainly proves it to be spiritual, immaterial, and a simple being. (1.) It is void of any principle of corruption in itself. (2.) It is not liable to any stroke of death, by any adverse power without itself. 1. It cannot be liable to death from any seeds or principles of corruption within itself. The spirituality and simplicity of the soul admits of no corruption. Nor is it liable to death by any adverse power without itself; no sword can touch it, no instrument of death can reach it, therefore it is immortal.

Argu. 2. If the soul at death be actually separated from the body,* and in that separated state goes upwards to God that gave it, it is immortal; (but this the text before cited plainly proves, Ec 12:7) Therefore, the soul is immortal; the body goes one way, the soul another; the body returns to the dust, the soul goes to God; the body being made of the earth returns to earth, but the soul proceeding from God, who is called the Father of spirits, it being created of God, and infused into the body, that goes to God that gave it, or upward; whereas the spirits of beasts go downward, and though the souls of the wicked go to God, or go upwards, yet not into the third heavens; (for no unclean thing can enter into that place) but go into some inferior part of heaven, where God may pass sentence against them, and send them to prison. God (saith one) is not so in the third heavens, that he hath not a

glorious presence in the lower heavens; if this be not so, how could Satan appear before God, as is mentioned when he accused Job. If, therefore, the soul died or slept with the body it could neither be said to be separated from the body, nor to go another way, and not whither the body returns.

Argu. 3. If godly men at death commended their souls or spirits unto God, praying the Lord to receive them, then they are immortal; but godly men have done, and always do this. Ergo, the soul or spirit is immortal.

“And Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my Spirit,” Ac 7:59. Moreover, the very same thing our Lord Jesus Christ did himself, “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice he said; Father into thy hands I commend my spirit,” Lu 23:46; that was his human soul, “For he was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted.”

Argu. 4. If the souls of men, in their separated state from their bodies, are either in joy or misery they are immortal; but the souls of men in their separated state from their body are either in joy or misery. Ergo, the souls of men are immortal. That the soul is separated from the body at death I have proved; and that the souls of the just are in a state of joy at death is evident. “I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.” Our Lord in these words answers this poor sinner’s desire, “Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,” Lu 23:42-43. Here he discovered his faith, he believed Christ was the Son of God, and that he would in an hour or two be in his kingdom, i.e., in heaven; and also showed he believed he was the true Saviour, and one able to save him; and now our Lord assured him that, that very day [He] (that is the soul of this believing criminal) should be with him in paradise, a place of delight and pleasure, viz., the third heaven; not that only he should be with him in his kingdom, when he comes again the second time, but that very day his soul should be with the soul of our Lord in heaven; I know some (who abuse this text) say, Christ said to him that day, or made a promise to him that day, that he should some time or another be with him in paradise. What will not men do to prop up an erroneous opinion, mind the comma, “I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me,” &c. And from hence I infer, if the soul of one believing and godly person goes to Christ at death, then the souls of all godly persons go to Christ at death. For as the soul of the penitent thief went to heaven at death so also did the soul of Lazarus, and so the souls of all believers. And as the soul of the wicked rich man at death went to hell, or to a place of torments, so do the souls of all wicked men at death go to hell also.

Argu. 5. If men cannot kill the soul of man it is immortal; but men cannot kill the soul. Ergo, the soul of man is immortal. See what our Lord saith, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," Mt 10:28. Were the soul mortal, he that killeth the body kills the soul also, even the whole man; but men are not able to kill the soul. Besides this, our Lord spake to encourage us not to fear bloody persecutors; because though they may put an end to our natural lives, yet our souls being immortal (they being not able to kill them) they live; and the very moment we lose our lives our souls are with Christ in heaven.

Obj. If any should say our Lord means that men cannot kill the soul for ever.

Answ. 1. Answer, in that sense they cannot kill the body, for the body shall live again; our Lord speaks not of the future, but of the present state of the body and soul or what the state of the one and the other is at death.

Argu. 6. "If every one that believes in Jesus hath everlasting life in him, and shall not see death (I mean eternal life in the seed and principle of it), then the soul is immortal; but every one that truly believes in Jesus Christ hath everlasting life in him, the seed or principle of it, and shall not see death. Ergo, The soul is immortal. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life," Joh 3:36. "And this is the record that God hath given us, even eternal life," &c. 1Jo 5:11-12. "That ye may know ye have eternal life. No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," 1Jo 3:15. A true believer hath eternal life abiding in him, because he hath the eternal Spirit in his soul, and it abides in his soul for ever. Now, if this vital principle abides in the soul for ever, the soul lives, and abides for ever in life, only not as being immortal (for so it was before) but in a state of eternal life also, which proves the soul's immortality and final perseverance. "This is the bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die," Joh 6:50; "He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever," ver. 58. Our Lord must speak either of the soul or of the body; of the body he speaks not. "The body dies because of sin, but the Spirit is alive because of righteousness," Ro 8:10. As the soul lives a life of grace here, and hath a title to eternal life by Christ's righteousness, so, the Spirit being in the soul of a believer, his soul lives for ever in a state of eternal life, or life of joy. The Spirit being that "living water in the soul, springing up unto everlasting life," Joh 4:14. The Spirit of God abiding in the soul of a believer, as a principle of eternal life, proves the soul is immortal. For if there is no separation of the Spirit from the soul, but that he makes his

cohabitation there for ever, then the soul lives for ever; or it hath a being for ever, and a blessed being also; therefore it is immortal.

SERMON XVII

And in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom,” —Lu 16:23.

I AM upon arguments to prove the soul is immortal, and have passed through six.

Argu. 7. If the soul of man in its separated state from the body be capable of the highest joy, or spiritual ravishments, it is immortal; but the soul of man in its separated state from the body is capable of the highest joy or spiritual ravishments. Therefore, it is immortal. “I knew a man in Christ fourteen years ago, whether in the body I cannot tell; or out of the body I cannot tell, God knows; such an one caught up into the third heaven: he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words,” &c., 2Co 12:2,4. If Paul knew the soul was not capable to be separated from the body (or if it was), yet, if not capable in that separated state of such sensible and soul-ravishing joys and visions, then he would have said, I know he was taken up in the body; but, since he says he knew not whether without the body or in the body, it proves that Paul knew the soul was capable of such a separation, and, in that separated state, capable also of the highest enjoyments of God.

Argu. 8. If, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; and, when absent from the body, present with the Lord, then the soul is immortal; but both these Paul positively asserts; “Therefore we are always confident, that whilst we are at home in our body we are absent from the Lord;” 2Co 5:6. “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” ver. 8.

Answ. I answer, at the day of the resurrection we shall neither be absent from the body nor from the Lord; therefore from hence it most evidently appears that the souls of all believers at death are absent from their bodies, and present with Christ in heaven.

Argu. 9. If it be gain to a believer to die, the soul is immortal; but it is gain to a believer to die: ergo, the soul is immortal. See what holy Paul affirms, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,” Php 1:22. Now, if Paul’s soul was not in a far better condition at death than when he lived in the body, having more sweet joy, comfort, and consolation, death instead of being gain to him, would have been great loss, for he might live many years,

and have had sweet communion with Christ; and yet it would not be any longer before his body would be raised at the last day.

Besides, the apostle speaks not of gain when his body shall live again; but of that gain he should have at death, or when he died; not when he shall be raised at the last day, though then he knew his body and soul both shall be crowned with glory for ever.

My brethren, is not the presence of Christ, and communion with him here, while we are in the body, a great blessing; and if we may live twenty or thirty years longer here to enjoy this, would it not be gain to us? but if God should take us away presently, (and we lie in the grave asleep both body and soul) without any sensible joy or comfort at all, certainly (were it thus) death would be a great loss, and no gain at all; for we shall rise again from the dead, as soon though we should live forty years longer in the body.

Argum. 10. If the spirits of all just men separated are made perfect in heaven, then the soul of man is immortal; but the spirits of all just men departed this life are made perfect in heaven: ergo, the soul of man is immortal. "We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb 12:23. That is, we are come to a clear revelation of this comfortable truth, as we are come to the blood of sprinkling, and to the general assembly, &c., viz., to a clearer knowledge and discovery of those glorious truths than the saints had who lived under the law or before the gospel times.

Argum. 11. If the soul of our blessed Saviour went to heaven at death, the soul is immortal; but the soul of our Saviour went to heaven at death; ergo, the force of this argument lies here, viz., Christ was made like to us in all things, sin only excepted; if therefore his human soul was immortal, the souls of all men are immortal. And if his soul was not immortal, how could it die a spiritual death, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and that his soul went to heaven at death, I before showed. "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."—"Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.

Argum. 12. If the soul be fed with and lives upon immortal or incorruptible food, it is itself immortal; but the soul is fed with, and lives upon immortal or incorruptible food; ergo, it is immortal. That which is corporal or mortal, may be fed with corporal or earthly food; the body being mortal, corporal food feeds it; but no earthly or corruptible food can feed the soul: no, that lives upon incorruptible food, spiritual food, or on the bread of life; let such therefore that affirm the soul is mortal feed their souls with the

same food they feed their bodies; and if their souls are wounded, let them apply the same balm to heal them, which they apply to bodily wounds, and see whether such things can either feed or heal them; and try also whether some rare cordials physicians can prepare will revive their souls when faint and drooping since they affirm their soul is mortal, and so corporal.

Argu. 13. If the souls of those wicked men who lived in the old world in the days of Noah are now in prison or in hell, then the soul of man is immortal; but the former is true, ergo, for the proof of this argument see what the apostle Peter saith, "By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient in the days of Noah," &c. The apostle shows that "Christ was put to death in the flesh, and quickened by the Spirit," or by virtue of his Deity, even by the same Spirit or Godhead; he preached to those spirits that are now in prison, who once lived in the days of Noah wicked and ungodly lives. This text doth not only prove the souls of men are immortal, but also the pre-existence of Christ, or his glorious Godhead; inasmuch as by his servant Noah, he preached to the old world, to those whose spirits are now in prison, or in chains of darkness.

But to proceed. We read of souls under the altar in heaven. And from thence I argue,

Argu. 14. If the souls of those blessed saints (that were slain for Christ's sake) are now in heaven, and have white robes given to them, then the soul of man is immortal, but the former is so. Ergo,

"I saw under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long holy and true, dost not thou avenge our blood, &c., and white robes was given unto every one of them," Re 6:9-11. The altar I conceive is Jesus Christ; they lie under the wings of Christ, or are in heaven by virtue of the blood of our altar Jesus Christ. "And white robes were given to every one of them." By white robes is meant not only the righteousness of Christ (which brought them to heaven) but the purity of that state and happiness they are possessed with, triumphing in glory. White robes (saith one) is the sign of their honour and triumph in heaven.

Argu. 15. If there are some now in heaven who were reconciled to God by Jesus Christ then the soul of man is immortal; but there are some now in heaven who were reconciled to God by Jesus Christ. Ergo, See what the

apostle saith. "By him to reconcile all things to himself: by him I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven," Col 1:19-20.

Object. By things in heaven, some say the apostle refers to the holy angels.

Answ. I answer that cannot be, because the holy angels need no reconciler. Hath Christ reconciled them to God? Were they and the holy God ever at variance, or was there a breach between God and them? Certainly, if there be any in heaven that were reconciled unto God, they must be the souls of just men made perfect, because no creature but the off-spring of Adam, or mankind only, were reconciled to God by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. So much as to the arguments, to prove the souls of all men to be immortal.

To proceed, let me add here some of those gross absurdities that attend the opinion of such that affirm the soul is mortal, and dies or sleeps with the body.

Absurdity 1. If the soul of man be mortal, then the punishment which God threatened against, and also executed upon our first parents, was only temporal punishment; as sickness, &c., and death, or going to the dust.

Absurdity 2. Then also the demerit of sin is not such, as the word of God positively declares, nor is there such inconceivable evil in sin, if it be only temporal misery and death the justice of God requires and inflicts upon the sinner. Moreover then also it follows that mere animal creatures suffer as much, or as great punishment for man's sin; as man himself would ever have suffered, had not God sent his Son to raise mankind again from the dead; and how absurd that is I will leave to all men's considerations.

Absurdity 3. Likewise then it will follow that Jesus Christ is but a temporal Redeemer (for though he may purchase other blessings for us) yet he could redeem us from no other death and miseries than those that sin brought us under, or exposed us unto.

Absurdity 4. Then also the curse of the law, and the wrath of God for the breach of the first covenant, is no great matter, nor to be so much feared; nor is the redeeming love in God the Father, and in God the Son so great, as his holy word everywhere expresseth it to be; for it must be then only to restore or redeem us from temporal or external wrath and punishment, and

not from internal wrath which came upon all, nor to prevent that eternal wrath which certainly would have fell upon all had not the Son of God come to redeem and save us.

Absurdity 5. Moreover, then our blessed Lord was unjustly punished in his soul, for why did he suffer such dismal sorrow, and bear such wrath in his soul for us, as to sweat great drops of blood, if mere bodily suffering could have satisfied the justice of God, or have appeased divine anger? Besides, it would render our blessed Saviour more afraid of death than many thousands of his saints have been, who rather rejoiced in death, courted death and desired it, rather than showed any fear to die the most cruel deaths, that bloody tyrants could invent. And what disparagement and contempt would this cast upon the Son of God, who cried out, "Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and also it is said, that "He began to be sorely amazed, (and said) my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:" certainly this was from the weakness of his flesh or human nature, under the sense he had of that dismal wrath his soul felt (when our sins were laid upon him, and that wrath due to us let out against him, he standing in our law place) that made him cry out in that nature, even with bitter cries and tears. Ah! none know, nor conceive, what he endured in his human soul; that he might satisfy the justice of God for us, "The pangs of hell took hold on me," Ps 116:3.

Absurdity 6. Then it is weakness in the heathen, who never heard of Christ, and of the resurrection, to fear any punishment that is due to them for sin, but only that which is external; and how comes it about (or from whence doth it arise) that they fear and dread eternal wrath; and many of them so positively have asserted the immortality of their souls: the people of all nations, even Heathens as well as others, believe the soul is immortal; and is it not absurd to think that God would suffer the whole world to be deceived. Cicero saith "In every thing the comfort of all nations is to be accounted the law of nature." And (Seneca saith) "We give much to the presumption of all men." And as one notes, the ancient Chaldeans, Grecians, Pythagorans, Stoics, Plantonists, &c., asserted the immortality of the soul; and Plato hath wrote excellent arguments to prove its immortality, amongst which this is one, viz., That if the soul were not immortal wicked men would certainly have the advantage of the righteous and good men, who after they have committed all manner of evils should suffer none: also, some of the Heathen argued for the immortality of the soul, from the consideration that nothing in the world can satisfy it, or fill its desires, and so make it happy: the Turks, also, in their Alchoran, assert a state of joy or sorrow after death, into

which the souls of all men enter; though they fancy a paradise of sensual pleasure; nay, the very Indians believe it, and their wives will cast themselves into flames to attend the souls of their husbands in another world.

Absurd. 7. If the soul be not immortal, then Adam had not, and so by sin lost not the spiritual life of his soul; nor was the soul a capable subject to have the image of God stamp'd upon it; nor can our souls be said to be quicken'd by Christ, and so that life and divine image restored to us again. For how can an internal life, be said to be restored to man by the second Adam; if the first in innocency never had any such life.

Absurd. 8. Moreover, if this be not so, what dignity had mankind above mere brutes, exempt his dominion; for they have all one breath, therefore to deny the immortality of the soul, is to debase man; yea, rob him of his chiefest honour, who was made but a little lower than the angels. Were it not for the excellent quality of the soul, how comes man to be so noble a creature, more in worth and far excelling all inferior creatures; for in strength, perfections of sense, agility of members, many creatures excel man. Moreover, were it not thus, from whence proceed these excellent faculties of knowledge, reason, understanding, &c., in man.

Absurd. 8. Then also it was not true, which our Lord told the penitent thief, viz., "That he should be with him that day in paradise;" and Paul also was very weak in desiring to depart and be with Christ; and was mistaken in saying death would be gain to him, and far better for him to be dissolved.

Absurd. 9. Take what a worthy writer notes, if man was only to be reduced (by the first sin) to an eternal state of dust, then really and truly God intended not to punish him at all, except it were in previous dying pains; for that was but to put him in the same condition in which he was before he was made, and that was only dust; which speaks him no more miserable, than if he had never been made; and surely none would think it had been a punishment to Adam not to be made at, &c. Besides the beasts, &c., would have suffered as much misery as sinful man.

Again (saith he), then also it will follow, that, that being in us, our soul, which understands, or knows God, Christ, the Spirit, in the unity, independency, immensity, and eternity of their nature, and that love, joys, and delights therein, above all the delicacies of food, melody of music, and all the pompous shows of this visible world, and all the hidden treasures of the earth, should be nothing but a congruity of the elements of air and fire, &c.

And also that in man, which is the principal subject in regeneration. And is partaker of the divine nature, and is inhabited by the Holy Ghost, is nought else but the finest part of the decocted blood of our body, and this (according to these men) is that which the apostle says, "Is born again of the immortal seed, the word of God, and is regenerated by the Spirit, &c.

Absurd. 10. Then also it will follow, that the death of Christ would be the greatest curse and plague to the wicked that ever was, in that he, by his death and resurrection, brings them into a capacity to suffer eternal pains, who should after death, otherwise have known no sorrow nor misery: but alas! had not Christ come, the souls of all must have suffered everlasting wrath and vengeance; though it is true, their torments will be aggravated for their contempt of such great and inconceivable grace and favour, offered them through Christ in the gospel.

Absurd. 11. If the soul be not immortal, then the saints and people of God in every age of the world have been deceived in one of the great motives which encouraged them to suffer violent deaths and cruel martyrdoms for Christ's sake; viz., the hopes they had of being that very moment they died with Jesus Christ. Were they born up with self-hope and a vain and idle dream; they said (one to another) O brother be of good cheer, for though we have a bitter dinner, yet we shall have a sweet supper this night with Jesus Christ. (Or to that purpose).

Absurd. 12. And then, also, as Christ's ministers have generally told the people a company of lies; and, also, one of the greatest encouragements believers have to be willing to die is gone for ever; which is the hopes of being that moment with Christ in heaven; for who would not rather desire to live longer in the possession of joy, comfort, and communion here with Christ, than to die and lose it, and come to heaven no sooner than if they lived forty years longer in this world.

Absurd. 13. Then also the man begets the soul, and is the father of the spirit, and God robbed of that peculiar prerogative and honour, who is called "The Father of Spirits," Heb 13:9; and man only the father of the flesh.

Absurd. 14. If the soul be mortal, and dies with the body, who can prove it shall rise again? Or, where is there any scripture that asserts any such resurrection? It is only the body which the Scripture says shall rise again; and this is one article of our faith, viz., "The resurrection of the body;" but not that we believe the resurrection of the soul. Now that which the Scripture

affirms not we ought not to believe. Some, indeed, talk of the soul's sleeping, but they say man is wholly mortal both his body and soul, and so both die. As to such that speak, as if the soul slept, or doth not die but sleep, is a foolish notion and needs no answer to confute it; for sleeping in the grave and lying dead there is all one.

APPLICATION

I. We infer from hence that the soul is very precious; it is capable of divine union with God, and of Divine inspiration; "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." And of divine assimilation to God, and of divine contemplation of God, and of divine communion with God. 2. Because the souls of the saints are in paradise with Christ at death, and the soul is worth more than ten thousand worlds, being bought with a great price, and feeds upon a most precious and incorruptible food.

II. We infer the loss of the soul is the greatest loss, "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul," Mt 16:26.

III. That the ungodly are the greatest fools in the world, who prefer their bodies above their souls, nay, mind everything more than them; their children, their servants, nay, their beasts shall be fed and provided for, but their souls are neglected, though immortal, and neither be fed nor clothed; and, though sick and wounded, yet no seeking and looking out for a physician, to heal their precious and immortal souls. I have heard of a woman, whose house being on fire, got out all her chiefest goods, and then rejoiced, saying, she had saved her goods," but one replied to her, "Woman, where is your child? (She forgot that, which, being in the cradle, was burned to death). "O (then she cried out), my child, my child is burned." Just thus most people mind their goods, labour for the world, but forget their souls until in hell, and then cry out, "My soul, my soul is lost and tormented in these flames."

IV. It may be for reprehension.

(I.) Such who expose their souls to eternal flames, for love to their base lusts, and the vanities of this world, and may be for the unjust gain of one penny.

(2.) It may reprehend all such that draw others into sin, who are not satisfied to destroy their own souls, but seek ways to destroy the souls of others also. See to it, you that entice others to drunkenness, to uncleanness, &c. Is it not enough to have an account to give for the loss of your own souls, but for the loss of many souls of poor creatures also that you have enticed and drawn into abominable wickedness, even to the damning of their precious souls for ever?

(3.) Such also are to be reproved who promote damnable errors and heresies, to the destruction of multitudes of souls and glory in it. To see how they have corrupted them, they, being deceived themselves and given up to believe lies, deceive others also.

V. Exhortation.

(I.) O, bless God, sinners, for sending his Son, his Gospel, his Word, and the means of grace, to save your precious and immortal souls; and admire his infinite grace and pity in extending such boundless mercy unto us, to prevent the eternal ruin and damnation of your souls.

(2.) Strive to believe in Christ, to receive Christ, and to be converted, “For if you believe not that I am he you shall die in your sins,” Joh 8:24. Again, our Lord says, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,” Lu 13:5 “Marvel not, I say unto you, Ye must be born again,” Joh 3:7. Before he spoke these words, he said, ver. 3, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” What, then, can you expect that are swearers, drunkards, whorewongers, or proud and covetous persons, but that you must perish and lose your souls if you die before you are regenerated, or become new creatures.

(3.) It speaks much comfort to believers. O, how happy are you that are true Christians! Your souls are safe, and when the wicked are miserable you will be happy; death will open the mouth of hell to them, but it opens the gates of heaven to you; be content with your portion though you are like poor Lazarus here, yet your condition is far better than the rich (who are ungodly) and this will be manifested at death, labour to prepare for it; life is uncertain, and death makes a mighty change, it will be a happy change to you, but a dismal change to the wicked.

SERMON XVIII

And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.—Lu 16:23.

The point of doctrine I shall take notice of from hence is this, viz.:

Doct. That the pangs of hell are dreadful and tormenting.

In opening of this proposition,

I. I shall prove that the pangs of hell are dreadful, &c.

II. Show who they are that when they die go to hell.

III. Apply it.

I. That punishment, that fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, must needs be very dreadful and tormenting. What pain and misery shall devils one day feel and endure, who are such implacable enemies to the Holy God, and have showed such hatred and malice against him, his Son and his interest, and precious children; why, the same all hypocrites and unbelievers must endure, “Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” Mt 25:41.

II. The extremity of their torments will further appear if we consider that it is inconceivable, or beyond all men’s understanding, “Who knows the power of thy anger,” Ps 90:11; who can comprehend, or can be rightly and duly affected therewith: we can conceive of bodily pains or of external torments, but we cannot comprehend nor conceive the nature of infinite wrath, no more than we can comprehend or conceive of infinite love, grace, divine favour, and goodness; there is an height, length, depth, and breadth in it; it is amazing and unsearchable.

III. It is intolerable wrath and vengeance.

1. Because it is according to the fear of, and, O, my brethren, what fear have some awakened sinners under despair had of the wrath of an offended God and of the torments of hell. “According to thy fear, so is thy wrath.” The fear of some evils is worse than the evils feared, and many have experienced it to be so; truly said they, I found it not as I feared, or according

to that apprehension I had of it before it came; but it is not so here. Hell and the wrath of God will be according to that fear any can have of it.

2. The torments of hell are intolerable, because worse than any plague, anguish, or misery, undergone by any in this world; some feel the anguish and tormenting pains of cruel wounds, broken bones, sawing off legs and arms; and others the pain of the stone, gout, cholic; some burning in gentle fires, being consumed by degrees, and long before they could die, and some have been impaled, &c.

Now, consider these torments, nay, the worst of these many of God's dear children have suffered in this world; and therefore were no more than God's fatherly chastisements, or from the sin-correcting hand of God. But the torments and pains of hell are from the sin-revenging hand of God; the one proceeds from God's love, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," Re 3:19; the other proceeds from his incensed wrath: but if God's correcting hand (or Fatherly chastisements) may be so sharp, and put his children to such pain and misery, how intolerable is that anguish, that pain, which is the effect of his offended justice.

3. Consider what hell is compared to. (1.) "To a furnace of fire," and to streams of brimstone and fire; and also called fiery indignation. (2.) "To a lake of fire;" indeed a hot fiery furnace is but a shadow of this lake of fire; and so far as the substance exceeds the shadow, so far doth hell exceed all torments or places of torment in this world, therefore intolerable.

4. The pains and miseries inflicted on the bodies of men here, in this world, may be abated, or mitigated, with some mixture of ease, if not in the body yet in the mind, or by the pity or sympathy of friends that seem to give little ease; but in hell both soul and body after the resurrection shall be equally tormented; and without any mixture of mercy, or mitigation of pain; neither will the damned have any to pity them. "The worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Not one drop of water hath any soul in hell to abate their pain; therefore the torments of hell are, and will be, intolerable. "They shall drink of the wrath of God, that is poured out without mixture into the cup of indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," Re 14:10. They shall have judgment without mercy, sorrow without joy, pain without ease, darkness without light; all relief is totally withdrawn from them for ever.

IV. Because it is to satisfy divine justice, as it proceeds from infinite wrath; yet no satisfaction can they by suffering make, for the wrong done to the holiness and justice of God, &c., but wrath feeds on them, like as a hungry man eats that which satisfieth him not.

V. We may gather what the nature, sore pangs, and torments of hell are, by considering what pains, sorrow, and anguish our blessed Saviour endured for us; when our hell-pangs were upon him, how did he cry out, and what drops of blood did he sweat, and yet had the power of the Godhead to support him; nor was he ever under the apprehension of being for ever forsaken of his father, though for a while he did hid face from him by reason our sins were charged upon him, and he was to give satisfaction to divine justice in our behalf.

VI. To add to all I have said, the eternity of these torments show the fearful nature of them; for as they are easeless, so they will also be endless; to be tormented one hour is sad, but more to be in pain and torture twenty-four hours, but much more dreadful to be in unspeakable anguish forty or fifty years without ease or cessation of pain; but what are ten thousand years to an endless eternity? Alas! when million of millions of years (comparatively) are expired the damned in hell will be no nearer the end of their torment, than they were the first moment they were cast into hell. And is not this amazing thing to think upon.

VII. All the passions and faculties of the soul will be let out to torment the damned.

1. Conscience terrifies them, which is that worm that dies not. O, saith the sinner, what a wretch have I been! what a God have I lost, who often knocked at my door?" Re 3:20; and O! what a heaven have I lost! and what a precious soul have I for ever lost; I was told by faithful ministers that what is now come upon me would be my sad portion, but I believed them not, but slighted all their reproofs, and cast God's Word behind my back. For the love I had to the base lusts of my evil heart, is all this come upon me; my pride, my uncleanness, my cursed oaths, my covetousness and love to the world, my malice, and my vilifying and reproaching the godly, hath damned my precious and immortal soul. Also I neglected prayer and hearing of God's word, I regarded not the mercies of God, nor the judgments of God, I came into the world a dead condemned creature, and refused life. The sense and punishment of loss will torment the damned, as well as their penal sorrows.

2. Shame will also greatly afflict and torment them, “The wicked shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt,” Da 12:2. Should a king lose his crown and kingdom for the sake of a few cockle shells? what shame would ever cover his face? the drunkard will be ashamed; O, saith he, for the sake of my cursed cups, and love to my wicked companions, am I cast into these flames. Also, shame will cover the proud; my heart was lifted up, I thought none so wise as myself, I contemned others, and made a derision of them that feared God: saith another, I would not leave off my idle and foolish fashions, though I grieved my poor parents, grieved men and women, and grieved godly ministers, “I loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” My heart (saith another) was lifted up because I was rich and had a good estate, and regarded not the poor. My gifts and parts saith another puffed me up, O, wretched creature as I am, I am undone and covered with shame and confusion of face.

3. Sorrow will likewise torment, penetrate, and seize deep upon their souls, “There shall be weeping and wailing, as well as gnashing of teeth.” But it will be fruitless sorrow; no tears, no crying, will avail them anything for ever.

4. Despair, also, seizeth upon their souls: O, saith the damned, what a great gulph is there fixed, God’s eternal decree is passed, there is no mercy for ever now, no hope, no relief, no remedy. My brethren, here, in this world, when a man is in misery he hopes it may be better with him, and this abates his sorrow, and gives a little ease, but in hell all hope is perished and gone for ever.

5. Fury and fearful rage afflicts, and torments the damned in hell; how will they tear, as it were roar, and howl in an hideous manner, and hate themselves, hate God, and blaspheme his holy name, and all that dwell in heaven.

6. The company they shall have will also greatly no doubt torment them, though they thought perhaps the multitudes they should suffer with might be some ease to them; but they will find the contrary. May be such that they drew them into sin, will there curse them and torment them with taunting reflections, it was you, thou cursed wretch, that brought me to this place, you drew me to commit this and that sin. Others may say, it was you that deceived me with your cursed errors and heresies, and caused me to deny the true Christ, or to cast contempt upon his holy person, &c., devils, also, must

be their companions for ever, who strove to bring them into that place, the sight of whom must needs be grievous, and hateful to them for ever.

The sorrow and rage of the damned (saith reverend Dr. Bates) will be increased by despair, for when the wretched sinner sees the evil is peremptory and no outlet of hope, he abandons himself to the violence of sorrow, and by cruel thoughts wounds the heart more than the fiercest furies in hell can, &c., p. 535.

6. Both soul and body too shall be tormented for evermore, when the bodies of men have been tormented, their souls have been at ease, and sustained them under their outward sorrows, but in hell the soul will be tormented as well as their bodies; the soul will be tormented in one fire, while the body is tormented in another.

II. I shall show you, who they are that shall go to hell, or are in danger to be cast into those dismal torments at death.

1. The devils. You heard that hell is prepared for the devil and his angels.

Indeed it is difficult (as one notes) to conceive how material fire can act on a spiritual substance; but it is (saith he) unreasonable to determine that it is impossible; for, if we consider what pain is, it is as conceivable how pure spirits are capable of it as how pure spirits in conjunction with bodies. The human soul in its nature is spiritual, as an angel: yet has a painful sense of fire, and other afflicting evils incumbent on sense. The body merely feels not pain, but it passes through the body to the soul. If the soul by a strong diversion of thoughts apply itself to an object the body is insensible of pain, as is evident in some diseases; and that in the heat of battle deep wounds are not felt. And as God, by a natural constitution, has ordered that the body so touched and moved, excites a painful sense in the soul, he may have ordained that the devils shall feel the impression of material fire in the place, to which they shall be confined. (Thus Dr. Bates. p. 531.)

But I rather adhere to what reverend Dr. Thomas Goodwin saith, viz., that though the body shall be tormented in hell with material fire (which he saith, he will not deny), yet the soul of man and the devils shall be tormented with immortal fire. Though there may be something in what the other reverend Doctor saith, yet, my brethren, what fire can be more tormenting than the internal sense of God's incensed wrath let out upon the Spirit and

conscience of a man (as it seemed to be in Spira and poor Mr. Child). Certainly, the anguish and misery which our blessed Lord felt in his soul, when he bore the wrath of God due to us, was inconceivable (as I hinted before.)

2. As the devils shall be cast into hell, so shall all profane and ungodly sinners that live and die in their sins, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners,” 1Co 6:9-10. &c., that is, such who so live and die; for in the next verse he saith, “And such were some of you, but you are washed,” &c., ver. 11. And as here the apostle saith they shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, so another text saith “The wicked shall be turned into hell,” Ps 9:17. And again it is said, “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,” Re 21:8.

3. All Atheists who deny the being of God, none can be greater sinners than these, let their lives be what they will, for if they that know not God (with a right spiritual knowledge) shall be damned, much more all that deny the very being of the true and only God. (2Th 1:8.)

4. All unbelievers: I mean such that do not truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not enough to believe there is a God, or to believe in God the Creator; but we must believe in Christ, the Son of God, as our only Saviour and Redeemer; “Ye believe in God, believe also in me,” Joh 14:1. “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned,” Mr 16:16. Again, it is said, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Joh 3:36. As all men abide under wrath until they have the Son, or believe on the Son, so if they die before they so believe, and have union with the Son, they must perish in hell for ever.

5. All hypocrites who die in that state, “They shall be cast into a furnace of fire, and shall have their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers,” Lu 12:46; and therefore it is said, “Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrite, who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burning,” Isa 33:14; so as to be tormented for ever and ever.

6. All persecutors who hate, murder, and vilify the people of God, for who are worse murderers than these.

7. All backsliders or apostates, who draw back unto perdition, or who revolt from God, from his ways and people and never return, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them," 2Pe 2:21. Certainly, such sin against light and knowledge; they were once enlightened, and therefore to them. "Remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," Heb 10:26-27.

8. All witches and sorcerers, who give themselves up to the devil, and are never helped to disclaim, and get out of that hellish contract, they expect no other thing, than being cast into hell. In a word, all whosoever they are that are not born again. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," Joh 3:5. And if they cannot enter into heaven, they must go to hell; and, indeed, what would an unrenewed man, an unholy man, do in heaven; for, as no unholy person can enter therein, so heaven would be of no heaven to him that has not an heavenly nature, or is not able to taste of the spiritual joys of heaven.

Quest. When shall sinners go to hell?

Answ. Their souls go to hell at death, even that very moment the body dies; "The rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments," &c.

And at the resurrection, when the judgment is ended, they shall both body and soul be cast into hell; "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire," Re 20:15.

APPLICATION

I. Infer. 1. That many persons are very near being cast into hell, even every ungodly and unbelieving sinner. O, how soon may some of you, if in your sins, feel how intolerable the torments of hell are? It is not afar off, no, there is only a small thread of life between sinners and eternal torments.

Infer. 2. What horrid and soul-undoing evil is in sin; how hateful must that be to God that provokes him to throw such multitudes of his creatures into hell.

Quest. But will the torments of the damned never cease?

Answ. No. They will never cease. "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2Th 1:9.

1. Because the judgment of the great day is called the eternal judgment; and also because the rewards of grace are eternal; the godly shall have eternal joys; therefore the punishment of the wicked eternal sorrow. The sentence; "These shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," Mt 25:46. Not only eternally to excess (for the wicked shall eternally exist) but into eternal blessedness.

2. Because God is infinite in wrath and justice as well as in love and goodness. Moreover, our Lord shows they must lie there "Until thou have paid the utmost farthing;" and it can never be, because a finite being cannot satisfy infinite justice.

3. Because the soul is immortal, and the bodies of the wicked shall when they are raised be made immortal also; that is, not be subject unto death any more, nor to be annihilated; they cannot destroy their own miserable beings, and God will not.

4. Because their sinful natures and evil habits remain in them for ever; and were they capable subjects to sin (as when here on earth) they would eternally sin; nay, it is thought they will actually ever sin by blaspheming of God, &c., and therefore shall suffer those torments eternally.

Obj. But doth not the text say that the wicked shall be burned up, both root and branch, or be consumed, &c. Neither of these texts refer to the torments of hell: that in Mal 4:1 (as Mr. Cotton well observes) refers only to that internal and external wrath of God against the Jews, and Church of Israel, which began to burn against them in the ministry of John the Baptist; and God let it out at last to the utter burning up and consuming their Church-State, and left them not the root of Abraham's covenant, nor branches or the fruit of their own works and righteousness.

Infer. 3. From hence we may see how blind and deceived sinners are; what ignorance, folly, madness, and unbelief is in their hearts; they put the evil day far off, and neither regard nor fear the wrath of God, nor will they give credit to what he positively affirms in his holy word.

Infer. 4. We infer also from hence that ministers ought to preach on the torments of hell; they must be giving warning; "Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord we persuade men," 2Co 5:11, that is, we persuade them to believe in Jesus Christ, and to fly to him from the wrath to come. Why did our Lord speak this parable, and also end so many of his parables after this manner, viz., "And shall be cast into a furnace of fire, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Ought not we to learn of him who was the great Gospel minister? Moreover, let all take heed how they reflect upon such ministers who do insist frequently upon such subjects, by calling them prodigal preachers; lest thereby they cast contempt upon our Lord himself.

Exhort. 5. Sinner, bless God you are yet out of hell. What improvement may we think the damned would make of one sermon (if it might be allowed them) in order to their taking hold of Christ, and so come out of that place; but alas! there is no grace, no mercy, nor means of grace allowed them for ever, there is no redemption out of hell.

Admirat. 6. O, let us also admire the infinite love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was pleased to bear God's severe and dismal wrath for us and in our stead, that we might never undergo it in our souls nor bodies.

Consol. 7. Moreover, what comfort and consolation may this administer to believers; the blessed Jesus hath suffered, not only to free us from the torments of hell, but also to purchase for us eternal joys in heaven, he hath delivered us from wrath to come.

Lastly, Poor sinners will you be wise, and remember your latter end. Will you think of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and labour to believe the truth of God's blessed Word about the future state of all men. You need not to have one to come from the dead to tell you what the joys of heaven are, nor how dismal the torments of hell are; for you have one represented in this parable, speaking in hell; O, hear his sighs and his groans, but if you will not believe God's word, if you will not believe Moses, nor the prophets, Christ, nor his apostles and ministers, neither would you believe, though one should rise from the dead to preach unto you. Know assuredly that nothing you can do can save you from hell. No, it is Christ alone, by what he hath done; and

you must believe in Him or perish; and when you do believe truly you will soon find what a mighty change will be wrought in you. True faith is not without its powerful operations, there are sin-abhorring, self-abasing, heart-purifying, and God and Christ-exalting operations, which always accompany the faith of God's elect. So much at this time.

SERMON XIX

And he cried, father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.”—
Lu 16:24.

THESE words show that this is a parable, for there is no converse between the saints in heaven and the damned in hell.

One design of our Saviour in these words, as I conceive, is,

1. To show, that the torments of hell are very dismal and intolerable.

2. To show that the damned have not the least ease, mitigation, or abatement of their pain and misery.

3. It may also show, that as wicked men were ignorant of the way of salvation, whilst they lived on earth; so that ignorance remains with them in hell. He cries to Abraham to have mercy on him, not to God nor to Jesus Christ. Alas! the best of the saints of God cannot help the distressed in this life. Can they show mercy to relieve sinners? They may pity them, instruct them, pray for them, but they cannot ease or relieve; none have mercy to bestow to help the miserable but God alone; indeed, if the saints could, yet they would not show mercy to such they know God will show none unto.

“To cool my tongue.”

The soul hath no proper tongue, but as eyes, hands, a face, mouth, &c., are ascribed to God (who is an uncreated Spirit,) for several reasons I have formerly mentioned, so members of the body, and particularly a tongue, is ascribed here unto the soul of this condemned sinner. And it may be (as some think) because such a one as is here represented had blasphemed God, or grievously offended with his tongue; may be, by lying as well as swearing, or by reproaching, backbiting, and villifying the godly, and perhaps this poor beggar. “The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, and is set on fire of hell,”
Jas 3:5.

Doct. 1. The damned in hell would gladly receive the very smallest degree of ease, but it is denied them; not so much as one drop of water is allowed to allay that flame.

God will measure to them as they measured to others. "They shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy." As this wretch would show no pity to poor Lazarus in his sorrow, so he now has no pity, no mercy showed to him; no, not anything to mitigate, or abate his pain and anguish. All cries and tears in hell, avail nothing; their desires are all fruitless, as their pains are easeless and endless. The passions of the soul will abide for ever, both desire, horror, rage, grief, shame, and despair.

"But Abraham said "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

1. Note! the person here represented (it appears) was one of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh; and so, in that external covenant with him whilst he lived on earth, Abraham calls him Son, therefore a person being one of Abraham's seed, and in that covenant. Sirs, being the child of believing parents will avail no man; no, unless he be a Son of Abraham according to the covenant of grace made with him; which runs only to his true spiritual seed, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise," Ga 3:29. Therefore most evident it is, there was a twofold covenant made with Abraham, viz., The covenant of circumcision, and the free promise of God, "In thy seed (that is, Christ) shall all the families of the earth be blessed," Ge 12:3.

2. Note! the good things which the damned once had will be brought to their remembrance; they shall call to mind their worldly riches, honours, and pleasures, and how their hearts were inordinately set upon those things; and also they will remember what means of grace was afforded them, which they slighted and utterly rejected. Moreover, how they slighted and neglected the poor.

Thou received thy good things, that is, thou hast thy portion in the world. Many men have "Their portion in this life," Ps 17:14. Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation; not because they are rich doth our Lord denounce a woe to them, but because they set their hearts upon their riches, trusting in them and despising the riches of grace and the glory of heaven; nor improving their riches to the honour of God, in supporting the common wealth, nor to the profit of their neighbours, the interest of Christ and his poor saints. Thou (as if Abraham should say) didst

desire no better things, and God answered thee according to the idols set up in thine own evil hearts.

And from hence note,

2. Doct. That some rich men have all their good things, or their portion only in this world.

From these men David desired to be delivered, “From men who are thy sword, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure, they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes,” Ps 17:14. They leave none of it to charitable uses, or not to Christ’s servants to promote the gospel, nor to the poor saints: this very thing is a character of one that has his portion here; they leave all to their children or relations, and little or nothing for the other great purposes.

Doct. 3. That according to their unsatisfied desires, God answers some men’s carnal hearts, in judgment and wrath, and not in love nor mercy to them.

1. God may give some men earthly riches to discover the abominable evil that is in their hearts; he this way tries them, and, for the neglect of due improvement of what they possess, will be the aggravation of their sin and misery.

2. Hereby God seems to deal with them (as some men serve rebellious children) viz., put them off of the inheritance, by leaving them a shilling in their last will and testament. Wicked men who have abundance of the world may justly fear that God designs to cut them off the inheritance above; they are stubborn and rebellious persons, and as such God deals with them. Alas! all the riches of this world comparatively is not one shilling to that crown of glory above, or inheritance in heaven.

Again observe,

Doct. 4. The remembrance of those good things the damned had when on earth will greatly afflict them in hell and augment their sorrow.

I shall a little open, and enlarge upon this truth, by giving a few reasons why it will afflict them, &c.

1. Because they see what fools they were. Wicked men think themselves to be wise above others whilst they live, and are never convinced of their folly till they come to hell; and may they not cry out against themselves, for placing their chiefest happiness in such thing, which could not answer the wants of their souls whilst they lived. What folly is it to esteem the creature above the creator.

2. They thought the people of God, who were exposed to reproaches, persecutions, and many sorrows in the world, to be the worst of fools; but to see them afar off in glory will tend to convince them and discover their folly, and cause the remembrance of the saints (whom they abused) to be very grievous to them.

3. The remembrance of the shortness of their outward happiness will afflict them, that they for one day's delight and pleasure should lose eternal or endless glory, and incur everlasting misery.

4. They will remember their horrid infidelity, and how the devil deceived them; they believing the father of lies, and disbelieved all which the holy God said and testified, and deriding his ministers, then they will say, "How did we hate instruction, and obeyed not the voice of our teachers, nor inclined our ears to them that instructed us," Pr 5:12-13.

USE

1. Let none call the rich happy unless they are gracious it may be feared: that but few rich men are good men; and though they seem happy here, yet are like to be miserable hereafter; these men bless themselves, and many foolish creatures bless them. But alas! the holy God blesseth them not, they are under his curse. "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth," Ps 10:3.

2. Consider that the remembrance of sensual delights will not allay but augment the misery of the damned; if pain here extinguish all the pleasures of the senses, and if actual enjoyments cannot afford delight to the body afflicted with tormenting diseases, what will the reflections upon past pleasures in the fancy and memory terrify the damned in extreme torment. Saith Dr. Bates, "The remembrance will infinitely increase their anguish, that for such seeming and short pleasures they brought upon themselves misery intolerable."

3. Let such who are rich, if not gracious, always remember this rich man, and behold him first in his purple robes, (and perhaps) with a chain of gold about his neck, riding in his chariot, with many servants attending on him; also his table spread with all delicious food, whilst concerts of ravishing music and sweet melody soundeth in his ears, and multitudes bowing down before him; and then presently behold him as he is in another world, deprived of all his honour, and none to attend him but devils; and, instead of music, nothing but the horror of a guilty conscience continually following him, while his soul lies burning and is tormented in dismal flames. Also, behold him in his first state possessed with all that grandeur but for one hour, and in his other (or last) state for millions of years; nay, to all eternity: and you will conclude the rich who are ungodly are miserable creatures and such to be abominable fools that desire their portion here.

“And Lazarus his evil things, but now he is comforted,” &c.,

A godly man hath all his evil things in this world, which friendly and kind death delivers him for ever from; sweet death puts an end to all his sorrows and begins his everlasting joys, when the sorrows of the righteous end then the sorrows and miseries of the wicked being; or as death opens heaven to all believers, so it opens hell to an ungodly sinner: when death comes the souls of the righteous are comforted, and the souls of the wicked are tormented: when it is spring-time with one, it is winter with the other; “One sings for joy of heart, the other shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit,” Isa 65:14. Whilst the one drinks and is abundantly satisfied with the rivers of God’s pleasure, the other is thirsty, and has not one drop of water, either to allay his thirst nor ease his pain; and as no comforts are like soul-comforts, so no torments are like to hell torments; and as there is no place of joy and delight like the celestial Paradise, so there is no place of sorrow, like the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Moreover, as the pangs of hell cause the damned to forget all his former good things, joys, and delights, so as no ways to please him, so the joys of heaven cause the saved to forget his former sorrow and miseries, so as no ways to grieve him.

Doct. 5. The day of death is the day of a believer’s joy and comfort, and of the wicked’s sorrow.

The godly sowed in tears, but then reap in joy; “Light is sown for the righteous,” Ps 97:11; and death is the harvest of that light, and joy for all the

upright in heart; and death is the harvest of that joy. Do the wicked think they shall always rejoice, and the godly always mourn? no, no, as the joys of the one are but for a moment, so the sorrows of the other but for a moment in this world; and as the joys of the one in the other will be eternal so will the sorrow and miseries of the other in the other world never have an end, but be eternal also. How should he want comfort that enters into his master's joy? can God comfort his people? can Christ comfort them? can the Holy Ghost comfort them? can the fruition of God comfort them? can all the joys, the unmixed joys, soul-ravishing, soul-satisfying joys comfort them? can all the joys of heaven comfort them, even joys that are unspeakable and full of glory? Then they shall be comforted, and that also when the wicked shall be tormented.

1. God is their God, who is the God of all comfort; and, when death comes, that is God's time to let out the greatness of his comforts to his saints.

2. Comfort is promised to them that mourn, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," Mt 5:4; such that mourn under the sense of the evil of sin, and the evil of their own hearts.

3. They must needs have comfort in respect to their state, being delivered from all discomforts and sorrows whatsoever; and are in a sweet, comfortable place, and with sweet and comfortable company. Who can want comfort that are with Christ in paradise?

4. God hath ordained or appointed everlasting comfort for all true mourners, and his decree and counsels shall be accomplished, "As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you and ye shall be comforted," &c., Isa 66:13. It will be soul-comfort, and comfort without sorrow, yea, and eternal comfort.

USE

1. I infer, That you that are godly, though poor in this world, may lift up your heads and sing, for though you have sorrow here, sorrow now, yet you shall be com forte, being delivered from whatsoever is evil, and possess whatsoever is truly good, and when you die you shall partake thereof.

2. Who would that is godly be afraid to die, or fear death: who that is sorrowful, but would be comforted; and what you want of it now, you shall

have hereafter; though your life be a life of sorrow, your death will be comfortable: O, what a vast difference is there between the state of believers at death and the state of sinners.

3. Bear up under your present troubles: God gives you, now and then, comfort in the midst of your sorrows here, and will pour joy and comfort into your souls like a river hereafter, when wrath will be poured into the souls of the wicked, how full of earthly comforts soever they seem to be now; when your comforters, remember, come, they will never abate nor end. You shall never see one dark or uncomfortable day more, but ever be with the Lord; therefore when your godly friends die. "Do not mourn as others, who have no hope, but comfort one another with these words."

4. Let the wicked howl and mourn bitterly, for they shall at death be tormented; their comforts are short-lived and the days of their sorrows will be many.

Besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, &c. ver. 26.

This gulf that is fixed, some think, is God's eternal decree. My brethren this shows that the happiness of the saints in heaven is unalterable, and the miserable state of the damned in hell is also unalterable; the glorified in heaven are fixed there for ever, the one cannot pass to the other they can neither change their place nor their company.

The wicked can neither return again or live on earth,* nor can they go to heaven; all their hopes of being saved die when they die: their expectation perishes, and all means of grace cease: the door of mercy is shut for ever: they are in a bottomless pit out of which they can never get; but are bound in chains of everlasting darkness. The power of God and his wrath as it is fierce, so it is irresistible, and his will is unalterable: the decrees of God are compared to mountains of brass, Zec 6:1.

Sinners tremble; O, what a dreadful God do you provoke! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb 12:29. If you know not what it is to sin against God now, you shall hereafter; and when you come to hell there you must abide, justice will hold you fast, "Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out hence, until thou hast paid the utmost farthing," Mt 5:26.

2. Will you remember what sin will bring you to; why do you put the evil day far from you; death may be nearer than you are aware of, and that is the evil day to all Christless sinners, then they go to hell; dare you defer seeking Jesus Christ, “boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what one day may bring forth,” Pr 27:1.

3. O, dread death, how can you think of death, and are in your sins, and without God, without Christ, and without hope; that is, without any true and well-grounded hope; Eph 2:12; be persuaded to lay these things to heart, and labour to improve the means of grace, and prepare for death, and bless God you are yet out of hell.

SERMON XX

Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldst send him to my Father's house; For I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place.—Lu 16:27-28.

No doubt, but our Saviour represents a man in the parable whose Father's house and brethren were like himself, viz., wicked or ungodly. Here are several things to be considered.

1. The rich man's request, which was, that Abraham would send Lazarus from heaven to the earth: he would employ him in a great work, whom, when on earth, he would not allow the crumbs that fell from his table.

2. To whom he would have him be sent, viz., to his Father's house and to the five brethren.

3. The message itself, viz., to testify to them; that is, declare the great danger they were in, of going to hell when they die, and so feel that torment which he himself actually felt: let him declare what a woeful condition I am in, and what a blessed state he himself is in; let him assure my five brethren, that there is a dreadful God, and a hot hell prepared for all that provoke this God, and live wicked lives, and regard not their precious souls.

It cannot be thought that there is pity among the damned, or love to the souls of sinful men; they care not (as one observes) how many are as miserable as themselves; having a diabolical nature.

Saith another,* it is most undoubted that there is no real charity among the damned to the souls of their survivors, nor any true zeal for their salvation, &c.

1. Therefore (as our annotators observe) he prayeth not for them, but for himself, that his torments might not be increased, or aggravated by his brethren's continuing in their sins, and so come to hell also; whom, perhaps, he, by his wretched life (or atheistic notions), had hardened in ungodly ways, whilst he lived among them. A grave author (as our annotators note) saith, that he prayeth not for them but for himself, that he might not be more miserable by their company, who upon earth were his relations, and dear unto him. But another, I think, speaks more to the purpose: take his words,

viz., “It is most probable that the main reason which swayed the rich man to the making this request was the fear of the aggravation of his own torment by the continued sin and future damnation of his brethren then living on the earth, so that whatsoever he pretends, or appeareth at first sight, self was at the bottom. But we must (as he saith) remember that our Saviour here speaketh in a figure, and that which he intends by these expressions to instruct us in is no more than this, i.e., that all atheistic, rich, proud, and haughty persons, who in this life make a mock at hell and the wrath of God, and despise the poor servants of God, who by their doctrine, holy life, and good example taught them better things, yet shall find the fire of hell so hot, and the wrath of God so terrible and intolerable, that if it were possible they would gladly receive any relief from such ministers or persons, whom in their life’s time they hated and despised (and were it possible for them, to have natural affections or bowels in them when in hell); they would beg the favour of them, to forewarn any whom they loved (who are out of hell) to leave their ways, and believe in Christ, and accept salvation on any terms, though themselves they see are past all hope of recovery.

But to proceed a little further on this, God, no doubt, will punish the wicked not only for their own sins, in which others partook not, but also for drawing of others into sin, either by actual enticements or by their example strengthened, and encouraged them to pursue the like horrid lusts and evil courses; some “Walk in the counsel of the ungodly,” Ps 1:1-2. We read of some that caused others to sin; how often is Jeroboam branded with this brand, i.e. he “Who made Israel to sin.” O, then, how dismal will the state of impostors be! who by false doctrine and heresies have deceived and eternally ruined thousands of souls, as well as such who entice persons to steal, or to drunkenness, or to uncleanness, &c. And, O, what torments shall the devils have, who have tempted so many millions to sin against God, to the eternal destruction of their souls. Also, such sinners, who have been instruments to draw many souls to commit cursed acts of sin, or that have been ringleaders to wickedness, be sure shall have a hot hell. Nay, my brethren, if just and righteous endeavours are not used to dissuade others from their sinful ways, it may provoke God; he hath punished some men in this life in indulging their children in sin, or not endeavouring to restrain them from acts of great wickedness, as in Ely’s case; and he may punish others in hell for ever, for their great wickedness in this respect; how do some by their own evil example rather encourage their children in abominable acts of sin rather than forewarn them or strive to restrain them from it; and by sending them to such places where they can learn nothing but evil and cursed practices.

USE

1. Learn from hence not to be partakers of other men's sins: this may be done many ways; which here I shall not speak to. But,

2. Much more learn to avoid drawing others into sin. Look to it, you that entice others to drunkenness, or to uncleanness; or to hear false teachers, such that deny the Christ of God, or that preach not justification and salvation by Christ alone. You may bring the blood of such persons upon your own souls, and not perish yourselves only, but be instruments of their destruction, also, though all ignorantly done, "Take heed who you hear." Our days in this case are very perilous.

Be sure take heed you be not ringleaders to wickedness, nor into any false way, notions, and opinions.

The person here represented, it is concluded, had been an evil instrument to blind, and harden his brethren in some wicked ways or another; and so feared his torments might be augmented if they, through that means, came to the place of torment.

But to proceed,

"Abraham said, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." ver. 29.

And he said, "Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent." ver. 30.

"And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," ver. 31.

1. Note, it is no small blessing to have the written word, or God's sacred oracles; "Moses and the prophets were until John," Lu 16:16; that is, they were the chief external means God afforded his people to direct them into the way of life until John; but we have not only the Old Testament, or Moses and the prophets, but the holy doctrine of Christ and his apostles; we have the New Testament also, and so much clearer light than such had who lived under the ministration of the law, or in the times of the old prophets.

2. See the blindness of men's hearts, and the vainness of their imaginations. Alas! hell removes not that infidelity, folly, and ignorance that is in them; they remain in the same mind and filled with the same idle fancies and dreams that possessed them when on earth. Hell is no place of conversion. Sinners think that way to be the most effectual to bring them to repentance which God hath not ordained; they stop their ears, or are deaf to the voice of God's word, and think some sensible evidence (either of future joys in heaven, or of the wrath of God in hell) will work more powerfully on the hearts of sinners than the revelation of the word, or the preaching thereof; they oppose their fancies to divine oracles, or God's sacred institutions; "They have, saith the Lord, chosen their own ways," Isa 66:3; they will give the preference to what proceeds out of their imaginations; like as the "Jews and Pharisees, who made void the commandments of God through their traditions," Mt 15:6; or are like the people of old, "Who refused the waters of Shiloah, that went softly and rejoiced in Rezen, and Remaliah's Son," Isa 8:6; or esteemed the word of God as a small and contemptible book, and rather adhered to the lofty and proud notions of silly mortals. "Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the rivers of Israel," said Naaman, the Syrian, 2Ki 5:12. The cause of this (as one notes) is their pride and arrogancy, together with self-love; as likewise, that rebellion and perverseness there is in their hearts against God, and no doubt Satan is not wanting in stirring them up through his malice, to contradict the wisdom, appointment, and authority of God; he knowing hereby the Holy God will be provoked, and that he will pour forth his wrath upon them for opposing his sovereign will and pleasure. For sinners hereby seem to intimate that their wisdom exceeds the wisdom of God, as if they knew what ways would sooner bring men to repentance than God himself; which is to confront divine wisdom, and so inexcusable presumption. Let this be a caution and warning to all such who go about to set up their post by God's post, or bring in their superstitious worship and vain traditions, as if God was negligent, or had omitted such things that would tend much to his own honour, and the profit of men's souls. "Vain man would be wise, though man is born like a wild ass's colt," Job 11:12; i.e., he would be wise beyond his line (saith one) or in things above him; though he is but like a brutish creature, yet would magnify his wisdom above the wisdom of God. O, ye children of men when will you leave your folly, and strive to bring down high thoughts that exalt themselves in you, against the will, pleasure, and authority of God, and submit to him before he draws forth his sword, and cuts you off in his anger.

"They have Moses and the prophets," &c.

That is, They have their writings, or those divine oracles, that God appointed as the chief outward means to deter men from sin, and to direct them into the way of salvation. They, my brethren, that lived before John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles (as I hinted before), had only the Old Testament, but it may be said, we who live in these gospel times have Christ the Son of God sent from heaven, whom “God hath spoken unto us in these last days,” Heb 1:1-2; whose holy doctrine is laid down in the writings of the evangelist and the holy apostles. True, the Old Testament testified of Christ, Moses pointed unto Christ, the Shadows of the law and sacrifices held forth Jesus Christ, and the prophets prophesied of Christ, but yet that was but a dark dispensation of the gospel; and hence it is said, “Many prophets and kings desired to see those things which ye see and have not see them, and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them,” Lu 10:34. That is, to see Christ come in the flesh, and to behold the vail taken off, and so to see with open face as in a glass, the glory of God shining forth in the ministration of the gospel. But let no man mistake me, the law is still of great use, and the old testament is of the same authority with the new, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,” &c.; the law convinceth of sin, and discovers the woeful state and condition all sinners naturally are in, and God, by Moses and the prophets, denounceth wrath against all ungodly sinners; but yet pray know that we are only to receive the law now from the hands of Christ, or from the mouth of our high priest. Moses, as a teacher, was not to abide in the house for ever; his ministration of the law abides not, though the law as it is in the hand of Christ, abides as a rule of righteousness for ever. And from hence note;

Doct. That it is no small blessing and privilege for a people to have the written Word of God, especially the Gospel or New Testament, i.e., the writings of the evangelists, and holy apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This I shall endeavour to demonstrate, and show wherein the written Word of God is of such great use.

1. The Word of God is of such great use that without the knowledge of it what can men know in any nation of the world concerning God, &c., but only mere natural religion, or what is made known by the light of natural conscience, through the help of the visible things of the creation: for the Heathen or Pagan world know no more, nor any people on earth who never had God’s written Word, nor conversed with any persons who had the knowledge of them; they may know the being of a God, together with his glory, wisdom, and mighty power, considered as a creator, “The heavens

declare the glory of God, and the firmament show his handy work,” Ps 19:1. “For the invisible things of Him from the beginning of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse,” Ro 1:20. But they show nothing of Christ, or report nothing of a redeemer; nor can any know this, but by the revelation of the holy Scripture.

2. Moreover, such is the usefulness of the written Word that upon this respect the apostle shows that the Jews had the advantage of the Gentiles, viz., “Because unto them were committed the oracles of God,” Ro 3:2. For God only gave his laws and statutes unto Israel, some of which God wrote with his own finger, and he commanded Moses to write them in a book; “He showed his Word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation, as for his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord,” Ps 147:19-20.

3. Matter of fact proves that all men remain ignorant of Christ and salvation who have not nor ever heard of the sacred Scriptures, by which means it evidently appears that this great and importunate matter only depends upon revelation; for such who have conversed with the Pagan or Heathen people found them altogether ignorant of the very name of Christ; they never heard of any such person, much less of that blessed sacrifice he offered up to God for sin, and of faith in him, “For how shall they believe on him on whom they have not heard,” Ro 10:14.

4. This further appears, for though (as the apostle shows) “God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the Fathers by the prophets, hath in these last times spoken unto us by his Son,” &c., Heb 1:1-2. By the Lord Jesus Christ only, as the last great prophet he promised to raise up, to reveal his mind and will unto the sons of men, whose holy doctrine, together with what he hath done and suffered, he commanded to be written, and to this very end, that men might know and believe in him; though all things our Lord did are not written, yet so many things are left upon sacred record, that God saw was necessary for us to know, in order to instruction, reproof, correction, comfort, and eternal salvation, “But these things are written that ye might know Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name,” Joh 20:31. This shows the absolute necessity of the writings of the New Testament; God being pleased this way only to reveal or make known the blessed Saviour; and to make his Word as it is wrote and opened in the ministration of the Gospel his ordinary way to work faith through the spirit in the souls of men: saith Paul, “I am not

ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.” Why so, or how comes this to pass? “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed,” &c., Ro 1:16-17. It is thereby revealed and no other way except God doth it in some extraordinary or miraculous manner, who being a free agent may step out of his own ordinary and instituted way if he please; but it is not revealed to any, by the light that is within all men, nor by the visible things that are made, &c.

5. The holy Scripture is (as the apostle shows) every way useful by God’s ordination, being given by inspiration of God, or by holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, througly furnished unto all good works,” 2Ti 3:16-17. There is nothing needful for us to know or be instructed in, but is contained in the written Word of God, though they are not understood by any without the Holy Spirit opens them to us, and works faith in our souls.

6. And lastly, the written word (it appears from hence) is the only rule both of faith and practice; and, indeed, should this be denied, God hath left us no certain rule at all, as hereafter I shall (God assisting) endeavour to prove, which cannot stand consistent with the wisdom and goodness of his holy majesty. Therefore, the sacred oracles should be held in highest esteem, being beyond all pretended visions, dreams, or apparitions whatsoever.

And from hence, we may see the great blindness of this wicked creature in hell, who conceived that if one rose from the dead to tell his five brethern, the state of the dead in the other world, they would believe or be persuaded; who would not be prevailed with so to do by the written word of God; indeed he was for a sign, like as the Jews were: “What sign showest thou, that we may believe on thee? As if those miracles our Lord did, were not sufficient to confirm his holy doctrine. And thus it appears, that those who have not the written word of God, have not the greatest blessing under heaven; they are with the means God has appointed, to bring men out of darkness into light, and have no ways or means afforded them, to reveal Christ to them; they are without that stated and established rule and way of faith and conversion, and so left in a dismal condition.

1. O, prize God's holy Word, esteem the law of his mouth above thousands of gold and silver, as David did: value it above your lives, account it your greatest riches, prefer it more than mines of gold.

2. Labour to believe the truths contained therein, never doubt of the verity of God's word; conclude all such thoughts that may be darted into your minds to question the veracity of the sacred Bible are from the devil.

3. Expect no new revelation from God, for God hath established his Word for ever, he will not alter the thing that is gone out of His mouth; heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot or tittle of God's Word shall pass away. Expect no new revelation, nor any other prophet to be raised up, to discover the mind of God to you, or to make void any thing that is not written, or to teach you otherwise to believe, act, or do, that you may be saved.

4. Entreat God to bless his own blessed means, or his avowed and established institution, to your conviction, and conversion, and eternal salvation. O, take up and read, search the Scripture, neglect not reading your holy Bible, and pray that God would give you wisdom to understand what you read;* pray over the Word which is the immortal seed, by which the babe of grace is begotten and nourished.

5. Know that the Word of Christ remains just as you find it written, even every precept every ordinance, every promise, without any alteration, additions to it, or diminution from it: therefore have no regard to any who press things upon you as truths of Christ that are not written; for the precepts of Christ are laid down in the New Testament very plainly, the faithfulness of the Son exceeding the care and faithfulness of Moses, who was but a servant in God's house. The Jews had made void many of the commandments of God through their traditions, which from the beginning were not so. No Church, no people, or person under heaven,* have any power to alter anything left in Christ's last will and testament; and such that add thereto or diminish therefrom are pronounced accursed.

6. Be aware of those men who condemn the holy Scripture, and such who strive to render it to be contradictory to itself, and full of falsities, and commend natural light above it, or those who pretend to inspiration and extraordinary revelation, and cry up their cursed books to be of equal authority with the holy Bible; nay, indeed, magnify their detestable nonsensical scribbling above those sacred oracles: the holy Scripture, they call

a dead letter (as the Papists calls it a noise of wax) but their own books are called light and life, a word from God is the voice of God, &c.

Lastly, take heed you do not receive the Word of God's grace in vain, but strive to mix faith with it, for otherwise it would not profit you anything, or at least not be made an instrument of God's power to the salvation of your souls.

SERMON XXI

And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.—Lu 16:31.

I shall from hence note,

Doct. That the written word of God is of divine authority, and therefore is above all pretended inspirations or apparitions of the dead, &c., and so of great efficacy to bring men to believe.

In speaking to this proposition I shall,

1. Lay down several arguments to confirm the truth of this doctrine.

2. Prove that the sacred scriptures as read (especially as preached and opened in the ministry of such men Christ hath sent, or authorized to preach) hath far more efficacy to bring men to believe, than any pretended immediate revelation, or than if one should rise from the dead.

3. Show you how the sacred scriptures should be heard, when faithfully preached.

Note this by the way, that it is no wonder that such who doubt whether the holy Scripture be of divine authority, find not the power and efficacy of them upon their own hearts; for who will regard that which they are ready to believe is a more devised fable or contrivance of man's own brain. Some men in these days, do, indeed count it but an idle tale, too many atheistical wretches are in these times, and God having left them withdraws all the operations of his Spirit from them.

But to proceed,

Argu. I. My first argument to prove the divine authority of the holy Scriptures shall be taken from the matter contained in them, and their Sublime style: certainly this proves they are not of an human product, what writings carry in them or discover such amazing mysteries?

1. What human brain could have imagined a Trinity in the Godhead, or have given such an account of the manner of God's existence, or of the

Person of the Son of God in taking our nature on him, or into union with his own divine person; or would not God have showed his abhorrence of such an attempt long ago. Had the declaration of those things been the contrivance of any wicked man's brains, certainly divine vengeance had been quickly poured out upon such a person or persons, who should give a false account of the blessed Deity, as existing in the three sacred Persons; that so the generation of the righteous might not be deceived in, and about the object of divine worship; though in many cases the patience of God seems wonderful: but such things, sure, could not consist with his truth, wisdom, love and holiness to bear with.

2. The holy scripture only gives an account of the beginning of the world, which men by natural light have given full demonstrations could not be from eternity, but had a beginning; but deny the holy scriptures to be true, or from God. It is impossible for us to know how they were created, or how long since, or how long God was in creating of it, and all things that are therein; and can it be imagined that the holy God would keep mankind (for whom he made this world) ignorant of this important matter.

3. The Scripture only gives an account of sin, and discovers how, and by whom it came into the world; and unless men believe the truth of the scripture, men may deny that there is such evil in it, or that sinners must be punished in another for it.

4. What an amazing account is there given in the holy scripture of that covenant, that was between the Father and the Son before the world was made; and revealed as soon as man had sinned: could such things have ever entered into the hearts of men, what purity and wonderful equity, is there contained in every precept of the holy law; and how is the substance of the matter contained therein, confirmed by the light in every man's natural conscience.

4. What a self-denying doctrine doth the scripture bear witness unto, directly opposite to the whole corporation of debauched mankind, being utterly destructive to all men's carnal interest and to all impiety.

What foolish and imperfect rules of life, with the end and design of a holy life are those of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Tully, Seneca, &c., when compared to the holy scriptures, or the best and wisest of mere natural men, who have wrote of moral and Divine things.

Argu. II. My second argument shall be taken from the antiquity of the Scriptures;* the writings of Moses being the first that ever were in the world (next to those wrote by the finger of God himself on mount Sinai): this Justin Martyr hath fully proved, who lived one hundred and thirty years after Christ; the same also is most excellently proved by Tertullian. And, indeed, if the Scripture be not of God, then. Moses is a grand impostor, and the first religion a mere counterfeit, and that the devil set up his chapel before God built his Church. Since Moses' writings contained a platform of worship, of any notice, and given of God himself, and the first that ever the world knew, so that it would follow from hence, that the world's origin, the fall of man, and the way of his recovery, is all a cheat and delusion, and the Jewish worship, and all the sacrifices were devices of some wicked man or men; which is enough to cause all who deny the divine authority of the holy Scriptures to tremble.

Argu. III. Consider the majesty and authoritativeness of the Spirit of God speaking in them, and that extraordinary and inimitable style wherein they are written: the style of the sacred Scripture is singular, they teach with awful authority, and have peculiar properties not found in other writings; its simplicity is joined with majesty commanding the veneration of all serious men. Not like the writings of men, filled with elaborate blandishments, or human elegancy, that tickle the ear and fancy, and relish with the flesh. Commands here are given forth, and subjection peremptorily required with great severity; and no stronger arguments than the will of the law-maker; promises made unlikely to be accomplished, yet assurance of performance, though no other reason alleged, but "I, the Lord, have spoken," Isa 51:22; 52:4. And to encourage against the greatest difficulties imaginable, that a man might believe in hope against hope, or things utterly impossible in the eye of sense and reason, nothing is added but "I will come, and Sarah shall have a son," &c. Also the divinity of the style may be observed, that, without respect of persons, all degrees of men are commanded, high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, kings and peasants, and such things, too, most distateful to their natures, forbidding what they approve, and promising not earthly honour but everlasting life, threatening, not with rack and gibbet, but with eternal pains and torments in hell-fire.

Of all writings in the world, the sacred Scriptures assume most unto themselves, telling us, they are the Word of God, the words of eternal life, and given out by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the testimony of Jesus, the faithful witness, Joh 12:48; and that they shall judge the world, 2Ti 3:16; that they are able to make men wise unto salvation. Re 2:19; that they are the

immortal seed, Ex 20:1-2; their tenor is, "Thus saith the Lord," 1Pe 1:23; and no conclusion but "The Lord hath spoken," "Hear the word of the Lord," "He that hath an ear to hear let him hear." The nature, quality, or composure of the style and phrase of the Scripture, we say, is emphatical and signally different from all human writings. Here is no apology begging pardon of the reader, or insinuating into his good opinion by the art of rhetoric, but a stately plainness and mysterious simplicity. The Scripture so speaketh (saith Augustine) "That with the height of it it laughs proud and lofty spirited men to scorn, yet feeds men of the greatest knowledge and understanding, and nourisheth babes and sucklings."

Argu. IV. That excellent Spirit of holiness, which every where breathes in, and from the scriptures, show of whose framing they are: to this holiness they most powerfully persuade by amazing expressions and commands, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" requiring men to be righteous and holy, and yet to behold themselves filthy, and not to trust to their own inherent holiness, nor to boast or glory, but to be ashamed and loath themselves after they have attained to the highest degree, while here in this world they are capable of arriving at, assuring that "No man without holiness shall see the Lord," Heb 12:14. And yet that their holiness is none of their title to eternal happiness, but that they must be found in the righteousness of another, and that their own is as but filthy rags; yet censuring men to eternal burning, not only for the outward acts of sin, but inward lusts of their hearts. From whence can such pure streams flow, but from the fountain of all perfections. Doth such a design to advance holiness and utterly debase man look as if it was the intrigue of any polluted and proud mortals, and which discovers such a way of attaining to righteousness and everlasting happiness, that lies above the reach, thoughts, invention, and comprehension of the wisest of mere natural men.

Argum. V. The sweet and admirable agreement, consent, dependence and harmony that we find in all and every part of the holy Scriptures prove their divinity, though there are so many books contained in them and written by so many different persons of various conditions, in different ages, in several places, and in different languages, yet all agreeing with each other, and every part with the whole; which could not be foreseen or contrived by any human wisdom or subtilties of men in writing any one part thereof; for all the histories, prophecies, promises, types, and doctrines in an orderly connection, tend to promote the same thing, and one admirably subservient to the other; and every age proves a fresh interpreter, and reveals to us more and more of this glorious concord and harmony, which could not be the

effect of human artifice, nor of any other cause, but an infinite comprehension and foresight, and that the several writers of this book were in all times guided in what they wrote by the supreme wisdom of that one God, who is always constant to himself, and the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Argum. VI. Consider yet further, the credit and sincerity of the penmen of the sacred scriptures; for were they not what they pretend to be, viz., the Word of God, and dictated to the writers thereof by the Spirit of God, it would be the greatest affront to the Divine Majesty imaginable, and the greatest cheats towards mankind, that ever was put upon the world; but if we consider the penmen thereof we shall find them all of undoubted credit, and no ways to be suspected of imposture; some of them being kings, and of the deepest learning, not likely to be guilty of such a mean and base spirit, as to vent odious lies and forgery. Moreover, many of the prophets, and almost all the apostles were illiterate men, of parts and education so mean that of themselves it seems impossible they should write so profoundly, or lay so deep a contrivance for deluding the world; and, as it is incredible that so many men of such a distance, times, qualities, and abilities should all agree in the same imposture, and so harmonize in promoting it. So neither could any interest nor ambition prompt them thereunto; for, as in the main tendency of this book is to notify men's ambition and lusts, so most of them exposed themselves by publishing these writings to great hazards and persecutions. Many of the prophets, and almost all the apostles, being put to death in maintaining the things asserted and wrote by them; nor have several of them forbore to record their own great sins, failings, and imperfections, together with those of their brethren.

Thus Moses relates his own infidelity and averseness to submit to the extraordinary call of God. What an account have we of Noah and Lot, Jacob, David, and Solomon, and Peter's great sins and falls. Now, had the penman of the Scripture wrote only by a human spirit, or had they been impostors, be sure they would have hid or concealed their own and their brethren's gross iniquities; but no doubt those sins of their's were by the Lord left on record for many grand and good causes; and one among the rest might be to support poor believers, who, through temptations, may fall fully, and that they might from thence have hope, that the root of the matter may be in them, though Satan and their own evil hearts might be too hard for them.

Argum. VII. My next argument shall be taken from the accomplishment, and punctual accomplishment of the prophecies of the Scripture to foretell

events, which is the prerogative of God alone. Let them bring forth (saith God) what shall happen; or show us things that are to come hereafter, that we may know them” (Isa 41:22). Now, my brethren, the body of the Scriptures is enlivened with the spirit of prophecy almost throughout, and what a full and convincing prophecy is that of Jacob (recorded by Moses), i.e., “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a law giver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be,” Ge 49:10. This was not fulfilled till near two thousand years after. The first part was made good all along, from the entrance of the tribe of Judah upon the government in king David, until the going of it off in the person of Hircanus, whom Herod slew, as Josephus testifies; but when Herod, a stranger, and of another nation, had cut off the house and line of Judah from the government of the Jews, then, at that very time, Shiloh, viz., the long expected Messiah, punctually came into the world. That by Shiloh the Messiah was meant, the Jewish Rabbins do not deny, which, being well considered, one would think might convince the Jews their Messiah is long since come. But, however, what a plain and wonderful confirmation in this prediction of the sacred verity of the Scripture; also I might mention that concerning Cyrus, foretold by the prophet Isaiah one hundred years before he was born, and how he should conquer Babylon, and rebuild the temple at Jerusalem; which came to pass accordingly. As also the seventy years’ captivity of the Jews by the Babylonians. Moreover, Daniel’s prophecy of the four monarchs, and of the fourth or Roman monarch, which, as he foretold, should be so much different from all the others before it, and of the rise of Antichrist signified by the little horn, Da 7, who should wear out the saints which the whole world long since hath seen exactly come to pass. And also, that of Daniel’s seventy weeks, discovering the very time when the Messiah should be cut off, which was punctually fulfilled accordingly. Also, if we come unto the New Testament times, how fully were the predictions of our Saviour accomplished, touching the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and also Paul’s predictions of the revelation of the Man of Sin, and John’s prophecies in his revelations, of the general apostacy from the Christian faith; and the rise and tyranny of the Papacy, or the Church of Rome, under the name of Mystery Babylon; together with the time of the Beast’s reign for forty and two months,* and state of the witnesses of Christ in sackcloth for one thousand two hundred and sixty years all these prophecies do abundantly rove the truth and divine authority of the holy Scripture.

Argum. VIII. Those writings and doctrine, that was confirmed by real and wonderful miracles must needs be of God; but the books and doctrine of canonical Scriptures were so confirmed. What miracles did Moses work by

the finger of God in Egypt, and at the Red Sea to confirm the Jewish religion, or the truth of the Old Testament. And, also, how amazing were they wrought by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, to confirm he was the true Messiah, and to confirm the doctrine of Christianity, or the truths of the New Testament, which, as to matter of fact, none dare or can deny, for those miracles were not done in a corner: the very Turks deny not the miracles of our Lord, and Josephus makes mention of them in his history of the wars of the Jews. When God puts forth his miraculous working power, in the confirmation of any word or doctrine (saith reverend Owen) he avows it to be of and from himself, or to be absolutely and infallibly true, setting the fullest and openest seal unto it, which men who cannot discern his essence or being are capable of receiving or discerning, &c.; the worst enemies of the Christian religion cannot deny the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord. Moreover, take notice of this, i.e., that the devil can work no real miracles, for could he, what mortal might he not deceive? all the miracles which he, or his instruments pretend to work, the Lord calls lying wonders; those miracles in the primitive times, sirs, did not soon cease in the Church. For I find, that Irreueus who lived near two hundred years after Christ, declares that miracles were not ceased in his time, but that in the name of Christ. "The dead were raised, and devils cast out," in his days.

Argum. IX. I might add the wonderful preservation of the holy Scriptures for so many ages, which, indeed, seems to me to be none of the least of miracles, considering what enemies they have met withal; certainly, if they belonged not to God, as the author and parent of them, they had not continued to this day. For why should God suffer such a book to remain, and be under his peculiar care, declaring itself to be of his dictation, if falsely pretending to his name and authority? Many works of eminent men are lost, but the sacred Bible continues in spite of the wrath and malice of men and devils. What, the holy God suffer a book to remain, calling itself the Word of God? If it was not indeed so, be sure it had been obliterated and blotted out long ago; but since it hath surmounted all difficulties and oppositions for so many generations, and against such unwearied and diabolical attempts, we have no reason (in the least) to doubt of the certain verity thereof.

Argum. X. The wonderful success wherewith the Gospel has been attended might be brought in as another argument to prove the Divine authority of the Scripture. How in the first ages did Christianity prevail and spread itself, notwithstanding the opposition made against it by the Heathen emperors and many cursed heretics: though published by a few weak and illiterate fishermen and contemptible instruments, yet it strangely prospered

and prevailed (as I may say) against wind and tide, earth and hell; and what a multitude were brought to the obedience of the cross in many nations.

Argum. XI. The fearful judgments of God inflicted in several ages, upon many wicked men, for contemning these sacred oracles, might be brought in as a weighty argument to prove this great truth, God having in a dreadful manner cut off some, who have blasphemed his Word and holy name, by immediate death, as approved histories testify.

Argum. XII. The wonderful power the writings of the Holy Scripture have had, and still have upon the hearts of men, is a forceable argument to prove they are of Divine authority; they convince the conscience, enlighten the eyes,* convert the soul, stop the mouths of gainsayers, kill, and terrify obstinate sinners, and comfort the minds of sorrowful and dejected saints, manifesting the thoughts and intents of the heart, causing the godly to bear and endure the greatest sorrows with the greatest cheerfulness, the unshaken hopes they give to good men of a future glory, and the horror that through them oft-times falls on wicked men for fear of hell, shows they are of God.

Argum. XIII. The faith, confession, and universal testimony born to the truth of the Scriptures, by the martyrs and consent of the godly, and universal Church in all ages, is another strong and powerful argument, for the confirmation of the verity of the Holy Scriptures: what power could support, and bear up the spirits of the martyrs in the flames, testifying to the truths of the written Word, save the mighty power of God.

Argum. XIV. If the Scripture be not of God they are human: viz., compiled by men, and if by men, either they were godly men or wicked men; good or godly men they could not be, for what is more foul and abominable in men, than to invent or forge a book out of their own brains, and to father it upon the holy and ever blessed God. Moreover, there is no reason to think they were compiled by wicked men, for what impious wretches would, nay, could frame such a book, that promotes such a holy, self-denying life as the Scriptures do; so opposite and contrary to the natural interest and inclinations of all ungodly persons.

Argum. XV. To all these I might add the Divine testimony of the Spirit upon the hearts of all the godly, which unremovably doth establish our faith, and give us a full assurance of the truth of them. Though this testimony is not the formal reason of our belief of them, yet it is of such a nature, that we are wonderfully confirmed hereby; so that neither men nor devils can weaken

our confidence, nor alledge anything to shake our belief of the sacred oracles, because we have the witness of the Spirit, testifying to our conscience within, to what they speak and declare without.

SERMON XXII

And he said, if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.—Lu 16:31.

I AM upon proving the Divine verity and authority of the holy Scriptures. I shall proceed to another argument and demonstration.

Argum. XVI. If the Scriptures be not the Word of God, then God hath left us no certain rule at all, either of faith or practice; nor is there any way for us to know truth from error. The Papists say, the Church is the rule. To which we reply, that the true Church is only known by the Word of God, for twenty communities of men, whose doctrine and discipline may directly differ from each other, may each pretend to be the true Church; and if we have no certain rule, whereby to know which is the true Church, no Church can be an infallible rule but the former is true; ergo., the like I might say (as you will hear by and by) touching immediate revelation.

He, therefore, that disowns the Bible to be of Divine authority must prove there is some other way to know the true way to heaven, and the true worship and will of God, or else it will follow that God hath utterly neglected mankind in the highest matter of importance in the world, which must of necessity cast the greatest contempt and reproach upon the wisdom, goodness, love, and mercy of God to his creatures imaginable; and if a man thinks there is no certain rule, then he doth not only give the lie to the Christian and Jewish religion, but generally to all religion that has been or is in the world: all may be false or a counterfeit: but that infinite wisdom and goodness should deal thus is absurd and unreasonable to conceive and most abominable.

Argm. XVII. The doctrines and matters of fact recorded in the Scripture,* if true,* then its divine original cannot be doubted of. But many things spoken of in the Scripture as to matter, are not only avouched by its own votaries, but divers things contained therein are acknowledged by its enemies.* As to instance, in a few particulars. The creation of the world is intimated by Ovid, the long lives of men in the first age of the world by Manetho, the Egyptian; Berosus, the Chaldean, and others. The Flood, also, is mentioned by the same Berosus, whose words are recited by Josephus; also Noah is mentioned under the notion of bifronted Janus, because he lived in both worlds, by Berosus and Heroditus. We read also of the ark in Polyhyosor,

and of the destruction of Sodom. We read in Pliny that there was such a man as Moses, and a people called Israelites, whom he was captain of, and led out of Egypt, is testified by the most ancient records of the Egyptians,* Chaldeans, and Grecians; and also Manetho speaks particularly of the Israelites coming in, and going out of Egypt. Of the coming of the Israelites into Canaan. See Procopius.* Of Solomon we read in Dionysius, Cassius. And Tacitus, the great Roman historian, speaks of the persecution of the Christians by Nero.* The star that appeared at the birth of our Saviour, is taken notice of by Pliny, and also by Caloidius an Heathen philosopher.* The slaughter of the infants by Herod is recorded by Macrobius. Moreover, Josephus gives an account of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he calls a man (if it be, saith he, lawful to call him a man, for he was a worker of great miracles, and a teacher of such that received the truth, &c.)

The same thing is also spoken by Lentulus in his epistle to the emperor Tiberius, recited by Eutropius in these words: There hath appeared in our days, and yet is living, a man of great virtue or power, named Jesus Christ; who is called of the nations the Prophet of Truth, whom his disciples call the Son of God, a raiser of the dead, and an healer of all manner of diseases. Now, how unreasonable a thing is it for men to give credit to the truth of many human histories and matter of fact that never was so confirmed, as the sacred Scriptures, have been, and yet boldly dare deny or doubt of the divine authority or truth of this book.

But to proceed,

Secondly, I shall endeavour to prove that the holy Scripture, in the ministration thereof, hath far more efficacy attending it to bring men to believe and repent than immediate revelation, or apparition from the dead, &c.

1. For the proof and demonstration of this great truth I shall show you the uncertainty of the evidence of all other pretended ways, particularly that of immediate revelation.

1. Suppose a man pretends to immediate inspiration or revelation, by which he says he knows the truth, or the only way to be saved, and how to worship God, how can we be assured that what he says is a true and infallible revelation. For, perhaps, twenty men, who may all teach contrary doctrine one to the other, yet all pretend to immediate revelation or inspiration of God, how shall any enquiring and doubting person be assured,

which of these are truly inspired; one may say, I witness it in myself, and know it is of God; well, and so may another of them say, and so all; and how, then, is the doubting person left at an utter uncertainty.

For unless one or another of this sort who pretends to immediate inspiration can do that or such things to confirm his mission which no imposter can pretend unto, or do the like, he is not in the least to be regarded, in what he says or teaches from such a spirit.

Quest. What must he do?

Answ. He must work real miracles, as to raise the dead, and open the eyes of such that were born blind, by that spirit he pretends to be led; and if he cannot do such things he can do no more than any grand deceiver or imposter can pretend unto.

Moreover, pray consider that Almighty God himself, who is a Free-Agent, and is under no obligation to his creatures, never gave forth but two religions, or two sorts of public worships, laws, and ordinances (the first was the Jewish religion, and the second the Christian religion) and neither of these he imposed on his people without confirming them by signs and wonders.

The first was given forth by Moses, and pray what amazing miracles and wonders did he work in Egypt before Pharaoh, and at the Red Sea, to prove his mission; or that he was sent of God, and such that none could do the like: though Jannes and Jambres withstood him, and strove to do the like things, but at last were forced to cry out, it was “the finger of God.” Moreover, when the time of the Jewish worship, and their Church-state was expiring, and our Lord was sent from heaven, to give forth the doctrine and worship of the New Testament; and what wonderful miracles did he work to prove he was sent from heaven; he also said, “If I work not the works that no other man can do, believe me not,” And again he saith, “The works that I do, they bear witness of me.” They proved that the Father sent him, and that his doctrine was of God, “Or else believe me for the very work’s sake,” Joh 14:11.

3. Suppose a man should say he is come from the dead, either from heaven or hell, who will believe him? he may be an imposter, a liar, he is not to be regarded, unless he works miracles; and to confirm what he says he must raise the dead and open the eyes of such that were born blind, or such

like wonderful works which no deceiver can do; for the devil, and all lying spirits can work no real miracles, no, they are all lying signs and wonders, for were not this so, the world were left in a woeful condition. Besides, then the miracles our Lord wrought could be no infallible evidence that he was the Son of God and sent by Him, and his doctrine was from heaven.

4. Moreover, suppose one should really come from the dead, and preach to sinners, and tell them what they should do to be saved; yet his testimony would be only the testimony of a mere human creature; but the sacred Scriptures are the word of God, "All Scriptures are given by inspiration of God," 2Ti 3:16; Heb 1:1-2. Nay, the doctrine of the Gospel, or word of the New Testament was spoken by Christ himself, the Son of God from heaven; he, in His own person and with His own mouth, gave it forth as He received it from the Father, and confirmed it by wonderful miracles. And now, which should we soonest believe, or is of the greatest authority? what the Son of God himself spake, or what an human spirit should declare?

The great argument to prove the written Word of God, as read and preached, is the most effectual way and means to bring sinners to believe

5. But the grand argument is this, viz., that way, or that word, or that means, which God hath ordained or appointed (as the ordinary and most effectual way or means) for the conversion of sinners, or to bring them to believe and repent, hath a great and divine power and efficacy in it (yea, above all or any other way or means whatsoever), to effect that end. But God hath ordained or appointed the sacred Scriptures as read, especially as preached by his faithful ministers, as the ordinary and most effectual way or means for the conversion of sinners, or to bring them to believe and repent, therefore the Scriptures as so read and preached hath a real and Divine power and efficacy in it above all or any way or means whatsoever, to effect that great end. Will God leave his own ordinance, and own an ordinance of man's own devising, or cause that to succeed to answer the great end proposed by himself in his own institution? no, no, the rich man in hell magnifies the apparition of a spirit; concluding that what one that riseth from the dead might declare would have more effect upon his five brethren than the written Word. But, Certainly, that way and means God hath ordained to such or such an end, he will bless and own, for the effecting his own gracious design and purpose, above any way or means else. Now, for the confirmation of this argument, see what the apostle John saith, "Many others signs truly did Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of

God, and that believing ye might have life through his name,” Joh 20:30-31. The reason why the doctrine and miracles of our blessed Saviour are written in the Book of the New Testament is that we might believe this is the way and means God hath ordained to this great end, compared with Ro 10:14-15. “How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they are sent.” (1.) Note, that faith comes by hearing the Gospel preached as the ordinary way God hath ordained. (2.) That they must be such that preach it whom God hath ordained and sent. Now, either he hath ordained mortal men to preach it, or angels, or else the spirits of men who are dead; but God hath not ordained his angels to preach it, nor the spirits of men that are dead; therefore he hath ordained and sent mortal men, whom he hath gifted to that end, to be the preachers thereof. Besides, matter of fact puts it out of all doubt, for nothing is more evident than this, that mortal men were chosen, gifted, ordained, and sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the only ministers or preachers of the gospel. Mt 10:14. First, he chose his twelve disciples, and sent them forth to preach it, (Lu 10:1), and afterwards he sent out the “seventy.” And when they went away he said to them, “Behold I send you the promise of my Father, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high,” Lu 24:49. Also it is said, “When he ascended up on high he gave gifts to men.” Not to angels, nor to the spirits of the dead. “And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,” Eph 4:8,11. The first had an extraordinary mission and call; such offices as apostles, and extraordinary prophets, and evangelists, none can pretend to have since the extraordinary gifts ceased; but pastors and teachers remain in the church to the end of the world, who preach by virtue of those gifts Christ received and gave when he ascended up on high, and hath left rules how pastors should be qualified, and how both pastors and teachers should receive their ordinary and regular call, and so be sent by the Church.

6. That Word which is more sure than in the voice that came from the “excellent glory in the holy mount” must needs be of the greatest authority, and most powerful efficacy attending it, to bring to believe, &c. But the holy Scriptures is a more sure word than the voice that came from the most “excellent glory in the holy mount;” ergo, the holy Scripture is of the greatest authority, and hath most power and efficacy in it to bring men to believe, &c. “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his Majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and

glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the Holy Mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts,” 2Pe 1:16-19. Well, and what is that more sure word? see the next verse, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,” &c.

Know this first, viz., The rule of your faith and practice, or first and principally above all things, as the great article of your faith, that the holy Scripture is of divine authority, and is to be preferred above that glorious voice heard in the mount; and so far above all pretended visions, new inspirations, spirits, or any other way or means whatsoever, that any can pretend unto. And that this doctrine contained therein, and as a sure rule, remains until Christ the Day (or Morning) Star comes in his glory, when our hearts shall be perfectly illuminated, or that which is perfect is come, and that no one place of the Scriptures is to be interpreted by men’s own spirits, or is of any private interpretation, contrary to what is confirmed by other Scriptures; God being the Author of it, all agrees and sweetly harmonize, though, through the ignorance of men, and by the delusions of Satan, some understand them not, and others wrest them to their own destruction; but not that we are to conceive no man is to interpret the Scriptures unless he hath received extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, or the knowledge of the tongues, for the Scripture may be understood of the ignorant (as the ancients well observe), who have but the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, by comparing one scripture with another; for the Scripture itself is the best interpreter of the Scripture.

7. If we read of many thousands that have been converted by preaching the Gospel, or by the unerring Word of God or his sacred oracles and not one converted by the Spirit of any of the dead, or by any spirit whatsoever, teaching directly contrary to those sacred oracles, or not adhering or referring to them by pretended immediate inspiration, then the Scriptures, or the preaching of God’s written Word, hath the only authority and efficacy in it through the Spirit of Christ (which always teaches according to it), but we read of thousands this way converted, and not of one converted by the Spirit of any come from the dead, nor by immediate inspiration or by a Spirit that teacheth directly contrary to those sacred oracles; or not adhering or referring to them. Ergo,*

My brethren, such who pretend that they were converted by any spirit,* light, or inspiration of or by any spirits that speak not according to this Word, it is a lying spirit, and no light is in them, but that they are certainly deluded and deceived by the devil.

8. If the holy Scripture be not the certain way and means of faith and practice, or of faith and repentance, then God hath (as I before hinted) left us no certain rule, way, or means at all, and be sure that cannot stand consistent with the wisdom, goodness, mercy, pity, honour, and faithfulness of the holy God. If any say God hath left a certain rule for our faith, practice, and conversion besides the Scriptures, let them prove it by such evidences that are infallibly certain, that no man led thereby can be deceived. I deny not, but God may convert men by afflictions, &c., but what though yet he makes use still of the written Word in the light and promises thereof, though it may not be by preaching.

9. If no man or spirit is to be regarded, unless they speak according to this Word, viz., the written Word of God, then the holy Scripture is the only rule and ordinary means, answering the great end pleaded for: but that this is so, see Isa 8:19-20. "And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter; should not a people seek unto their God?" &c.; "to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.

10. If the holy Scriptures, through faith, are every ways sufficient, in respect of faith, practice, and salvation, then the holy Scripture hath the only efficacy in them for this great end, but that this is so, see what the apostle says; "That from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2Ti 3:15-17. And now, my brethren, what is further necessary that the Scriptures fail in to any one that believes in Jesus I see not.

Lastly, I might add that the personal ministry of our Saviour, could it be enjoyed again, (as Reverend Crusoe notes) it would be ineffectual to them whom the written Word hath none effect, "Had you believed Moses you would have believed me; but if you believe not his writings how shall you believe my words," Joh 5:46-47. O, how doth our

Lord magnify the written Word? There is the same reason why Christ's Word should not be believed by such that believed not Moses' writings, who confirmed his mission with miracles as our Saviour did his. You, therefore, that despise the written Word of God, should Christ come again and preach to you (in such a state and condition as he appeared in when on earth), you would despise him or not believe in him.

Thirdly, How should the sacred oracles or the holy Gospel be heard?

Answ. 1. As it is indeed the Word of God or holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, you that hear it as only being the word of man, it is no wonder you profit not by it. See how Paul commended the believing Thessalonians, "For this cause, also, thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God which you heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God, which effectually also worketh in you that believe," 1Th 2:13. The apostles preach the Gospel, and that Word or doctrine they preached he saith truly, is the Word of God, and as being such we should hear it.

2. With prayer, or join prayer with hearing, for the Holy Spirit to accompany it; for unless the Holy Spirit works with the Word it will not be effectual to them that hear it; God must open the heart, and work faith in the heart, or bless the Word with the divine influences of His Spirit.

3. With all diligence, and holy awe and reverence, "I stand in awe of thy Word," Ps 119:161: thus saith David, and the Lord saith "To this man I will look, that trembleth at my word," Isa 66:2. It is by the word we shall be judged at the great day. Nothing should divert our thoughts while we are under the Word, but attend upon it with our utmost diligence. Some think it is enough if they hear the Word, though they never regard how their hearts wander abroad, like the eyes of a fool to the ends of the earth; whilst they hear it, and others perhaps sit and sleep, whilst the Word of Life is preached to them.

4. With all endeared love and affections. If we love not the Word how should we profit by it? it will not be a burden to him who esteems it above God. "O, how love I thy law?" We should prize it above our necessary food, and hunger for it, love and esteem it, as a hungry man loves and hungers for bread, prizes and esteems bread; so should our souls hunger for the Word of God.

5. With a full purpose of heart to receive it, to hide it in our hearts, Ps 119:11. Not only receive it into our ears and heads, but into our hearts, into our understandings and affections; and so, also, have our wills bowed to the authority and power thereof, and retain the savour of it in our memories, and with a firm resolution to yield all due ready, hearty, and present obedience to it. We must believe the promises, obey the precepts, and fear the threatenings of the Word.

6. Believing. If we do not mix faith with the Word it will not profit us;* we must feed upon the Word, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them.” The Word of God is the food of the soul, “And thy word was to me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart,” Jer 15:16. This was Jehoshaphat’s advice to the people of Israel, “Believe in the Lord your God, and believe his prophets, so shall you prosper,” 2Ch 20:20. Some will not, do not so much as give such human credence to the Word of God as they give to human histories; if they did, durst they persist in sinful ways as they do? whereas the Word pronounceth wrath and Divine vengeance on all ungodly men,* and shows that swearers,* drunkards, unclean persons, liars, and all that live in any known sin or course of wickedness,* or believe not in Christ, shall be damned; or such who are not born again.

APPLICATION

1. I infer that such who cast contempt upon the Word of God, and magnify any spirit, rule, or light, that some pretend is in all men, above the holy Scripture, are deceived by Satan, and are in a fearful condition, and are greatly to be pitied.

2. It reproves such that neglect reading and hearing the Word of God, and it may inform us that the reason why some men are not converted, it is, alas, because they attend not upon that means which God hath appointed to that great end.

3. Moreover, it may inform us why some who do hear God’s word profit not; alas, they hear it not as it is truly the Word of God, nor attend upon it with diligence, with faith, and godly reverence: the voice of the minister of Christ is God’s voice, or the voice of Jesus Christ; but this they believe not, “They that receive you receive me,” saith our Lord 2Co 5:18-20. Ministers are God’s ambassadors, by whom he offers terms of peace, and a marriage with his son.

4. It may inform us what a mercy and blessing it is to have the holy Scriptures,* or the sacred oracles, and what a loss and dismal judgment it would be should God take the ministration of the Gospel from us, or bring upon us a famine of the Word. The glory of England lies in this, it enjoys the light of God's word, it is a land of vision; but if God should take from it the Gospel, it would soon become a land of darkness: no judgment, as I have shown in opening another parable, is like to such a judgment, as many in our neighboring nation find by woeful experience.

5. O, let us highly prize the Word of God, and beware of Satan's designs now on foot, in labouring to render it of little worth or value, by stirring up some to magnify natural religion above that holy religion revealed in the blessed Gospel of our dearest Lord, and in stirring up others to cry up the light in all men as the only rule of faith and practice, and their foolish and erroneous books above the sacred Bible, "God hath magnified his Word above all His name:" though, perhaps, incarnate the world may chiefly be meant thereby, yet what way of revelation of God to His creatures hath God magnified as He hath His written Word, as God's name by which He is made known; for all other ways by which He is made known to us fall short of that revelation we have of Him in His word.

6. Prize and esteem the messengers or ministers of God's Word, for though they are but instruments in God's hand, yet it is by them and through their word we come to believe, "Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man," 1Co 3:5; but, O, let us look beyond ministers, unto God; who is the great and only agent of all Divine operations, "I have planted and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase," ver. 6.

Now to conclude and close with this parable, let us all learn from hence to bless God that hath afforded us the best and most effectual way and means to believe in Him, and to turn our souls from our evil ways, that so we might be eternally saved; and let none once think in their hearts that if God would send one from the dead to preach unto them that they then should be persuaded to leave their sinful ways and receive Jesus Christ, or that that would be a more effectual means to awaken them, and work upon their hearts and consciences. For if they will not believe Moses and the prophets (or Christ's written word and His apostles) neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead

10. X. Parable, Luke 18:10-14 Of The Pharisee And Publican

SERMON XXIII

Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all I possess. And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breasts, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—Lu 18:10-14.

The occasion of our Saviour's speaking of this parable is expressed in the precedent verse, "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." So that the design or scope thereof is,

1. To discover the sad and fearful state of all self-righteous persons, or such that trust in their own righteousness.

2. To make known the frame of a person's spirit that is justified in God's sight, viz., one brought to the foot of God, being humbled through the sight and sense of his sin, and so a self-condemned sinner. Moreover, it might be to inform us, what great encouragement there is for great sinners to fly to the mercy of God; and that it is not only the duty of sinners to pray, but to let us know God regardeth their prayers, who are under the sense and conviction of sin, when he rejects the prayers and worship of self-righteous persons.

But to proceed,

First, in this parable we have mention made of two men, and also who they were or what sort of men; viz.,

1. One was a Pharisee. 2. The other a Publican.

Secondly, we have an account of what they did, viz., “They went up into the temple to pray.”

As all the families of Jacob were to discharge the duty of prayer in their dwelling- places, so likewise they were enjoined to pray and worship God in the temple, God having promised to hear the prayers that were made in that place.

The Pharisees were a strict sort of people amongst the Jews; but though they seemed to be very devout yet were guilty of great hypocrisy, and very vain-glorious, doing what they did to be seen of men, against whom our Lord denounced many bitter woes.

The Publicans were tole-gatherers, being such that collected Cesar’s tribute, and were greatly hated of the Jews.

1. Because they were servants to the Romish emperors, whose yoke the Jews could not abide.

2. Because they were generally very loose, or profane persons, extorting from the people more than their due, to enrich themselves; there were some who were masters of the society of the Publicans; and it is thought that Zaccheus was one of them because he is said to be “chief of the Publicans,” Lu 19:2; but though they were great sinners yet divers of them were converted, and became the disciples of Jesus Christ; the evangelist Matthew was a Publican before he was called to be an apostle. Moreover, we read that the Publicans were so hated by the Jews that though they were of their own nation yet they would not suffer them to marry with their daughters.

These two men (it appears) differed very much the one from the other; one was a zealous professor, and the other a profane and an ungodly sinner, yet both went to the temple to pray and worship God.

Thirdly, we have a relation of both their gestures and manner of their devotion.

1. “The Pharisee stood and prayed.” Standing in prayer is not condemned by our Lord, it was used by good men, as well as kneeling; but, perhaps, the Pharisee stood to be seen of men, with his hands and eyes lifted up towards heaven, that all might see that he prayed, for may be his voice at this time was not heard.

“He prayed with himself.” Intimating as if he did not speak out with a loud voice at this time, which at other times the Pharisees and Pharisaical persons were ready enough to do, that others might hear them; but it seemed to be a strange kind of prayer; we find not one petition he put up to God, or asked anything.

He prayed thus, “God I thank thee, I am not as other men are,” &c. I grant that thanksgiving is part of prayer, but certainly all sincere persons, when they pray, have something to desire of God, some request to put up by way of humble supplication to God for what they want, as well as to give thanks for what they have received of him; but the Pharisee, it is like, saw no want of anything, glorying in himself, and in his own righteousness, and commending himself to God; whereas nothing is indeed more hateful and abominable in the sight of God than so to do, and such (as our Saviour saith) shall be abased.

2. We have, also, an account of the gesture of the poor Publican. (1.) His standing afar off. (2.) Not daring to lift up his eyes unto heaven. (3.) He smote upon his breast. (4.) Saying “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Fourthly, we have an account how successful this man’s prayer was, and how unsuccessful the other’s; or of the acceptance of the Publican, and the rejection of the Pharisee, “I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.”

Fifthly, an intimation from whence it was the Pharisee was rejected; and an account of the frame of the other’s spirit that was accepted and justified; i.e., the one exalted himself, was proud and conceited, and therefore abhorred of God, and shall be abased. The other was of a humble, lowly, and broken frame of heart; he was accepted, and shall be exalted; signifying that God justifies and exalts all whom He doth justify only in a way of free grace, and that all such whom he doth accept, pardon, and justify, are sensible sinners, broken-hearted, and self-condemned sinners. But to proceed,

Note. Doct. 1. That all Pharisaical and self-righteous persons God rejects, and will cast off for ever.

Doct. 2. That a justified person looks upon himself with abhorrence, or sees himself, as in himself, a woeful, lost, and an undone sinner.

In speaking to the first of these propositions, I shall,

1. Give you the character of this Pharisee, and in him of all self-righteous persons.

2. Show you from whence they justify themselves, and why God rejects them, and their condition is so dismal.

1. The Pharisees were hypocrites; they did all they did in religious matters to be seen of men. I do not say they were also without exception: some might act out of a principle of moral sincerity, as certainly Paul did when he was a Pharisee; but generally our Saviour condemns them for hypocrites. Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, they did all to be seen of men or for vain-glory sake, and therefore were hypocrites. And this appears in respect of three religious duties performed by him, viz., giving of alms, prayer, and fasting.

In their giving of alms they blowed a trumpet, “Therefore, when thou doest thy alms do not sound a trumpet, as hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets that they may have glory of men,” Mt 6:2. When they purposed to give alms to the poor they caused one to sound a trumpet, not to call the poor to them, but to let all men know what religious and charitable persons they were.

2. When they prayed they did it to be seen of men; this our blessed Lord also charged them with and condemned them for. “And when thou prayest, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men; verily, I say unto you they have their reward,” Mt 6:5. They stood up in the synagogue, in such places that all might see them when they prayed, and would get into some corners of the streets merely out of ostentation, that they be thought to be more holy and devout persons than any others. My brethren, I never approved of such who in their families pray so loud as that such that go by their houses in the street may hear them, for, if it doth not savour of hypocrisy, I am sure it doth betray their folly and weakness, because it opens the mouths of all that hear them to censure them for hypocrites; therefore our Saviour directs us when we pray to enter into our closets and shut the door (Mt 6:9.) Though in family-prayer, where people live in rooms next to the streets, possibly (though they speak low) yet their voices may be heard, and they not reprobable; but let us all look well to our hearts, ends, and aims.

3. In fasting, also, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees appeared, “Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to fast; verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when ye fast, anoint thine head, and wash thy face,” &c., Mt 6:16.

Quest. Some (perhaps) may say, why do we not do thus when we fast, since our Saviour directs us thus to do?

Answ. Should we do thus, it might in a little time savour of as great hypocrisy in us as it did in the Pharisees to disfigure their faces; because, it being not a custom amongst the people of this nation to anoint their heads, &c., anointing the head, and causing the face to shine amongst the Jews was a sign of joy, and to put on sackcloth, and disfigure the countenance, and look demurely, was a sign of great sorrow; but neither of these are used in these northern countries. Therefore, where that action or practice is used, it would have quite different effects; the use of it is not, ought not to be complied with, for whatsoever may favour of hypocrisy or vain ostentation is utterly condemned by our Saviour in these places.

II. The Pharisees only made clean the outside, i.e., strove only to keep their outward conversation unspotted, and took no care to have their hearts washed from sin and filthiness, “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter,” Mt 23:25, “that the outside of them may be clean,” ver. 26. They were outwardly holy but inwardly wicked. And hence our Lord compares them to “painted or whited sepulchres,” which appeared beautiful outwardly, but were within full of extortion and excess (Mt 23:27,) or all manner of filthiness and pollution. Thus, this Pharisee cries, “God, I thank Thee I am not as other men are, nor as this Publican,” that is, not outwardly profane and wicked, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, &c. But though they did not perhaps appear to men to be unjust, &c., yet, by what our Lord shows, they deceived themselves in that respect, for he charges them for devouring of widows’ houses, “Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers,” Mt 28:14. Their practice (it seems) was to persuade widows under specious pretences to give their estates when they died to them to the service of the tabernacle, they making long prayers for them.

III. They gloried much in negative holiness, being not profane persons; though it is true personal holiness partly consisteth in departing from sin, or outward acts of wickedness; yet not chiefly from the outward act, but from the love of it, and evil habits also; which inherent negative holiness they never arrived at.

IV. They were much also in some acts of positive holiness; “I fast twice a week;” they prayed, you heard, often, and were frequent in the public worship of God in the temple and synagogues, and paid tithes, or their tenths to the priests, as God under the law commanded; but pray note that all Pharisaical persons chiefly show their zeal in a constant performance of the outward acts of worship; they were for the easiest part, but the more hard parts of religion they would not put forth their finger to do. What people are more zealous at their public devotion than the Papists and common Protestants? they will be at their public worship (may be) twice, or thrice a day, and say over with a great many prayers, but it is all done from false principles, and in show only.

V. The Pharisees, and all self-righteous persons have a self-fulness in them, they are not poor in spirit, nor do they see any need to confess their sins to God, no, they see not that they are sinners, but righteous persons, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their wickedness,” Pr 30:12. They are increased in goods, and have need of nothing, but are the people the prophet speaks of, “Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am more holy than thou! (saith the Lord) these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day,” Isa 65:5. A great conceit of a man’s own righteousness, of his knowledge, parts, learning, or self-fulness is the character of a Pharisaical person; the Pharisee confesseth no sin to God, he asketh not for pardon, nor cries for mercy.

VI. They expected to be justified by their own righteousness before God, and see no need they have of any other righteousness to be found in at God’s bar; not doubting but by their own obedience to the law, and the precepts thereof, they shall be saved; as many among us think, by keeping the ten commandments (though they break them many times in a day), and by conforming to the rules and precepts of the Gospel, they shall be justified in God’s sight and saved when they die; never being convinced of the want they have of the righteousness of Christ (to be clothed with that) and to cast off in point of truth all their own.

VII. They were always more strict and zealous (as I hinted) for the smaller matters of the law than the more weighty things thereof, and made a great stir about days, meats, drinks, garbs, dresses, &c., but neglected judgment, justice, mercy, faith, and the love of God, Mt 23:23.

VIII. They were such whose eyes were more abroad than at home, could sooner see a mote in their brother's eye than see the beam that was in their own eye. This is the character of an hypocrite, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye. Thou hypocrite! first cast out the beam that is in own eye, and then thou wilt see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye," Mt 7:3,5. It is notorious wickedness to censure and condemn others for this or that fault when we are guilty of worse ourselves; indeed we should take heed that we do not judge others at all, nor censure them unless they are found guilty of a palpable violation of God's law, or of the rules of the Gospel and good order: who art thou thou judgest thy brother? So much as to the first thing proposed.

Secondly, I shall show you from whence it is that they justify themselves, and God rejects all self-righteous persons, and so their state is so dismal.

I. It is from their ignorance of God. (1.) They know not the rectitude of his nature nor pure holiness, who is of such pure eyes that he abhorreth all who have the least stain of sin in them, nor can any stand before him in judgment who have sinned. If a man be justified with God it must be by a perfect, spotless righteousness, but this the Pharisees saw not. (2.) They were (and such persons still are) ignorant of the eternal counsels and purpose of God in Jesus Christ. (3.) They were ignorant of the holy law of God, thinking if they keep the external precept, so as not to break the law in the letter of it, they might be justified by the righteousness thereof; not seeing that by the secret lusts of their hearts they violated the law every day, and that the justice and holiness of God required satisfaction for the former breach of it. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness," Ro 10:3. Paul himself, when a Pharisee, was without the law, that is without the true knowledge of it.

II. It was because they knew not Jesus Christ, nor the end and design of God's sending his son into the world, to take our nature into union with his own divine person; they knew not why He was made under the law and therefore He lived in an exact conformity to the precepts of it, nor wherefore He died the cursed death of the cross; they thought their Messiah when he

came would appear like a glorious king in outward glory and grandeur, to save them from all their enemies, and so only a law-giver; and not to work out a righteousness by His obediences and sufferings to justify such that believed in Him, and since they were ignorant of this, how could they believe in Him, and so be justified by him, "But he that believeth not shall be damned," Mr 16:16; that is, that doth not fly to Christ to be justified; and, indeed (as I have often told you), we have them in and about this city and nation who look upon Christ to be little more than a law-giver. One that hath purchased a mild law of grace, of faith and obedience, by living up to which they expect to be justified before God, even and so far as they do obey in sincerity, so far they think they are justified; which error I have in opening other parables fully confuted.

III. They justified themselves by reason they knew not what a fearful state they and all the Jews (as well as the Gentiles) were in, or there being no difference, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Ro 3:22-23. All being under the guilt of original sin, and all under the breach of the first covenant, and all the children of wrath by nature. Alas! the Pharisee saw not this; he looked upon his state very good, though he thought the state of the Publican was bad; but Paul shows all were gone out of the way, &c., "And that by the deeds of (that broken) law no flesh could be justified in God's sight."

IV. They saw not any necessity of regeneration, or of a changed heart, nor could they attain thereunto without the Spirit and true faith in Jesus Christ: how ignorant of this was Nicodemus (though a master in Israel), and yet our Saviour shows, that "Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Joh 3:1-3. And hence their state was so miserable, they thought a reformed life from gross acts of sin and wickedness was sufficient to save them, as too many do now-a-days.

V. Because, they looking upon themselves righteous, whole, or such who saw no need of a physician; they were such a people as Christ came not to call, "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," Mt 9:12; but such sort of sinners the Pharisees were not; they knew not that God would have mercy and not sacrifice; and hence publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of heaven before them; and our Lord shows that except our righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees we can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven, Mt 5:20; whether the righteousness of the hypocritical Pharisees or such that were morally sincere.

APPLICATION

1. We from hence infer that men may be legally or morally righteous, and yet perish for ever; moral righteousness gives no man a title unto eternal life.

2. We infer but very few people know the true and only way of salvation. Most think it is by leading a sober life, or that holiness is the only way to happiness, or, because no man can be saved without holiness, they think their inherent holiness and good works will save them: but, alas! sirs, while some men (with the Jews) follow after righteousness they may not attain to the law of righteousness and the reason of it the apostle gives, viz., “Because they seek it (as it were) by the works of the law,” Ro 9:32 (or by their own righteousness), and others who are great sinners, such as the Gentiles were, “Who follow not after righteousness may attain to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith,” ver. 31.

3. Exhort. Be exhorted you that are conceited of your own righteousness to make your boast of that no more; but utterly despair of any relief or help that way for your poor souls; but look out to Jesus Christ for a better righteousness, “Even the righteousness of Christ, which is by faith of the Son of God,” Php 3:9. And this do with all speed, lest publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you; for you hear the publican (who humbled himself) was exalted or justified; and the Pharisee who trusted to his own righteousness was rejected and cast off by the Lord.

For the pressing this great duty upon you consider these things following:

1. Consider that you are condemned notwithstanding all your righteousness for original sin, and also for all your own actual sin, you lying under the guilt of both, until you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Consider that all sincere and most pious Christians in the world who believe in the Lord Jesus, and are justified, do see so much sin cleaving to their own inherent righteousness (though it far exceeds your’s) that they look upon it but as dung or as filthy rags.

3. And from hence also know and well consider that none of the holy saints of God durst ever plead their own righteousness at God’s bar; mind

what Job says, "I abhor myself," Job 42:6; and David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified," Ps 142:2: though David thus cries out, yet what man had ever greater repentance and sorrow for sin, or arrived to an higher pitch of inward sanctification, or had a clearer testimony of his uprightness, it being positively said he was a man after God's own heart, to which I might add what holy Paul saith, Php 3:8-9.

4. Consider that all the godly ever made mention of God's righteousness, "I will go in the strength of the Lord, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only," Ps 71:16; that is, for his acceptance and justification before God, I will not so much as once think upon or speak of my own strength or abilities, or what I have done, but only plead thy strength, thy covenant, thy promises, thy righteousness, which I have by faith, and through thy faithfulness.

5. Consider that Jehovah saith that in his righteousness alone is the help of all his people, "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed: in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory," Isa 45:24-25. That is, all that truly believe, or such who are true Israelites, whether Jews or Gentiles, they shall not, like the Pharisee, glory in their own righteousness, but shall be acquitted and freed from the guilt of all sins, by Christ's righteousness, received by faith alone: it is not by every one's own obedience, but by the obedience of one that many are made righteous, Ro 5:19.

6. Consider, O sinner, though thou art as vile as the worst, or a notorious and profane person, such as the Publicans were, yet if thou art helped, as an undone sinner, to fly to Jesus Christ, there is certainly mercy and pardon for thee: true, whilst thou remained unconvinced of thy sins and sinful state, there is no hope, no ground for thee to conclude God will forgive thee; but if thou smitest upon thy breast, and lookest upon thyself not worthy to lift up thine eyes to heaven, and canst plead for mercy through the satisfaction of Christ, thou needest not doubt of finding mercy with God. O, what a happy man is a convinced sinner, a sin-sick sinner, a wounded and self-condemned sinner. Sirs, as no man's own righteousness can save him, so no man's unrighteousness (if penitent and believing) can damn him.

Consolation. What, comfort, then, is here for broken-hearted sinners, and for all true believers; your sins God will forgive, nay, he hath forgiven

them, and will remember them no more: no enemy, no devil, nay, no sin can ever separate you from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord, “If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,” 1Jo 2:1-2. But this, I know, will not, cannot be an encouragement to you to sin; no, God forbid, you know by what a dear price you come by pardon (dear, I mean to Christ, though in a cheap and easy way to us); the love of God will constrain you to hate all sin, and to love holiness: O, be persuaded to lead a holy life, that your faith may be evidenced to your own conscience to be of the right kind; and let it be your care and mine to show forth the glory of God’s rich grace who hath pardoned and justified us freely “Through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ;” “And being now made free from sin, and become the servants of God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life,” Ro 6:22. Amen.

SERMON XXIV

Two men went up into the temple to pray, &c. And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner, &c.—Lu 18:13.

If the Publican was a Gentile he was not admitted into the court of Israel, but must stand as far off in the temple as the court of the Gentiles was from the other; but it is thought this Publican was a Jew, and that the Pharisee would not suffer him to stand near to him, nor, indeed, would they any but those of their own sect: Brethren, from what is said of the Pharisee I have prosecuted one point of doctrine, and from what is spoken of the Publican I shall take notice of another, and speak briefly unto it, viz.,

Doct. 2. That an enlightened person whom God justifieth looks upon himself with abhorrence, or is humbled at the foot of God, and sees himself (as in himself) a woeful, lost, and an undone sinner.

First, this appears to be an undeniable truth from what is said of this publican.

The publican stood afar off, and would not lift up his eyes unto heaven, &c. A sinner enlightened, convinced, or thoroughly humbled at God's foot, sees so much guilt and filth in himself, that he dares not, or is ashamed to look up to God.

But smote upon his breast.

1. O, here is the plague (as if he should say), it is in this vile heart of mine; O, what a rebellious and obstinate sinner have I been against God; how have I contemned his authority, resisted his will, violated his holy law, slighted his goodness, abused his patience, &c.; he had thorough sense of the majesty and holiness of God upon his soul; like that of the prophet, "Woe is me, I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts," Isa 6:5; "I that am but dust and ashes," said blessed Abraham; who was a man brought to the foot of God, who before was an idolator; "Who raised up righteously the man from the east, and calling him to his foot," Isa 41:2: so from the Hebrew some read it. Thus, the poor publican looks upon himself, even a loathsome and vile creature, a filthy leper, or as abominable

carrion in the sight of God; he stood afar off, (as one notes) that a Mediator might come between God and him, or between him and sin avenging justice.

“Smote upon his breast,” &c.

2. This smiting upon his breast may denote his great sorrow for his sins, or as a demonstration of his unfeigned repentance (as commonly a man doth that sees his state deplorable); yet, no doubt, he was convinced of the pardoning mercy of God in Christ; for in vain do any plead for mercy until they see God is reconciled in his Son, and that in Him there is forgiveness that He may be feared.

3. His smiting upon his breast may also signify his indignation against his sin (for true repentance, the apostle shows, worketh this in the soul of a sinner, “Yea, what indignation; yea, what fear,” &c., 2Co 7:11). He had an utter abhorrence of himself for his iniquity, and a hatred of his sins.

4. His smiting upon his breast may also signify that apprehension he had of the infinite love, grace, and mercy of God to him, upon his flying to him in and through Jesus Christ; as when a man is apprehensive of some great, wonderful, and undeserved favour from one that he hath abominably abused, smites upon his breast, “Lord (as if he should say) who could have once thought that I who have been such a rebel against Thee, should see hopes of pardon, and that purpose of Thy love and grace of receiving me into Thy favour and gracious presence, and confer honour upon me; but can it indeed be thus, Lord, or am I in a dream, or only flatter myself:” for some doubts, my brethren, especially at first may attend true faith in poor, convinced sinners.

“Saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner,”

Certainly (as I hinted before) this publican represents one that was enlightened into the knowledge of a Mediator; this is implied though not expressed; he pleads not for mercy, but in that way God only lets his mercy and pardoning grace forth to sinners, which is only in Jesus Christ.

But pray observe his confession. “To me a sinner.”

1. He confesseth himself a sinner, nay, one of the worst, the greatest, or chiefest of sinners, as Paul saith and confesseth, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save

sinners, of whom I am chief,” 1Ti 1:15. He does not say he had been the chief of sinners, but he had such a sense of his former sins upon his heart (when he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious) that he still loathed himself, counting himself still the greatest of sinners; “I am,” &c., and “Less than the least of all saints,” Eph 3:8.

2. No doubt but the poor publican confessed his sins, with all the aggravations o the ahominable circumstances thereof, and also how he stood charged; nay, condemned by the law of God, the commandment coming now with power upon his conscience, as it came upon Paul, “Sin revived and died,” Ro 7:9-11; by which means sin became to him exceeding sinful.

3. Nay, a true confession hath more in it, no question, for he acknowledged the justice of God, that he might righteously execute the sentence of the law upon him, and send him to hell: sholndst thou, O Lord, enter into judgment with me I am gone for ever.

4. It was a deep, a sincere, and hearty confession, with a resolution and full purpose of heart to sin no more; “God, be merciful to me a sinner,” “My sin is ever before me;” what a good and gracious God have I offended? I will not hide my transgressions;

“Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned,” saith David, Ps 51:4; I am willing to take shame to myself, and give glory to thee, “That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest;” I am contented that Thou should lance my sore, and lay open my wounds; that so Thy pardoning grace may be more sweet, and consolatory to my bleeding and sin-sick soul, and that I may have the greater obligation on me to live to Thy glory, and to advance thine honour, Lord: as if the poor publican should say I am ready to sink down under the burden of my sin; O, some relief, one word of comfort, Lord; apply the plaster, the only remedy, I have nothing to bring, no motive, no argument to plead with Thee but Thy mercy, Lord, be merciful to me; and thus David cries out also, “I said, Lord, be merciful to me, heal my soul for I have sinned against thee,” Ps 41:4.

5. In confession there is also contained restitution, if the sinner hath wronged any man. Thus Zaccheus who was a publican. “And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man, by false accusation, I restore him fourfold,” Lu 19:8. If a man be able who hath wronged any person he must make restitution, or else his repentance is not true.

And thus having opened the parts concerning what the publican said, and showed the nature of his confession, which partly proves the truth of the proposition, I shall,

1. Further endeavour to confirm the doctrine, viz., that an enlightened or convinced person who God justifies looks upon himself with abhorrence, or is humbled at the foot of God, and sees himself (as in himself) a woeful, lost, and undone sinner. And then,

2. I shall show what persons may be said to be undone, or in a woeful condition, or what sinners see cause to abhor themselves for.

3. Show from whence it cometh to pass that a person enlightened cries out for mercy.

4. Show how God deals with such a person.

First, further to confirm this doctrine, consider, that it is no wonder that this publican cries out, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," (I abhor myself), because the most eminent saints cried out in the same manner as was showed before. The prophet Isaiah was a holy person (as I hinted), yet, having a glorious sight of God, cries out, "Woe is me, I am undone;" the sight of a holy God on his throne made him dread and tremble: and thus it was also with holy Job, though he was a "Perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil," Job 1:1, yet he cries out, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job 42:6.

Job, no doubt, had not only heard of God, but he had also seen much of God before this time, but now had a more glorious vision or manifestation of God than ever he had until now, and see the effects it had upon him, "Therefore I abhor myself," &c., as if he should say (as Mr. Caryl notes).

1. I abhor myself, that ever I had one good thought of my own self.

2. I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes, that I ever complained of God's severe dealings with me; it is enough that I am out of hell.

3. I abhor myself that I was ever so bold as to desire to plead with God my innocence.

4. I abhor myself that ever I set such a value upon, or commended my own righteousness, my faith, and sincere obedience to be justified at thy bar.

O, I am, alas, an undone creature as in myself; thus Habbakuk also, when he heard his belly trembled, his lips quivered; “O Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid,” Hab 3:10. David cries out, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified,” Ps 143:2. He would have the Lord to hear his supplication in righteousness, ver. 1. In whose righteousness? even in that righteousness whereby God is ready and stands engaged to favour such who by faith fly to Him; but, Lord, I cannot stand before Thee in my own righteousness, upon a severe trial, at the tribunal of Thy divine justice; for if Thou shouldst rigorously examine all the passages of my heart and life, I dread the thoughts and consequences of it; I know I should be cast upon the terms of strict justice, and be undone for ever, unless I am found in the righteousness of my redeemer.

My brethren, although the profane hear of God, yet they are not afraid, they tremble not, hypocrites and presumptuous persons are secure. From whence is this? alas! they know not God, they see not the purity of his nature, his justice, and holiness: but it is far otherwise with such who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they dare not vindicate themselves, justify themselves, nor plead their faith, their inherent righteousness, nor sincere obedience: but see cause, notwithstanding all those things that are wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, or done by them, though the fruits and products of true faith, to cry out they are undone, “For I know nothing of myself, yet am I not hereby justified,” 1Co 4:4. Not that Paul was without sin, or knew no evil in himself; no, no, this is not his meaning, for then he would have contradicted what he speaks in Ro 7, but in the discharge of his ministry, and in the whole course of his life he had nothing to charge himself with in respect to any willful failing; he had in all things been as blameless (perhaps) as any saint or child of God ever was: well, but what of all this? some sin cleaved to him in his own sight, and much more in the sight of God who judgeth him; and therefore saith he, “I am not hereby justified; I dare not plead my own works, or my own righteousness at God’s bar, for he knew he had sinned, and formerly broken the law more than in one point; and now also, when he did good, evil was present with him; nay, saith he, “The evil which I would not that I do;” “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?,” Ro 7:17-24. I am undone in myself. Now, if such holy men were forced to plead the mercy of God, and the mercy of Christ, is it any strange

thing to see the poor publican to cry out, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner?" So much as to the proof of the doctrine.

Secondly, I shall show you who it is that may be said to be undone, or is miserable.

But before I proceed, let me note one thing, viz., what being undone doth imply? viz., that such a person was once, either originally or actually, in a good condition, or rich and happy. For a man that was ever poor and miserable, having nothing, cannot in a proper sense be said to be undone: he that never had anything cannot have less; or a person that is not in misery need not plead for mercy. Now all mankind originally in the first Adam were rich, and every ways in a most blessed and happy state and condition. But every one of his offsprings, as well as himself, by virtue of his first sin were undone, being brought into a state of misery, and so need God's mercy.

I. A man, who is possessed of a vast estate or great riches, that hath lost it all, even every farthing by thieves or by fire, or otherwise, we say is undone, and thus were all mankind originally undone.

II. But, may be, such a man (mentioned) that hath lost all, may not be every ways so undone as to be so miserable neither as all men are in the first Adam; for, perhaps, he may be able to work, and so to help and relieve himself; but if he be a poor, impotent, or indigent person being utterly unable to work to get himself one bit of bread, we say, Poor creature he is undone. Indeed, now thus it is with every man and woman in the world, as they stand in the first Adam, or under the covenant of works; not a man living who hath any strength, power, or ability to help himself, but by sin adds every day to his own misery, and further undoing, and therefore needs God's mercy.

III. But although the man I speak of so undone as to have lost all he had, and hath no power or ability to help himself, so as to get one bit of bread or morsel of meat, yet, notwithstanding, he may not be so undone, as all Adam's off-spring in a spiritual consideration are; for he may have some friends or brother that may relieve him and raise him again to a high, a rich, and prosperous condition in the world. But no one son, or child of Adam hath any friend or brother in all the earth, to do anything for him; because the whole family or posterity of fallen mankind were undone, and brought into the same deplorable state and condition of want and poverty; let a distressed soul go to what door he will, not one house hath one bit of bread

in it; not one person, neither friend, enemy, or brother, which hath so much as a bit of bread for himself, much more unable to relieve another. Now, thus I say it is with all mankind, as they are in the first Adam, and as they are in themselves; and, therefore, may well cry out for mercy, being distressed and utterly undone, or in misery.

IV. But such wretched creatures I speak of (among men) may not be so miserable neither as Adam's off-spring are in a spiritual sense: for though he may have lost all he had, and is unable to work (being blind, lame, &c.), and hath not any friend or brother to do anything for him, yet he may not be in debt, he may not owe anything; but poor, lost, and undone sinners, besides all I have said, are in debt, deeply in debt to God! not one of them but owes ten thousand talents; and one talent, as our annotators note, is one hundred, eighty-seven pounds, ten shillings, therefore ten thousand talents is a vast sum.

V. A man may be said to be in a miserable condition, who, being once in a king's favour (and raised to great honour), but for some heinous crime, as treason, rebellion, &c., is cast out of his favour; and not only so, but is condemned to die a most fearful and amazing death. O, say all that (hear of it, 'how happy was this nobleman once? how great, how rich, and honourable a person was he? but alas! alas! now he is undone, and is become a most miserable person; who can be in a more deplorable condition than he is in now? Why, thus it is in a spiritual sense with mankind in the first Adam, how dear and near to God were we while we stood in the state of innocency in which we were created? What creature was more in the love and favour of God? man was then in a state of honour, but for horrid treason and rebellion against the glorious Majesty of heaven we were cast off and rejected of God, and became the objects of his wrath and fearful curse, being sentenced to die a lamentable death, even to be burned alive, or to lie in eternal flames for ever and ever. And every man and woman naturally is in this fearful state, therefore he might cry out, I am undone, "O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

VI. But the man I before mentioned thus cast out of his prince's favour, and condemned to die a cruel death, yet he may repent and humble his soul, and his sovereign prince may pardon him, and so reverse the sentence. But the law which we have broke admits of no repentance, "He that sinned against Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses," De 19:15; "The law is not of faith," Heb 10:28; Ga 3:12. That speaks nothing of faith in a Mediator, though faith in God is commanded in the first precept;

but faith in Christ is not commanded by the law (as that by which the soul shall live), no, no, but every man is required to keep the law perfectly, nay, to continue “In all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,” Ga 3:10, or else he must perish. The law saith “Do this and live,” but it doth not say for your non-doing of these things, Repent, and ye shall live; no, repentance is not of the law but of the gospel. God’s law is an impression of His holy nature, and He is just, nay, justice itself; and therefore He by the law will not forgive any man: nay, I may say (with holy reverence) God cannot forgive, His justice puts in a bar, and stops the plea of mercy until satisfaction is made to His justice, truth, and holiness, for the breach of the holy law; so that every man is utterly undone as he is in himself, and as considered under the law and stands in need of God’s mercy.

VII. Though it be thus, or this be the tenor of the law of perfect obedience, ye some, perhaps, may say, mankind may not be quite undone notwithstanding this fiery and severe law; may not God reverse that law, abrogate the law that requires perfect obedience, and give forth a more mild law that will admit of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, that so by such a sweet and more gentle and mild law sinners may be justified.

Ans. Unto this I answer (as I have elsewhere) that the law which requires perfect obedience, God will never reverse, repeal, or abrogate; no, the pure moral law stands as an eternal rule of obedience (though as a covenant of works it is abrogated); God doth not now require us to keep the law that we may be justified (as He did require the first Adam), no, we must believe in Jesus, yet not one jot of the law, not one precept of the moral law shall pass while heaven and earth abides.

1. For what is the sum of the moral law, is it not To love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves, Mt 22:37-39. Now, is not this our indispensable due still, or is it not as much our duty thus to do as it was the duty of God’s people under the law? nay, are not we commanded to be “perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect?” Mt 5:48.

2. The law is (as it were) an image of God’s nature; God allows of no sin, no more doth his holy law; all precepts of the moral law are good, and therefore commanded and not commanded and therefore good (as all mere positive precepts are); therefore should God offer violence to his law, or abrogative that, his very essence would change, nay, he would cease to be God; for he may as soon cease to be God as cease to be less holy; or give a

law to justify a sinner that admits of imperfect obedience, or such obedience which is attended with any sin and horrid filth and pollution; therefore the publican might well cry, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

3. Moreover, had there been a law given, or could such a law have been given that could have given life, God, no doubt, would have given such a law for justification. For what reason can be given by our adversaries who plead for such a law why the blessed God did not give such a mild law of grace at first, wherein man's imperfect obedience, if sincere, might so have been accepted and he justified (when fallen) in the sight of God. And certainly, had the law simply proceeded from the sovereignty of God, such alterations had been made that man's sincere obedience thereunto would have been accepted to his justification; and so God might have spared his own beloved Son, for then there would have been no need for the Son of God to come into the world to take our nature upon Him, and to be made under the law, being obliged to work out a perfect righteousness by His complete obedience thereunto, and to die for our breach thereof; and if a sincere, though an imperfect, obedience would have done, we may say with the apostle, "If righteousness, came by the law then is Christ dead in vain," Ga 2:21. If righteousness could have been by any law, and furthermore the same apostle saith, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law," Ga 3:21. But nothing is more clear than this, viz., That the righteousness to a sinner's justification cannot be by man's obedience to any law whatsoever in his own person; therefore he is utterly undone as to any help or relief in himself, and must plead for mercy through Christ's merits.

My brethren, the law must be kept perfectly, and satisfaction must be made to Divine justice for our violation of it, by one substituted in our room, partaking of our nature, and accepted of God as our surety, and if God in his infinite wisdom had not found out such a representative, substitute, &c., and accepted of such a surety we had been eternally undone; and if any man hath his eyes open to see this Saviour provided he beholds the holiness of the Lord God of Hosts, and the nature of His holy law; he must cry, "Lord, be merciful to me, I am undone."

VIII. Moreover, if the least sin, whether it be a sin of omission, or of commission, lays man under God's wrath, the curse of the law and eternal condemnation, he is undone as in himself, and must cry for mercy; but thus it is, and all persons must therefore cry out as the prophet, and the publican

did, when God's Spirit openeth their eyes to see what a state and condition, as in themselves, they are in.

IX. Moreover, if God hides his face from any believer, so that he cannot see his interest in Jesus Christ, nor be able to behold his discharge from sin and wrath by our blessed Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, he is ready to cry out he is undone, or as an object of pity and mercy. Thus I have done with the first thing proposed, viz., What it is to be undone, and when a person may be said to be undone and to see himself miserable as in himself.

Secondly, I shall further (God assisting) demonstrate, from whence it cometh to pass that persons who are enlightened by the Lord come to cry out they are undone.

1. From the manifestation of the holiness of God's pure nature: God is infinitely holy, amazingly holy, he is holiness itself in the abstract, essentially holy; holiness is his very being and nature, he infinitely hateth all sin and iniquity, or whatsoever is contrary and opposite to his holiness and the rectitude of his nature; God cannot love nor delight in, nor justify any creature, that is polluted and defiled with sin as he is in himself, nor have communion with them, who have the image (or likeness) of the devil stamped upon their polluted and degenerate hearts; but indeed as they are so considered He abhorreth them.

I have repeated this great doctrinal truth, In speaking to several parables, because it is the main gospel truth, and that many are Ignorant

2. It riseth from, or is occasioned not only from a sight of God's glorious holiness, but also from the sight and of His justice. For God will not pardon or forgive guilty sinners, *i.e.*, to the eclipsing the glory of His holiness and infinite justice. Pray see what He Himself declared to Moses, when Moses desired to see His glory, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth," Ex 34:6-7. Ver. 6, He is merciful and gracious, but His mercy is only let out in a Mediator, "Forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin," but mind what follows, and he "Will by no means clear the guilty," &c. Now all are guilty, and stand charged before Him by His law and justice, as in themselves; and so remain until they are pronounced just and righteous in Christ. Sirs, legal repentance and sorrow for sin renders no person a subject of Gospel pardon, or such that God will forgive; no, be they penitent or impenitent it is all one, unless they fly to Him

by faith, in and by Jesus Christ, they stand charged, and “He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him,” Joh 3:36. My brethren, there is no begging mercy for the sake of mercy, without eyeing a complete satisfaction made to Divine justice, or without seeing how or by whom this satisfaction is made, and therefore until a poor sinner seeth his discharge in Jesus Christ, and Divine wrath pacified in Him, if he be thoroughly convinced by the Spirit, he will behold himself miserable, as in himself.

3. An enlightened sinner comes to see that he is undone, by his being convinced of the purity and holiness of the law of God which he hath broken; he understands the spirituality of the law, and how every sinful thought and lust of the heart is a breach thereof, and lays him obnoxious to God’s wrath and curse; and by this means he is brought to cry out he is undone. Thus it was with Paul, “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died,” Ro 7:9. The law entered or came with power upon his conscience and sin abounded; he thought he was alive, and in a good condition before, but soon saw he was deceived, and thus he was made to cry out, and thus no doubt it was here with the publican.

4. It riseth from a clear and full sight and sense of sin, which is so opposite and contrary unto the pure nature and holiness of God.

1. In respect of the guilt of it.

2. In respect of the abominable filth and pollution that is in sin, and how it hath defiled the soul.

3. From the sense of the great power and strength of sin.

4. From the sense and sight of God’s entering into judgment, and calling of the soul to his bar and fearful tribunal; or by the beholding the severe punishment and just demerit of sin. Had not the prophet some apprehension of this, when he saw the Lord upon a “Throne high and lifted up?” Our annotators on this place say, “I dread the thoughts of appearing before Thy judgment-seat, which I see erected in this place.* The sight of this glorious and Holy God gives me cause to fear that He is come in judgment against me.”

1. It is from the sense of the guilt of sin, and of that abominable evil which is in it, it being directly contrary to the holy nature of God, rebellion

against him, and a resisting of His will. Can the spirit of a man bear him up, or support him, when the weight of sin lies upon his conscience and presseth his soul? or when God comes by His Spirit, and shows him what a holy and just God he hath sinned against, wronged, and abused, and what a holy law he hath violated, both originally and actually also? and that many thousand times. Alas! should God but charge the guilt of one sin upon the soul of any man in the world, and demand satisfaction to His justice, what could the sinner do? What distress of conscience would he be in? and how would he cry out for mercy? Who then can bear the weight of such a mountain of horrid guilt that lies upon every sinner out of Christ, or in his natural state, or that seeth not how he is discharged, justified, and acquitted in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Can the feeble sinner bear the weight of sin when the guilt thereof is charged upon him, considering how it made the great and mighty Saviour to shrink and faint, nay, to cry out, and to sweat great drops of blood, when the guilt of the sins of the elect was laid upon him.

1. Can the law, or his keeping the commandments, ease him of this burden; no, no, saith he, the law accuses me and condemns me, and all that seek to it for relief and succour, thinking to be justified thereby; for it is the strength of sin, “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law,” 1Co 15:56. The law entered not to discharge us from sin, no, but that sin might abound, “and become exceeding sinful,” Ro 7:13. The law lays every sinner that seeks for relief thereby, under its fearful curse, “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them,” Ga 3:10. The law slays the sinner, it kills him, and lays him dead at the foot of God, that flies thither for help; and this the sinner sees when his eyes are opened by the Spirit, and convictions are set home upon his conscience; he thereby sees the purity and spirituality of the law; so that from thence, instead of obtaining relief and succour, he is forced to cry out, “Woe is me!” “Lord be merciful to me a sinner.”

2. Can a man’s own obedience and inherent righteousness, in conformity to the Gospel, under the sense of sin, relieve him? No, no, saith the enlightened sinner; Alas! alas! all my own righteousness is but filthy rags (Isa 64:6,) or it is loathsome in God’s sight, being attended with abominable pollution; and this made David cry out, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified,” Psal, 143:2.

3. Will a godly man's pleading his external privileges relieve him? Many boast of the great privileges they have attained, like the people of Israel, of old who cried out, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." Thus many now glory in that they have been baptized, are members of a Church of Christ, and have often received the Lord's Supper, are endowed with great learning and many spiritual gifts; but alas! those things can afford them no relief under the guilt of sin, nor be a sufficient plea at the bar of God, would he enter into judgment with them. See what Paul saith, "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee. Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church, touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless," Php 3:4,7. But notwithstanding all this, see what he further saith, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." If any man by his external duties and religious privileges, might hope for acceptance with God, Paul much more. Who of the Jewish Church excelled him, or had that cause to glory or receive relief and succour under the guilt of sin, from hence, like unto him?

Object. But, perhaps, some may object and say that Paul only in this place and upon this occasion refers to his legal duties and legal privileges; those (say they) it is true could not commend him to God, nor are to be trusted in, or to be pleaded with God, for by the works of the law, no flesh can be justified in God's sight; but he was now a converted man, and had attained too many great and glorious Gospel privileges, and to a high degree of Gospel obedience and holiness; and those things sure will avail him, and might relieve him under the sense of sin and the guilt thereof, he speaks of the time past, &c.

Answ. I answer, it is evident he comprehends all his Gospel duties and Gospel privileges also; and excludes them likewise, or accounts them and all his present inherent righteousness as nothing, in point of trust or dependence, "Yea, doubtless, and I do count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ," Php 3:8. He speaketh now universally what he did but indefinitely before (as our annotators note), using the present tense with a discrete particle. He disesteemed and excluded not only his Jewish and legal privileges, duties, and righteousness, which he had before, but also his Christian or Gospel privileges, &c., after conversion. Though he was an apostle, and had been an instrument in Christ's hand to convert many

thousands to the faith, and had planted many Churches, but he sought for no relief by these things as having any worth in them to commend him to God, or as any matter to be trusted to, or rested on for justification before God. He remarkably puts in all he had when a Pharisee, and now he is an apostle, yea, whatsoever could be thought of besides Jesus Christ, as being in comparison of Christ accounted but dung; therefore in himself (or as so considered), notwithstanding all his duties and privileges, he saw he was lost and undone, and must fly to God's mercy in Christ.

4. But some, perhaps, may say, will not sacrifices (which a poor sinner may bring and offer up to God) appease and satisfy Divine justice, and so relieve and give ease to his distressed conscience? suppose he could bring, "A thousand rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil, or offer his first-born, the fruit of his body, for the sin of his soul," Mich. 6:7. God in the law required a ram, or a few rams to be offered up in sacrifices; but if they were too few we will offer a thousand, or a very great number. The phrase (as one notes) is an hyperbole. Also, oil was required in sacrifices in meat-offerings, though in no great quantity, a log, or hin, about half a pint, or two or three quarts; that was too little, and infinitely short to satisfy Divine justice; but what if we should offer ten thousand rivers of oil, had we such store, (which no man ever had or could have) would such an offering satisfy for our sins, and procure God's favour? or if that will not do, suppose we should do as Abraham did, offer our first-born; which sacrifice must needs excel any other. But, alas! such a sacrifice God would reject. But then,

5. Will not repentance give a man ease, or relieve him under the guilt of sin, when it lies heavy on his conscience? No, it cannot; for then David's heart needed not to have failed him, nor he to have roared out in distress and horror, for who had greater repentance than he, who watered his couch with his tears, "I make my bed to swim, I water my couch with tears, I am weary of my groanings," Ps 6:6. How! who would be weary of such groanings, or the shedding of such tears, which could wash away the guilt of sin, and appease an accusing conscience? But, alas! alas! be found no relief that way, but still cries, "Lord, be merciful to me, for I have sinned against thee; wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin," Ps 51:2-3. He (with the Publican and all convinced sinners) saw a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, Zec 13:1; in which he must be washed, which is, the blood of Christ.

6. But will not a new course of life, a changed or reformed life give ease and procure a sinner's acceptance with God under the sense of sin and guilt?

No, this will not do neither, though it is to be feared many trust to this as their last refuge. Will promises a debtor may make (and keep them) that he will run no more, or any further in his creditor's debt, to whom he owes ten thousand talents, pay off that old score or so vast a sum? Besides, who can promise God that he will sin no more, there being no "Just man on earth, that doth good and sinneth not."

But to proceed,

II. The cause of a poor convinced sinner's crying to God for mercy is from the sense he hath of the filth of sin; I am (saith the soul) a man of unclean lips.

1. The convinced sinner sees the pollution of his heart. My heart (saith he) is defiled; even in all the faculties of my soul is much sin. O, how depraved and dark is my understanding, how carual is my mind, how rebellious my will, and how earthly my affections, how treacherous is my memory, and misled and misguided is oftentimes my conscience? "I am carnal, sold under sin," Ro 7:14, (saith the great apostle); "the good that I would I do not," ver. 19; "but what I hate that do I," ver. 15; "O, wretched man that I am." ver. 24.

2. Sin cleaves to our desires, and what weakness and inconstancy is there in our purposes and resolutions, and how oft have we broke our promises with God.

3. Sin more or less defiles our whole conversations, in our daily walk and converse with men. My brethren, though a believer is sanctified in every part, in every faculty, yet it is but in part in any; and though his conversation is holy, yet is not his conversation without sin.

III. Nay, my brethren, sin also defiles all our graces, or cleaves to every grace of the Spirit in believers.

1. Some make a great noise of their faith, and place it in the room of perfect obedience to the law of works; but, alas! faith itself needs a Saviour (I mean the sin that cleaves to our faith); we may all say, we believe, Lord, help our unbelief. Abraham, though at one time he was strong in faith, giving glory to God, yet, alas! how weak was his faith at another time, "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; I am afraid they will kill me for thy sake." Can any say, there is no sin, no doubts, no weakness, no fear attends their faith.

2. Sin cleaves to our love. Do we love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength, and our neighbours as ourselves? This is, 'tis true, our duty, but we can as soon perfectly keep the whole law as thus to love God; for though our love be sincere (and so it is said to be perfect) yet no man loves God in the highest degree of perfection. O, how is our love divided between God and the creature; yet I deny not, but every true Christian loves God with a superlative love. Again, do we love the Church and every believer as we ought? Do we love our brother as ourselves, and miss not at any time, fail not in heart, word, or deed?

3. Sin cleaves to the grace of humility. What think you, is there no pride, no high thought, nor conceitedness in our hearts, of our wisdom, gifts, parts or learning? do we always esteem others better than ourselves?

4. And then as to temperance and sobriety.* Do we never exceed in the inordinate love of the creature, or in the use of lawful things? Do we never exceed the bounds of temperance in eating, drinking, nor sleeping, nor in buying, selling, and possessing? Do such who have wives live as if they had none? Do you never exceed in weeping or worldly sorrow, nor in earthly comforts? Do they that buy, buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it.

4. And then as to the grace of patience. Doth no sin defile or cleave to that grace? Are any so patient that they are never disordered, having no inordinate passion, no impatience under afflictions, trials, losses, and cruel reproaches, and great provocations? Are there any who are quite free from wrath and all degrees of murmuring, or undue complainings under God's hand, or never are disturbed in their spirits, nor moved to anger?

III. Sin also cleaves to all our duties.

1. Take repentance as it is a grace or as a duty, hath it not many defects cleaving to it? Who can mourn for sin as much as he ought? Hath not our sin murdered our Saviour? Is there not an infinite evil in sin, considered objectively? Can then a finite creature mourn sufficiently in the sight and sense of sin? Have we not fought against God and contemned his authority, resisted his will, grieved his Spirit, abused his patience? What kind of sorrow doth such sins call for?

2. What sin attends us in preaching and hearing the Word? Are we never secretly lifted up when men foolishly praise us? or do we preach with that zeal, power, and constancy as we ought? and do we always hear the Word as it is the Word of God? and also with that holy awe, diligence, and reverence that becomes us? and are our hearts never wandering abroad in the time of hearing, nor are ever drowsy nor weary under it? and do we always believe and obey the Word preached, and take the reproofs of the

Word kindly, and never offended with the poor preacher while he discharges his duty with wisdom and faithfulness?

3. I might also proceed in the like manner, in speaking to the duty of reading God's Word.

4. As to the duty of prayer. Do we pray always in faith, lifting up holy bands without wrath or doubting? Do we never restrain prayer from God, nor are we at no time remiss in it?

5. I might also speak of the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and of Church- communion, and,

6. Of the duty of distributing to the poor.

7. Of all relative duties; as those of husbands to wives, and wives to husbands; parents to children, and children to parents; masters to servants, and servants to masters. And also of the duties of one neighbour to another. Are there any who never fail in any of these duties, or hath not every one need to cry out, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!"

Thirdly. Every one hath cause to cry out and to plead the mercy of God in Christ, in respect of the power of sin. What bones hath sin broken, what strong men, strong in grace, have been worsted and overcome by sin? David cries out, "All my bones are broken." Nay, my brethren, how did it crush the Son of God himself, and cause him to sweat great drops of blood when it lay heavy upon him, he standing in our law place.

Fourthly. They cry out and beg mercy in respect of the demerit of sin, or from that sense they have of the severe judgment of God, or the severe punishment that is due to it. Alas! it deserves infinite wrath, even the least sin that a child of God commits, for the satisfaction of Christ doth not lessen

the demerit of sin though our Lord hath borne it for us, yet sin is not less evil, nor less deserving as in itself.

Fourthly and lastly, I shall show you what care God takes of such that are humbled at his feet, or cry out for mercy through Christ's merits, as being in themselves undone, or show the happy state such are in.

I. As God hath found out a ransom, a Saviour, or hath laid help upon one that is mighty, so this ransom is applied to these souls; they find help in this Almighty One.

II. And as the Father laid all the sins of the elect upon his own Son, and he hath paid all their debts, so those souls who are thoroughly humbled, and are brought to believe in Jesus, are justified and pardoned. He went away rather justified. The Pharisee was not justified, but this publican was. "He that humbles himself shall be exalted," saith our Lord, which words he uttered to show that the publican was humbled, and therefore was exalted. Justification, my brethren, tends to lift up, or exalt a poor sinner, for such are brought into a state of peace and of union and communion with God; their persons are in the special love and favour of God, nay, they are the sons and daughters of God; this our Lord discovered to Zaccheus. Such who are the true spiritual seed of Abraham, and in the covenant of grace with God as Abraham was, and so the children of God.

III. They are the very proper objects of mercy, or such to whom God sent his Son to call, to heal, to seek, and to apply the precious virtue of the blood of the covenant unto, "The whole need not a physician but them that are sick; but go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Mt 9:13.

IV. By virtue of their receiving the Spirit, by which they are united to Jesus Christ, they have his righteousness imputed to them, and have interest in all the riches of Christ, and therefore, though poor in themselves, yet are very rich, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich," Re 2:9. None that are poor in spirit, poor in themselves, but are rich in Christ. Such that think they are increased in goods, and have need of nothing, are poor and miserable; and such who see they have nothing, possess all things, because they have Christ.

V. God looks upon these persons with a look of approbation, affection, and benediction, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word,” Isa 66:2. Such that look upon themselves with abhorrence God looks upon with acceptance.

VI. God doth not only look unto them, but also he dwells with them, yea, dwells in them, “For thus saith the high and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit,” Isa 57:15. Well, but why will God dwell in such spirits, and what advantage will this be? See the next words, “To revive the spirits of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones:” their spirits would otherwise fail, and their souls would faint. What can administer greater comfort, and what can be higher honour, than to have God by his Spirit in us, and dwell with us? “For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people,” 2Co 6:16. They have life in them, the Holy Spirit is that life, which is as “A well of water, springing up unto everlasting life,” Joh 4:14.

VII. See what care God takes of such; no sooner did the prophet see his own filthiness, or that he was a man of unclean lips, but he cries out he was undone; and immediately God sent one of his angels to him to comfort him, “Then flew one of the seraphims unto him, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar and laid it on my mouth.” This shows the work and office of the Holy Spirit, who applies the blood of Christ, the righteousness and merits of Christ, and comfort to a poor undone sinner, denoting the great speed and haste God takes to comfort poor, dejected, humbled, and broken-hearted sinners; as if God should say to one of the seraphims, Be gone, behold, my servant Isaiah is almost pressed down into despair under the sense of his sin, and uncleanness of his lips—assure him that all his sins are passed away and pardoned for ever. The Holy Spirit must first come, and touch our hearts and lips, before we have ease and cure; “And he laid it upon my mouth, and said this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.”

VIII. Our Lord pronounces in the first place (in the beatitudes) blessedness to them who are humbled souls, who see their own nothingness, and cry to God for mercy, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” Mt 5:3. They are the only heirs of eternal glory above, and have not only a true title to it, a right to the heavenly inheritance, but a proper meetness for it also: and, therefore, such that are poor in Spirit, who

see their own poverty, and cry unto God for mercy as this publican did, are exalted and in a blessed state and condition.

APPLICATION

Infer. I. I infer that sin is of all undoing nature, it hath brought all men into a woeful state and condition. Adam was once rich (and we in him), but by sin he and all his offspring were undone, and so remain in a miserable state until they are transplanted out of that dead root and united to the second Adam, or implanted into Jesus Christ.

Infer. 2. We may also infer that the Pharisees and self-righteous ones are woeful blind, for if believers see themselves (as in themselves) to be so poor and miserable, and cry unto God to have mercy upon them, what blindness is in such persons, who think themselves rich and have need of nothing.

II. Admirat. God's love in Jesus Christ, who hath out of his infinite wisdom, grace, and goodness, found out a way to enrich undone sinners, and to raise our admiration.

1. Consider that the remedy was provided before we were wounded, a garment prepared to cloth us before we were naked and needed it.

2. Consider also that God hath raised us to greater honour, and bestowed better riches in the second Adam than those we lost in the first, "Where sin abounded grace hath much more abounded," Ro 5:20.

3. Consider, God hath not only brought us into Christ, into a better state, or bestowed greater riches and honour upon us, but it is also firm, more sure and abiding: we can be undone no more, all our wealth and riches is put into a safe hand to secure it for us; it is all laid up in our head, in our Lord Jesus Christ! Our life, and riches, "Our life is hid with Christ in God." It is hid with Christ, by virtue of our union with him: as Christ is one with the Father, so are believers one with Christ, "Because I live ye shall live also," Joh 14:19.

Trial III. Examine yourselves. Did you ever see yourselves in a miserable state, ever made sensible of your spiritual poverty, and that you stood in need of God's mercy? did you see justice and Divine wrath pursuing you (like as the avenger of blood pursued the man-slayer), and are you still at the foot of God, and poor in spirit, bewailing the filth and corruptions of your own

hearts, and evil of your lives or are you not proud and conceited, and glory in what you have received, or think you are full. O, let us all see how it is with us in this case.

Quest. But why doth the Lord bring poor sinners into such a condition as to see themselves to be in a miserable state, as in themselves, and to cry out to God for mercy, when he is about to advance them to a state of happiness?

Answ. 1. It is to embitter sin unto our souls, that we may know how hateful it is unto God, and that we may the more sympathize with our blessed Lord in his sorrows (when our sins lay heavy upon him): though we satisfy not Divine justice yet is reasonable we should mourn and be grieved that we have offended,* and be in bitterness for him whom we have pierced.

2. It is to show the insufficiency that is in us,* to help or relieve ourselves, and that we might be abased to the dust, and for ever be delivered from pride and vain-glory, and have no confidence in the flesh. Man being born under a covenant of works is naturally a proud creature, but God, by letting in true light into our understandings, discovers our odious and filthy hearts to us, and so pulls down our pride and abaseth us to the dust.

3. It is to discover the absolute necessity of Jesus Christ to us, and the great need we have of such a Saviour, of such a physician, and of such a righteousness, which Christ hath wrought out for us, to render us lovely in the sight of God.

4. That we might be brought to ascribe all the glory of justification, sanctification, and salvation unto God; or that it is wholly of God's mercy and free-grace, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and so magnify rich bounty, mercy, and goodness as long as we live in this world. It being the grand design of God in the work of our redemption to advance his honour, and the honour and high praise of his blessed Son, our redemption, for ever. Who can admire sovereign and undeserved mercy more than they that have been in the depths of sorrow and misery, and are for ever delivered and raised to glory and eternal happiness?

5. Moreover, that we may never trust in ourselves, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we might not trust in ourselves but in God that raised the dead." Though we are weak in ourselves, yet are strong in the Lord; and though sinners in ourselves, yet righteous in the Lord; and though

dead, yet God can raise the dead; and though we have no sufficiency in ourselves, yet that the grace of God is sufficient for us.

Inform. IV. This may inform us what the reason is that sinners cry out no more as being distressed. Alas! they see not, know not their misery, or that woeful state they are in; nor, indeed, will they until their eyes are opened, they neither know God, the law, sin, nor themselves.

V. And from hence, also, we may be informed what kind of persons they are in their own sight that God justifies, or when he pronounceth them righteous and pardoned persons; viz., they are sensible sinners, humble, and nothing in their own eyes, and that such who justify themselves God justifies not, but, contrary-wise, leaves them under His wrath and condemnation; and therefore all self-righteous persons may see cause from hence to be afraid and tremble.

VI. And lastly. Let this be matter of encouragement to great, nay, the vilest of sinners, to fly to God in Jesus Christ. O, what great sinners have obtained mercy! many of those very sinners that put to death the Lord of life and glory found mercy; nay, our Saviour willed his disciples to offer mercy first to them when he gave them commission to go and preach the Gospel to all the world, and begin at Jerusalem. Let those very persons that cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him,” (as if our Lord should say), see what mercy and bowels, what pardon and mercy is in my heart. And thus I close with this parable.

11. XI. Parable, Luke 17:7, 8 &c. Of A Servant Ploughing And Feeding Cattle

SERMON XXV

But which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do.—Lu 17:7-10.

The scope of this parable seems to be two-fold.

1. To discover what kind of servants we ought to be, namely, such who are wholly devoted to our Lord's service, and to attend upon him at all times, though they did neglect some things that good servants in the proper season ought to do or might do.

2. To discover that no thanks, no honour is due to us from Christ our Lord and Master for what service we are capable to do; no, though we do all things he commandeth us yet we merit nothing, or deserve not so much as thanks from the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Which of you having a servant ploughing, &c.”

As the learned note, our Lord refers to servants, who, in those countries and in those days were bought with their money, or taken in war, and so were wholly their masters, and at their command, and all their time, and all they could do, was to be laid out in obedience to them, and to attend upon and honour their master.

Such servants are, or ought we to be to the Lord Jesus Christ, we being bought with a price, yea, with the price of his own blood.

“Will say to him by and by, when he is come from the field, go and sit down to meat?”

“And will not rather say, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself,” &c. Supper-time being come, though our servant has laboured hard, yet we do not say to him, go, eat your supper first; or, at leastwise, they did not say so to their servants; no, but provide my supper first, before you serve yourselves. Such servants we should be to the Lord Christ, not attend upon him when we have served ourselves; no, but though we have done that business he commandeth us, yet still we must attend upon him and forbear eating and drinking, or minding any secular business; if our master hath any further service for us to do, we must observe his motion, and honour him, and prefer his glory above our good, though we go with hungry bellies.

We must observe the proper season to feed and provide for ourselves, and not neglect our attendance on Jesus Christ.

Secondly, And when we do thus, even everything our Lord requires of us, we are not to think we deserve anything of Christ Jesus, but say, we are thine, Lord, our lives are thine, our time is thine, our talents are thine, our service is thine, and we, when we have done all, see cause to be ashamed we have done it no better; we deserve to be blamed rather than commended, much less not think that we deserve wages, or thanks from Jesus Christ for what we have done.

USE

1. From hence we may note, that as we are bought by Jesus Christ, we must not seek to please ourselves, in anything, in the neglect of our attendance upon him.

2. That we are wholly our Lord's and not our own, being obliged to love him with all our hearts, souls, and strength, and that our labour for our Lord must not cease, until the Lord cease commanding us, or we have no more to do for his glory in this world, which cannot be said until we die.

3. That we should not murmur if our Lord should command us to do such things that may seem hard to the flesh; no, but attend upon his word and ordinances, when some may say perhaps you may first mind yourselves and families, and provide what you and they need.

4. That when we have done all Christ hath commanded us, to acknowledge all is of free grace, and that we deserve not anything at his hands.

5. That the Lord may delay allowing us that which we may think is necessary in our time, and yet commanded us to show our sincere love to him, and honour him with a ready mind and willing heart.

6. That we should not so much mind what we shall have or receive at the hands of Christ in doing his work, as we should to glorify him and promote his honour, owning Christ to be our master, and we his servants.

1. This may reprove such who call themselves Christ's servants, but choose rather to serve themselves first, and their Lord afterwards; when they have done their own business, and have little else to do, they will obey Christ's commands, and attend upon him and hear his word.

2. Also it reproveth such that murmur at the service of Christ, thinking it too hard.

3. And such that are proud and conceited, or that look for praise from men for what they do, or expect something at Christ's hands for what they have done.

4. Such that mix their own faith and obedience with Christ's merits, these cannot think they are unprofitable servants, if by their inherent righteousness they are justified in God's sight.

Lastly, By this we may know who is a true and faithful servant of Jesus Christ; it is the honour of Christ such seek in all he doth, and accounts himself unworthy of the least favour and mercy of God, and also will do whatsoever the Lord Jesus Christ hath commanded should be done.

12. XII. Parable, John 10:1 Of Christ The Door Into The Sheepfold

SERMON XXVI

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep.—Joh 10:1-2, &c.

The holy and beloved disciple, the evangelist John, only hath recorded this parable, and (as I think) but one more.

The scope and main design of this famous parable (as our annotators call it) is, as I conceive,

1. To prove our blessed Lord Himself was the true Shepherd, the true Messiah, and only Saviour.

2. That all that came before him pretending that they were the Messiahs, or teachers sent of God, and yet had not their mission from the Father, were false teachers or thieves and robbers.

3. To show that the Scribes and Pharisees and the teachers of those times were none of the shepherds of the sheep of Christ, but thieves and robbers also.

4. To show the nature of the infinite love of the true shepherd to His sheep.

5. To prove that no man can be a true leader or shepherd who is not sent of God.

6. To discover who the sheep of Christ are,* and their great safety and happiness. Some conceive that this parable reacheth to verse 31.

But to proceed to the parts thereof. Our lord confirmeth the truth of that he is about to say, as he commonly used to do.

“Verily, Verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door in the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way,” &c.

The sheepfolds, I find, in those eastern countries were houses (and not like unto those among us) which had doors, by which both the shepherd and the sheep entered in. By the sheepfold is meant the Church of God, which, under the law, was the national Church of the Jews, or the commonwealth of Israel; and the door into that Church was by God’s institution by the first birth, i.e., all the seed of Abraham proceeding from Isaac were born members of that Church, by virtue of that covenant God made with Abraham and his carnal seed as such, though none of his male children could partake of all the privileges and blessings of that legal Church without they were first circumcised, which rite did not only simply belong to the children of godly parents that proceeded from Isaac, but to the children of ungodly or unbelieving parents also, which some good men among us seem not willing either to see or confess; they pretending to prove the right of infants (born of believers) from thence to baptism and church membership under the Gospel, which is far enough off to prove any such thing; for the Church of God under the Gospel dispensation is not national but congregational, it consisteth not of the natural seed of believers as such, but only of those who are the true spiritual seed of Abraham, who were comprehended in the covenant of grace, or free promise of God made to Abraham, namely believers, or such who obtain the faith of Abraham, and walk in the steps of Abraham. And if any man be in Christ he is one of Abraham’s seed, and an heir according to the promise, Ga 3:29; it is the second birth that gives right to Gospel Church privilege; yet, pray note, it was not the covenant as such that gave right to the male children of the Jews to circumcision, but God’s mere positive precepts given to Abraham; and so it is Christ’s own mere positive precept or institution that gives right to baptism under the Gospel, and not a person’s being in the covenant of grace: for both those ordinances were of mere positive right, depending wholly on the pleasure and will of the great lawgiver; so that if there is no precept nor president for infants’ baptism and Church membership in the New-Testament, that tradition is gone for ever, and all the pretended proofs taken from circumcision and the covenant made with Abraham’s natural seed as such signifieth just nothing, unless it be to please men’s fancies, and blind the eyes of the ignorant.

From hence note, that Christ in His institution is the door into the visible Church under the Gospel; the door is of God’s appointment, or of his ordination, and not that of man’s making.

Secondly, Christ is not only thus the door into the Church, but he is also the door into heaven, even as He is the only way to salvation, so He is also the door.

“Neither is there salvation in any other,” &c., Ac 4:12; Joh 14:6.

1. My brethren, whatsoever Christ is made to us, as He is the way into the Church, and the way unto the Father, that He is made as He is called the door.

2. And whatsoever may be said of the usefulness, end, and excellency of a door into a sheepfold, or into a house, in respect of appointment and necessity (according to the scope of this parable), that is the Lord Jesus made as mediator by the Father, as a spiritual door both into the Church below and into heaven above.

First, A door refers sometimes to a house, and sometimes to a sheepfold; so, Christ the door, sometimes refers to the Church, and sometimes to salvation itself, and also sometimes to the success the Gospel meeteth with, which door Christ is also, for all success of the Gospel is by Christ: “A door was opened unto me of the Lord,” 2Co 2:12, &c.;

“For a great door and effectual is opened to me,” 1Co 16:9; “I have set before thee an open door,” &c. Re 3:8.

Secondly, A door is appointed by the owner of a house, or the builder thereof, and so of a sheepfold, also the form and manner of it: so the great God, whose the flock is, hath constituted, ordained, or appointed His Son, considered as Mediator, to be the door in His institutions into the Gospel Church, and the way to heaven, and the door into it.

Thirdly, A door is fitted (by the wisdom of the shepherd who owns the sheep) every way to answer the great end and design thereof: so Christ is every ways fitted, according to the wisdom of God, who contrived the whole platform of our salvation and of the Gospel Church, to answer His great end and design. Moreover, there is the like necessity of Christ to let us into communion with Himself here, and into heaven hereafter, as there is of a door into a sheepfold, or into a house, or palace, &c; it is by him we enter into both.

Fourthly, And such that know not, or cannot find the door into a house or sheepfold, such cannot enter into it; so they that know not Christ, or cannot find him who is the only door, know not the way into the Church nor into heaven: no, all must find the power of the Spirit of Christ upon their hearts (as well as what Christ is made of God to all that are saved) and he truly regenerated, if they are by the Lord let into the Church below, and heaven above. Therefore, if men let any into the Church and not by the door, but some other ways, will they not be accounted worthy of great blame? Look to it you that receive into the Church the carnal seed of believers as such, who know nothing of regeneration, or you receive adult unbelievers and unholy persons: will you open a door, that Christ, who hath the keys of David, hath shut?

Fifthly, A door into a palace gives such who enter in a full view of all the glory and excellencies thereof, or, if it be into a sheepfold, of all the benefits, safety, and privileges of that sheepfold. So Jesus Christ gives to believers who enter into the Gospel Church by Him a clear view of all the blessings, security, and privileges of the Church or House of God, they partake of the riches of grace, and take a view of the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; they by him enter first into a state of union with him, and into a state of life, justification, pardon, peace, communion, sanctification, adoption, and of free access unto the Father, and are fed there, lie down there, and have rest and safety there: in the Church is a place of security, it hath strong walls about it, "Walk about Zion, go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bullwarks," Ps 48:12-13, &c.

He that climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

My brethren, as Christ is the door, so He is said to come in at the door, that is, by God's appointment, or by the ordination of the Father, from whom He had His mission to be both the door and the shepherd also. Now, for any to come and pretend themselves to be shepherds of the sheep, and teachers of the people, and have the conduct and government of a Church, who come not in by the door, that is, by the authority, commission, and appointment of God, or having no regular call from God, according to His ordination in the Gospel, they are thieves and robbers, and their design is to make prey of the sheep, or to shear them to have the fleece, but care not to feed the flock; nor will an human constitution or appointment of man give them any right to that work and office. Every true shepherd hath a true and right call from God; he that preaches the Gospel must be sent, and not thrust himself into the fold, or into the ministry, without a due and regular

call, for such come not in at the door, but climb up some other way, and so are thieves and robbers, whose pride and ambition, or secular advantage, prompt them to do what they do, and are not owned by the Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that entered by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

Our Lord in these words shows His great mission, which He received of the Father, to be the only Mediator, Saviour, and great shepherd of the sheep, having before showed that all whom God sent not were thieves and robbers; and, indeed, the first argument the apostle uses to prove Christ to be an High Priest, is His regular call, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So, also, Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee,'" Heb 5:4-5. Aaron had a divine call to his office; and so had Christ, as he saith in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec," Ps 110:4.

The first thing that every minister is to do is to show by whose authority he is made a minister, or produce his mission to preach the Gospel, being sent according to the appointment of God in the New-Testament; he must prove he came in at the door, that is, by God's ordination and constitution, and that his call is *Jure Divino*; for, if he hath no Divine right or call of God, he comes not in at the door.

Now this call, or being sent,* is either extraordinary, or ordinary: the Father gave His Son, as Mediator, an extraordinary call, and sent Him into the world, and He confirmed His mission by extraordinary miracles, and Christ gave His apostle also an extraordinary call and mission; but none have an extraordinary call now, no, only an ordinary call, viz., Christ having given them ministerial gifts and grace, and they being members of a, true visible Church, and approved of by the Church, are sent or authorised (according to the rules Christ hath left in his Word, and authority given to each particular, regular congregation): and what regular Gospel call any can pretend to besides this, I know not.

"To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice," ver. 3, &c.

By the porter I understand is meant the Holy Ghost; for it is he that opened the hearts of men to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. The work of a porter is to open the door, and give entrance to persons who may be

admitted into the house: now every man's heart is shut against Christ till the blessed Spirit opens the door.

“And the sheep hear his voice.”

The sheep, historians tell us in those countries will know the voice of their shepherd: so Christ's sheep know His voice, (i.e.) the true doctrine of Christianity; they do not only hear the voice of ministers, but the voice of the Son of God, whose voice raised them from the dead. This refers to the internal operations of Christ's Spirit on the soul of his people.

“And he calleth his own sheep by name.”

The shepherds, also, in those eastern countries gave names to every one of their sheep; and our Lord, it is thought, alludes to that. The Lord Jesus knows all His saints, as He said to Moses, “I have known thee by name;” so He knows every saint by name, also where they live, and what estate and condition they are in.

“And leadeth them out.”

The shepherds lead out their sheep into green pastures, and by the still waters, and into shadowy places in the heat of the day. So Christ leads His sheep out. Ps 23:1-2; Song 1:7.

1. Out of themselves, wholly to rest upon Him for righteousness and justification, also for food, refreshment, succour, protection, shade, and safety, in the day of persecution.

2. He leads them out of the world, and from idolatry, and false ways of worship.

3. And out, also, into a visible profession of His truth, and into universal obedience to all His holy ordinances.

“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice,” ver. 4.

Our shepherds follow their sheep, but those shepherds always went before the sheep. So the Lord Jesus, the good Shepherd, went before His sheep; He went before them in His obedience and suffering, and hath left

“us an example, that we (and all his sheep) should follow his steps,” 1Pe 2:21; and hence they are said to follow “the Lamb whithersoever he goes,” Re 14:4. Also, His sheep will not follow a stranger; they know false teachers, such who hold not the Head, who neither preach the true Saviour, or not the true Christ, nor the true doctrine of Christ, and others not his true worship, and ordinances, though, through temptation and Satan’s delusions, Christ’s sheep may for a while be misled or carried away into errors, yet they are again recovered; for the elect cannot finally be deceived, so as to perish by damnable heresies.

“This parable spake Jesus, but they understood not what things they were he spake unto them,” ver. 6.

From hence it appears, that a parable is not easy to be understood; they did not know what our Lord meant by these metaphorical allusions; and therefore he condescended so far to them, as further to explain what he meant hereby.

“Then said Jesus again unto them, I am the door of the sheep,” ver. 7.

Before, He said He was the door by which the Shepherd entered in, here He saith He is the door of the sheep; He Himself entered in a regular way by His Father’s commission into His work and office, and He is the door by His commission given to His disciples, and of all His sheep, entrance or admission into the visible Church, but chiefly it may refer to Him as He the door into a state of peace, reconciliation, and union with God, and so into heaven itself.

“All that came before me, were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them,” ver. 8.

Not that the holy prophets, who went before Him, were thieves and robbers; God forbid; He speaks not of them, but all that went before Him, who pretended they were the Messiah; or such who were false prophets, and deceivers, that bore no testimony to our blessed Saviour, but taught another way to be saved, than by the Son of God, (who was to come and suffer for our sins in the flesh, even in that flesh which He was to assume in the womb of the virgin, or the same flesh and blood that the children partake of, (Heb 2:14-15). And as all such who went before Him, who were false Christs, or false teachers, were thieves and robbers, so are all those false Christs and false prophets and teachers that come after Him; but His elect, as they did

not follow the false prophets of old, so they do not, will not, follow such cursed deceivers, who He foretold would after Him arise, and beguile many.

“I am the Door,” ver. 9.

See how our Lord repeats the same great truth of His being the Door, as if He should say, There is no salvation but by Me; no obtaining eternal life, except ye believe in me; no coming to the Father but by Me, Joh 14:6; “He that findeth me, findeth life,” Pr 8:35; and he that knoweth and followeth My doctrine, shall find the way into the sheepfold, and be led into green and fat pastures; Ps 23:1-2.

“If a man enter in he shall be saved,” &c.

He that believeth on Me shall be saved; he that obtains true faith in Christ finds the door to peace and safety.

“He shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

He shall find whatsoever his soul needeth, or whatsoever is truly good, (*i.e.*) he shall have grace and peace here, and eternal life hereafter.

Go in and out; that is, he shall go into the pastures where I feed my sheep, viz., into, the assemblies of my people, and out, and be blessed in coming in and in going out, in lying down and in rising up.

“The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and destroy,” v. 10.

Though by the thief here may be meant any deceiver, yet perhaps our Lord chiefly may by this thief refer to Satan. Indeed, when deceivers come, Satan, the grand thief, comes, whose purpose is to steal, kill, and utterly to destroy. Many deceivers are deceived, and they may not come with an intention to Kill and destroy, but that is Satan’s design. Yet the poisonous doctrine of grand impostors kills and destroys all that suck it in. I come regularly in at the door, deceivers climb up some other way; and that shows they come not to feed the sheep, but to make a prey of them. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it much more abundantly.”

“That they might have life,” that is, my sheep, mine elect, or them that my father hath given to me, that was the reason I came into the world; it was

with an intention and absolute purpose to save them for ever. They were dead in sins and trespasses, and condemned, or under the sentence of death and wrath, and I am come to bear that sentence, and suffer that wrath that was due to them, or to die in their stead, “the just for the unjust;” unless I came and lay down my life for them, they could not live; I am come to discharge them from condemnation, to acquit them, that they by me might have the life of union, and have a principle of spiritual life infused into them, and have the life of justification and of sanctification, and the life of comfort and consolation, and of glorification also.

“And that they might have it much more abundantly;” or a life far exceeding that life they had once in the first Adam, a righteousness far exceeding man’s original righteousness; also a more sure and certain life, a life that far excels in its nature and quality; for they being united to me, their immutable head, cannot die, “Because I live, ye shall live also,” Joh 14:19. So, in quantity, it is much more abundant, more abundant peace, joy, and comfort, their joys shall be full, they shall drink, “yea, drink abundantly,” Song 5:1, and their peace be like a river, Jesus Christ is their life, and, O, what a super-abounding life is in the Lord Jesus Christ!

“I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

I. Christ is the chief shepherd of the sheep, and “When the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory,” 1Pe 5:4.

(1.) All other shepherds are his servants, they have their authority from Christ the chief shepherd.

(2.) All particular flocks or each company of true believers are under the care of the Lord Christ.

(3.) And so is also the whole universal Church; he provides, leads, feeds, and governs them all.

II. Jesus Christ is the great shepherd, “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” Heb 13:20. He is endowed with almighty power, no lion, no enemy, no devil, can rescue one sheep out of the hands of this shepherd, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand,” Joh 10:28.

III. Christ is a wise shepherd.

(1.) He is the wisdom of God, nay, the only wise God.

(2.) He knows all his sheep throughout all the world, the sheep of ten thousand folds, he knows their names, their hearts, their thoughts, their wants, their diseases, their fears, their sorrows, their temptations, trials, and dangers, and knows how to supply all their needs.

IV. Jesus Christ is the good shepherd, a loving, tender-hearted and compassionate shepherd; “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young,” Isa 40:11.

V. Christ is a living shepherd; he lives when other shepherds die; he can raise his sheep that are dead to life.

But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, leaveth the sheep and fleeth, and the wolf catcheth the sheep, ver. 12.

An hired servant will not expose his life for the sheep, but the owner perhaps will do as David did, he will run great hazards before he will lose his sheep. He that taketh care of Christ’s sheep merely for filthy lucre is an hireling, and he cares not what becomes of the flock; so he hath but the fleece he matters not though the sheep perish, so that he hath his wages; he seeks not them, but their’s, and this shows he is a false teacher; deceivers and cruel wolves may enter and devour the flock for all him.

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep,” ver. 14, 15.

I am no hireling, I have tender bowels to my sheep, and a peculiar knowledge of love and approbation of them all, and my Father knoweth me perfectly, and I have a perfect knowledge of my Father, I know his divine essence, his eternity, his decrees, and counsels. “My Father and I are one.” In these words he shows that he is the great, the chief, and the good shepherd indeed, because this maketh it appear that Christ is the great, the good, and

only wise God; for none hath a perfect knowledge of God but God himself, or he that is one in essence with the Father.

“And other sheep have I, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring,” &c.

Our Lord refers here to the Gentiles, and he calls them His sheep, that is, His elect among the heathen nations, they were His sheep by decree, though then in their sins and idolatry, and not His sheep actually, they not having then the nature of His sheep.

I shall go no further, but observe one or two points of doctrine.

Doct. That Christ's sheep lay dead, dead in sin, and unless He came to give them life, they could not live.

1. They were dead in a law sense, the sentence of death had passed upon them.

2. They were without a principle of Divine or spiritual life. And,

(1.) Such that are dead cannot quicken themselves. Moreover,

(2.) No angel could satisfy for sin, which brought this death upon them, and on all mankind.

(3.) And the law could not give them life, “For if there had been a law that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law,” Ga 3:21.

(4.) It must be by Christ alone,* because that death which we were sentenced to die, and were under, He must undergo that gives us life.

(5.) And he must be such a person also that could quicken or raise himself from the dead, and who could do that but he that was God? he must be man, or else he could not die, and also he must be God, or else he could not satisfy; and therefore he must be God and man in one person, for God could not die, nor a mere man satisfy Divine justice.

(6.) It must be one that could quicken his dead sheep, and raise them to life, and conquer Satan, who had power over death.

Quest. What a life is it Christ came to give His sheep?

1. Ans. I answer, it is a discharge from that sentence of death, that passed upon them in the first Adam, and by the law, that they might be freed from that obligation they were laid under. "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," Ro 5:18. Or, as all in Adam died, so in Christ, all united to Him, or whom He was the common head of, are made alive.

2ndly. Christ came to give them life by infusing a vital principle into them by which they are quickened, "Wherein also you are risen with Him through faith of the operation of God, and you being dead in your sins and uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened," Col 2:12-13. This life is by His infusing of His Spirit into their dead souls.

(1.) And this life it first appears in convictions.

(2.) In regeneration.

(3.) In a further progressive work of mortification and sanctification.

3rdly. They shall also have the life of glorification.

(1.) And they shall be all made like to Christ, both in body and soul. Php 3:21.

(2.) Be crowned with glory. To be crowned with glory, is to have the highest glory creatures are capable of, they shall sit with Christ on His throne, and judge the world with Christ. 1Co 6:2.

For, is Christ a King and their Bridegroom crowned? yea, well then they are His Queen, and shall be crowned also, and have the same glory with Him, they being "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Ro 8:17.

3rdly. They shall be with Christ where He is, and behold His glory, and have His celestial attendance or retinue; this is the life Christ came that they might have.

Quest. Why shall Christ's sheep have this life?

Answ. Because Christ lives, “Because I live, you shall live also,” Joh 14:19. This refers to the twofold life of Christ.

1. To Christ’s life on earth; I now live (as if Christ should say) on earth for you, to procure or work out a righteousness and life for you by my actual obedience (because I live.) He lived that life as our Surety for us, to obtain the life of justification, and a title or right to glorification, and if Christ lived this life on earth for His sheep, they shall have life in both these respects.

2ndly. Because Christ lived after He was dead, and doth live for ever for them. “I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore,” Re 1:18. Well, what of this?

Quest. Some may say, wherein lies the stress of this argument? (i.e.) because Christ lived after He was dead, and now liveth, therefore His elect shall live?

Answ. It is the greatest argument of all.

1. Because He died to pay our penal debt, or debt of eternal punishment, our sins were laid upon Him, charged on Him as our Surety, and He was carried to prison, and kept a while under death; death we owed, yea, such a death as to pacify divine wrath, or God’s offended justice. Now if Christ our Surety lives no more, or riseth not again, we are undone; for our life of justification, as it refers to a discharge from hell and wrath, depends wholly upon Christ being discharged out of prison, and so living again. For if God doth not discharge Him, or justice doth not acquit Him, we cannot be discharged; and justice, be sure, would not acquit Him until our debt be fully paid. I shall (as if our Lord should say) in a little time die, but I shall live again, and because I shall live again you shall live also. I shall be raised from the dead, or have a resurrection, and, lo! I die personating you that are my sheep, and, when I rise again, I rise for your justification, to free you for ever from condemnation, and the wrath that is to come. Now, therefore, since He was discharged from death as our great Representative, all His sheep were then virtually discharged also in Him, and shall actually also be all discharged when they obtain a vital union with Him.

3rdly. Christ lives now in heaven for His sheep, and therefore they shall live; for he ascended up into heaven as their Representative or Forerunner, to show that justice had now nothing to charge His sheep withal; the Father

took Him into heaven, and set Him down at His own right hand, and the world sees Him no more. To convince us that His righteousness will carry us to heaven, he shall convince the world of righteousness, "Because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more," Joh 16:8,10. Nay, my brethren, all Christ's sheep were virtually glorified, when Christ was glorified in heaven; and therefore they shall all be glorified in heaven also. And see what a life Christ now lives in heaven, such a life His sheep shall have, because His life is the cause of their life, and the assurance of it, "Which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered," Heb 6:19-20.

See what I say, Paul confirms in this place, viz., that Christ took possession of heaven for all his sheep.

4thly. Christ's sheep shall live by virtue of that union they have with Him, I mean that blessed vital union; doth the Head live always, and die no more? and can the body or any member thereof die! no, surely, that is impossible. Christ is the mystical Head, and all united to Him in the sense I speak of, are His mystical body, and our Head lives, ever lives, and therefore the whole body shall live also.

Shall the root of the tree live, and may the branches of such a root who can preserve its branches, (die which hath such abundance of sap in it)? Christ must not suffer one branch of His to be cut off! nor can He lose any member without having an imperfect body; will a body suffer a member to die and be cut off, that can preserve every one of them? And though a natural root, or a natural body, cannot preserve every branch or every member, yet Christ can, and He says, His sheep shall never perish. Therefore, because Christ lives, they shall live also.

5thly. Because Christ lives in us who are His sheep, therefore, we shall live; neither sin, devils, nor death can separate us from the Spirit of Christ, nor from the love of Christ; though death may separate our souls from our bodies, yet death cannot separate us from the Spirit, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter," Joh 14:16. What to do, to abide with us for a day, a month, or a year? see what he says, "That he may abide with you for ever." My brethren, it is Christ in you the hope of glory, and having the Spirit in you, and dwell in you for ever is a sure ground of hope of your living for ever. "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Our souls or spirits are life, or alive, because the Holy Spirit dwelleth in them, or is the vital principle of our

souls, as the soul is the vital principle of the body. Death doth not, cannot separate the Spirit of God from our immortal souls, and by that spirit that eternally remains in our souls, shall our bodies be quickened at the last day. "He that raised Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you;" not dwelleth in your dead bodies; no, but in your living souls.

6thly. Because Christ lives now in heaven for us a life of intercession; He prays that we may live, and not die, or that our faith may not fail, or never fail, and that the Spirit may supply all our wants, and that we may be kept alive in our souls, and be at last with Him, where He is. "He ever lives to make intercession for us," Heb 7:25. "Father, I will that they that thou hast given me, may be with me where I am," &c. Joh 17:24.

7thly. Because Christ lives as our Guardian, Surety, or Trustee, to take care of us, and to supply all our needs, and because we have eternal life in the seed and earnest of it now, and by the Spirit are also sealed unto the day of redemption; and thus Christ is come that his sheep might have life, and have that life made sure to them for ever.

USE

1. I infer the love of Christ to his sheep is wonderful.

2. That it is not because our graces are alive and lively, or that we are in lively frame, that we shall live; no, but because he lives, and came that we might live, or because he lives with such a fulness in him.

3. I infer the life of Christ's sheep is a sure and certain, nay, an everlasting life, "He that believeth in me shall never die," Joh 6:47.

4. Then let us not fear death, nor mourn inordinately for such that die in the Lord. But to proceed;

"Other sheep have I that are not of this fold, and them I must bring,"
ver. 16.

2. Doct. That all Christ's sheep, or all his elect, who are not yet called, he must bring into a state of grace here, and unto a state of glory hereafter, he calls them the sheep. They are

1. His by choice, or by decree they are his sheep, “I have much people in this city,” &c.—“The Lord knows them that are his.”

In speaking to this,

1.1 shall show what his bringing them doth denote.

2. Show why he must bring them.

1. It denotes they are before called afar off, or in a state of alienation from God.

2. It signifies his absolute design of love, and purpose of grace towards the Gentiles,

“I know the thoughts I have towards you, thoughts of peace,” &c. Jer 29:11; “Yea, I have spoken it, and I will bring it to pass, I have purposed it, I will do it,” Isa 46:11; Eph 1:9-10.

3. It denotes the means Christ was to use in order to bring them home who were not yet called, or their effectual vocation, and so his removing that enmity that was in their minds, and darkness that was in their understanding, “He will give them a new heart,” Eze 36:26.

4. It implies his putting forth his almighty power in bringing them to God, or his working faith in them.

5. It denotes his bringing out of a state of wrath into a state of grace, or out of a state of death into a state of life and peace, and from a state of bondage into a state of liberty, and out of the world into his own fold, or his adding them to his Church, and making them fellow-heirs with the saints and household of God, Eph 2:19-20.

6. Or as he died for them, so he will renew and save them.

Secondly, Why must Jesus Christ bring them?

Christ must bring them unto a state of grace,

1. Because they were given to him by the Father, “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me,” &c., Joh 6:37.

2. Because he struck hands with the Father in the covenant of peace, and engaged to bring them, and his covenant he cannot break, nor alter the thing that is gone out his lips.

3. Because he died for them, and in their stead; “The just for the unjust, that he might bring them unto God,” 1Pe 3:18.

4. Because the decree of election must stand.

5. Because naturally they are all dead, and none but he can quicken them, and so bring them.

6. Because they are given to be members of his mystical body, and his body cannot be perfect without them.

USE

2. O! wonder what Christ hath done to bring His sheep home, and also at that obligation he laid himself under to do this, “Them I must bring let it cost me what it will, my blood must be shed, I know, to bring them, “I lay down my life for my sheep,” Joh 10:15. Our Lord showed to his disciples how he must suffer, Mt 16:28.

2. This pre-supposes there was a necessity of Christ bringing his sheep home, ‘the glory of one holy attribute must not be eclipsed to magnify another, “That God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,” Ro 3:26. We were all obliged to keep the law, and to die for the breach of it, and Christ must therefore in our nature perfectly keep it, and die for our violation of it.

O, what love hath God showed to His elect in their redemption! how is His love, His pity, His wisdom, His justice, holiness and power manifested thereby.

4. What fools are they, and how blind, that think they can return to God by a reformation of life, or by repentance, or by trusting in the mere mercy of God, having no saving knowledge of Christ crucified.

5. What evil is in sin, and at what a distance had it set us from God?

6. Be thankful, and also be filled full of joy, you that Christ among the Gentiles hath brought home. And,

7. This also may stir us up to pray for the fulness of the Gentiles to be brought in; for Christ must bring them in, even all of them that are His sheep

13. XIII. Parable, John 15:1-2 Of God Being An Husbandman

SERMON XXVII

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman; every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, &c.—Joh 15:1, &c.

The occasion of this parable some think, was from our Saviour's celebration of the holy supper; for he newly had administered that unto his disciples. Others think, that he saw a vine as he passed over the mount of Olives; see our late annotators. It is doubtful what might be the immediate occasion thereof.

We will therefore proceed to consider the scope and chief design of our Lord herein.

1. It may be, as I conceive, to show that God the Father is first in all spiritual operation, or the prime or original author of all spiritual blessings.

1. Is Christ, as Mediator, planted as the true vine? Why our Lord shows us here that it was the Father, that blessed Husbandman, that planted him. He is the first and chiefest plant of God's right-hand planting. And

1. He was first planted in that eternal covenant, or holy compact, that was betwixt the Father and the Son.

2. And the Father also planted Him in this world, by preparing Him a body to do and suffer for us.

2. The Father also grafts or planteth all those plants that are united to the Lord Jesus Christ, provided they are truly united to His person, who are fruitful; for such, and none but such, bring forth fruit to his praise.

2ndly, It may be to show the necessity of our being united to Jesus Christ if ever we bring forth fruit to God; and that we have no ability or power of our own, to do any thing which is truly spiritually good.

3rdly, To show that in Christ mystical (for so is Christ taken sometimes) are some barren branches, I mean in the visible church, and that such shall in time be cut off and cast into the fire.

4. To discover to us that all who obtain to true spiritual union with Christ (who partake of the holy Spirit) do abide in Him, and bring forth fruit unto eternal life, as our

Lord himself positively shows in ver. 16. and that there is a necessity of our abiding in Him, in order to our fruitfulness.

But to open the parts.

“I am the true vine,” &c.

That is, I am the true Messiah, the true Saviour, the right plant, and the true root of all grace; even He only that communicates life unto the souls of men, or He whom my Father hath ordained and planted to be supported of all his elect, out of whom they must grow, being first united to me if ever made fruitful unto God.

Quest. But why is Christ compared to a vine?

1. A vine is not a stately and amiable plant to look upon, as some other trees are; it is not so lofty as the cedar, nor so strong as the oak, nor so beautiful as the palm tree.—So the Lord Jesus in his humiliation appeared not to carnal eyes, to be beautiful or glorious, as many princes and kings of the earth, who shine forth in outward glory, beauty and grandeur. But as it was prophesied of him; “He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and a root out of dry ground, he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” Isa 53:2-3. So what form is there in a vine?

2. Yet perhaps it may be, also because of the honourable names given to the vine above all other trees.

(1.) It is called a goodly vine.

(2.) The noble vine.

Now, however contemptible our blessed Lord seemed to be when on earth, yet he hath a name above every name, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," Php 2:9. (not at the naming of Jesus.) What a name hath he who is called the Son of God, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful Counselor; and what name excels His name, Jesus? "And his name shall be called Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins," Mt 1:21. And what a sweet and noble name is that Immanuel, "They shall call his name Immanuel," viz., God with us, or God in our nature.

3rdly. A vine wonderfully aboundeth with sap and inward virtue, bearing and nourishing branches, which shoot forth perhaps beyond most plants. So the Lord Jesus Christ is full of spiritual sap, full of Divine life. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col 2:3. No vine is so full of sap as Jesus Christ is full of grace, "And we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," Joh 1:14. And as the vine communicates of its sap to the branches, so doth the Lord Christ communicate of His grace. "And of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace," Joh 1:16. And, O, how fruitful is the true Vine, and what a multitude of branches grow out of this sacred plant, many churches, and multitudes of true believers.

4thly, The vine is a most fruitful plant; what tree excels it in this respect? when God promised fruitfulness, it is expressed by the vine? "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine," Ps 128:3. But how fruitful then is the true Vine? (1.) Unto God! what glory hath He brought unto God the Father! He produced much fruit to God in one day, even three thousand souls. (2.) And also how fruitful hath He been, and is unto us, in His life, and in His death, and in His resurrection, and in His intercession!

5thly, The vine bears and brings forth choice and pleasant fruit. What are more sweet and pleasant than grapes in some countries? and how good, pleasant, and reviving is the richest wine! it is a cordial, and makes glad a heavy heart, "And wine that maketh glad the heart of man;" "Give wine to those that are of a heavy heart; let him drink and forget his poverty," Ps 104:15. Nay, wine is said to "Cheer the heart both of God and man," Pr 31:6-7; "When the new wine faileth the merry hearted sigh, and all joy is darkened," Isa 24:11. Jesus Christ, the true Vine, far exceeds the vine in this respect; for how pleasant is that fruit which he hath brought forth by His obedience unto God the Father! it is of "a sweet smelling savour," Eph 5:2; and unto us what can be so sweet and delicious, or so excellent and precious

to our taste? His “love is better than wine,” Song 1:2; more cheering, more restorative, more reviving; nor is there any such cordial in the world to revive a drooping and heavy heart? How sweet is the vine of reconciliation, redemption, union and communion, pardon of sin, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost! All is the fruit of the true Vine, for all this sweet fruit hath Christ brought forth, by His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession. And they that drink of this wine, forget their sorrows, it is so cheering, so reviving, so strengthening, so restorative, no cordial in the world is like this. “Are the consolations of Nod small with thee,” Job 15:11.

6thly, The vine is a shadowy plant; we read of men “Sitting under their own vines,” what pleasant arbors are made of vines I So Jesus Christ is a shadow to us, he shadows us from the scorching heat of God’s wrath, and from the wrath, rage, and fury of the devil and wicked men; and hence he is also said to be an “hiding place from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,” Isa 32:2.

7thly, The fruit of the vine is bruised and pressed that the wine may flow forth, so was Jesus Christ bruised under the pressure of divine auger, that we might drink plentifully of his fruit. Without the bruising and pressing the grapes we can have no wine; so unless the Lord Jesus Christ had been bruised we could have had no wine of true consolation, viz., no peace with God, no justification, no pardon of sin; therefore it is said, “It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief,” Isa 53:5.

But this spiritual Vine (as I hinted) far excels all vines.

(1.) Other vines only bear fruit but once a year, in the summer only; but this Vine bears fruit for our souls continually, both in the winter of afflictions and tribulation, or adversity, as well as in the summer of prosperity; go when you will to Christ the true vine, and you shall find he is full of fruit, full of grace; there is comfort in him, strength in him, consolation in Jesus Christ.

(2.) Other vines bear fruit only that comforts and cheers the body and natural spirits; but the fruit of this Vine cheers, revives, and strengthens our immortal souls.

(3.) The fruit of other vines, viz., grapes or wine, may and doth soon decay, and is good for little, but the fruit of the true Vine never decays, but yields us everlasting strength, everlasting consolation.

(4.) The fruit of other vines may be taken to excess, nay, it may surfeit, and prove mortal to him that receives it, but no man can eat or drink of the fruit of this vine to excess, neither can they be surfeited thereby; no, they that are Christ's friends are bid to eat and drink, yea, to drink abundantly of this fruit, Song 5:1.

(5.) Other vines are feeble or weak and need to be supported; but this Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the eternal God, and needs none to support him; no, he is able to support us, yea, the whole Church, and every weak believer, though never so feeble; and no marvel, because he "Upholds all things by the word of his power," Heb 1:2-3.

And my Father is the Husbandman.

That is, he is like unto, or may be compared to an Husbandman. Now God may be compared to an Husbandman in respect of these things following.

What an husbandman doth denote

1. A husbandman hath ground to till, seed to sow, and trees to plant, and servants to employ: so and in like manner the blessed God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath ground to till or manure, viz., the hearts of all his elect, whose hearts naturally are hard, rocky and barren. Our Saviour compares men's hearts to ground, Mt 13; nay, to four sorts of ground.

2. God, also, hath seed to sow, which is his Word and holy doctrine; this is called "the incorruptible seed," 1Pe 1:23.

3. God also hath trees to plant; he, indeed, as you heard, first planted Jesus Christ, this true Vine; Christ was early planted, and reason for it, because all other spiritual trees or plants grow out of his root: also all, the godly are called "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he may be glorified," Isa 61:3. Moreover, it is said, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap," Ps 104:16. All trees which our heavenly Father hath not planted will not bear any good fruit, but shall be plucked up.

4. God hath also servants to employ.

(1.) Jesus Christ considered as Mediator is God's servant, "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen," &c., Isa 43:10; "Thou art my servant, O

Israel,” Isa 49:3. The Lord Jesus is the best servant that God ever had, and he had done the hardest work; no other servant indeed could do what Christ hath done, nor ever brought that glory unto him; he did not only sweat at his work, but bled also, yea, sweat great drops of blood.

(2.) His ministers also are his servants whom he employs in his work; “We, then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain,” 2Co 6:1. O, what an honour is it to be fellow-workers with Jesus Christ!

(3.) All believers are God’s servants, whom he employs to work in his vineyard. Moreover, he having the command of all in heaven, earth and hell, he can make use and sometimes doth, of wicked men, and devils also to do some work for his glory.

Secondly, An Husbandman denotes one that is skilful, one that is wise, and knows how to manage husbandry. God is all-wise, wisdom itself; he is wise in heart, he knows all the mysteries of his own counsels, purposes, and decrees, and how to do all his work, and to do also in the proper time and season; some husbandmen are unskilful, but God is infinite in wisdom and knowledge, no winds nor weather, storms nor tempests, can hinder him from working, no, not men nor devils. “I will work and who shall let it,” Isa 43:13.

Thirdly, an husbandman hath a stock; a great husbandman must be rich, and have a good stock to manage all, or to defray the charge of all his husbandry: now the great God cannot want a stock, for all things in heaven and earth are His. Jesus Christ is God’s, “All things are your’s, ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s,” 1Co 3:22-23. He is not only His Son, but His servant; also (as you newly heard), all the riches of Christ as Mediator, he received from God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and all grace is His, the word and ordinances, and the promises are this husbandman’s, the angels are His, and ministers are His, therefore he hath stores of riches, or stock sufficient to manage His spiritual husbandry.

Fourthly, a husbandman’s life is a laborious life, and great diligence also it requires. God is an Almighty workman. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Yet nothing is hard with God, though his work is too hard for men or angels to do, and that also as He is considered an husbandman. Is it not hard work to make hard and rocky ground good ground, and to cause seed to grow in rocky hearts? also to make trees that naturally are evil, and that bring forth evil and bitter fruit, to bring forth good fruit, and turn them into good

trees; nay, he can cause trees that never bear, to bear abundantly, this husbandman can make the proud, humble; the carnal, spiritual; the earthly, heavenly.

Fifthly, an husbandman denotes an employment that there is an absolute necessity of; for without the labour of the husbandman the world cannot long subsist or stand: if there was no ploughing nor sowing we should all in a little time be starved; we have need therefore to say "God speed the plough," so also there is as great necessity of this great and gracious husbandman's labour, for if God had not planted Jesus Christ the true Vine, we and all mankind must have perished for ever, and if He doth not plough up the fallow ground of our hearts none can, and also sow the seed of the Word, and plant us in Christ, we must perish; "Ye are God's husbandry," 1Co 3:9. It is this husbandman that causeth the seed to take root in our hearts; it is God that transplants us out of the first Adam into the second Adam.

Sixthly. An Husbandman, in all his labours aims at his own profit, though thousands receive advantages by his cost and pains also. So God, in all he doth working about our salvation, designed his own glory: nay, in his creating, preserving, and governing the world, this was that which he aimed at; though his work properly profits him not. Can there be anything added to his perfections? but if we have profit, God reaps glory to his own name, that is, it tends to raise his honour and to magnify his name; for there is no addition can be made to his essential glory, "And he said, thou art my servant in whom I will be glorified," Isa 49:3. These are the words of God the Father unto the Son as Mediator; also, in His forming us, renewing us by His Spirit, what doth He say? "This people have I formed for myself they shall show forth my praise," Isa 43:21; "The Lord hath made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil," Pr 16:4. Also in our fruitfulness, our Lord saith, "Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," Joh 15:8.

Seventhly, An Husbandman fences in his ground, his fields, and makes walls about his vineyard; so the good Husbandman by his common providence preserves all the things that he hath made; all things are governed by his wise providence, but about His Church and every true Christian He makes a strong wall, that is, His special providence is over them, "Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about all he hath," &c., Job 1:10; "I will be to her a wall of fire," &c., Zec 2:5; which some think refers to the holy angels, who are compared to fire, and they are as a wall round about His people, that no wild beasts may hurt or devour them; for a wall of fire is the best defence in a wilderness from cruel and devouring beasts.

Eighthly, An husbandman views, and often well observes how his corn and trees grow or thrive; and takes good notice which of his trees are barren, and also expecteth fruit according to the cost he bestows, and the pains he takes; so the holy God views and well observes His Church and all His saints, and takes notice how they grow in grace, and who are barren among them, and also looks for fruit according to the cost and pains He is at, “And he looked that it should bring forth grapes,” Isa 5:2. But,

2ndly, God excels all husbandmen.

1. Other husbandmen many times want stock, and some of them want skill, and so wax poor, but in God are all perfections of riches and wisdom.

2. Other Husbandmen cannot cause it to rain, nor give increase to their labours and pains, or make their corn and trees to grow, but God giveth, and can give rain at His pleasure. “My word shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it,” Isa 55:11.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away,” ver. 2.

Some are in Christ mystical, viz., in His Church, who are not united to Christ by the Spirit, or by the faith of the operation of God, and these bring not forth fruit.

There is a two-fold being in Christ.

1. By an external or visible profession.

2. By virtue of a true spiritual union; and such that are internally in Christ, or have a vital union with him, shall bring forth fruit, see ver. 16.

“Every one in me that beareth not fruit.”

By branches are meant professors of the Gospel, or Church-members; and some from the original read it, “Every branch that bringeth forth fruit in me,” or that is not truly united to me. This seems to be the true sense of the text; for without a person is in Christ, or savingly united to the Lord Jesus, God regards not that fruit he brings forth; no, it must be fruit brought forth in Christ, or of such that are in Him: and what seeming fruit soever such bring forth that are not in Christ, God taketh away; hypocrites may bring

forth some kind of fruit for a time, but it is not by virtue of their union with Christ, and therefore not good or right fruit; so that there is a being in Christ and not a being in Christ, or a being externally in Him, but not savingly or spiritually being in Him, and these bring not forth fruit in Him.

“He taketh away.”

Either He takes away their gifts or leaves them to a carnal or worldly spirit, or else give them up to strong delusions, or lets them fall into some one sin or another, and so He cuts them off by the bill of Church discipline, or by excommunication, or otherwise He may take them away by withdrawing His restraining grace and common influences of His Spirit from them, or smite them with blindness of mind and hardness of heart, and that is a dreadful taking away of such fruitless persons, or unfruitful branches.

And every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth that it may bring forth more fruit.

The Husbandman prunes and purges fruitful plants; so God purges by His Spirit and by His Word, and sometimes by His rod, all fruitful Christians, “By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is the fruit to take away his sin:” by this, that is by affliction or sharp trials also, and this shall cause Jacob to blossom and bud. God hath many ways to purge His fruitful branches, though the blood of Christ alone cleanses from all sin, yet God may make use of this or that way to purify through Christ’s blood our souls: by a live coal from the altar the iniquity of the prophet was purged: Isa 6:7-8, also Solomon saith, “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the Lord men depart from iniquity,” Pr 16:6. By God’s mercy in Christ, and by His promises (which are sometimes called His truth,) which He hath made to them that believe in Jesus, “Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” 2Co 7:1.

They are all fruitful, God will make more fruitful, “Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you,” ver. 3. Now the traitor is gone out from you, ye are clean; you that remain are holy persons, ye are clean, (i.e.) no hypocrites; but not clean by their own works, no, but by Christ’s Word, by His promises, by believing in Him, and applying of His faithful Word to their souls, by His Spirit, for without that His Word cleanses none.

“Every branch.”

Quest. Why are believers called branches?

1. Answ. The vine bears the branches; so Christ supports believers.

2. Branches grow out of the vine, and by partaking of the sap of the vine they bring forth fruit. So believers grow out of Christ that blessed Stock, they being first grafted into him: "From me is thy fruit found."

3. According to the nature of the vine such is the nature of the branches: so every believer grafted into Christ partakes of His Divine nature; they are like Christ, holy, humble, meek, &c.

"Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me," ver. 4.

Those words do not intimate there was a possibility that they might not abide in Christ, but.

To show the necessity of a vital union with Christ, no man being able until then to bear fruit of himself.

2. To show this union must remain, they must for ever abide united to Christ if they cease not in bearing fruit.

3. To show the reason why some who seem to be in Him, (or externally in Him by a visible profession, or in Christ mystical) do not bear fruit, viz., because they are not indeed and in truth savingly in Him.

By abiding in Christ is partly meant abiding, believing his Word; so ver. 7, by abiding, loving Him, or in the strength of their love and affections to Him, though a dismal storm was coming upon Him and them; and also abiding in His Spirit or remaining spiritual, and also abiding in keeping his commandments.

Our Lord strove by these words to convince them from whom, or by what means they should remain fruitful, and also to stir them up to a constant witness to him, and in using all means for their abiding in him, and faithful to him, and also to let them know the time was near when many who seemed to be in him, and to be his disciples would forsake him as indeed they did.

“I am the Vine, ye are the branches.”

Even as the vine feeds, nourishes, supports and makes the branches fruitful; so it is by Christ: we are fed, nourished, supported and made spiritually fruitful: and as the branch that is not in the vine partakes not of its sap, so such that are not united to Christ partake not of his spiritual virtue.

“He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.”

These words more clearly open our Lord’s design, in repeating the same things, viz., that he or that person who hath a spiritual union with Christ, being in Him by His Spirit, and he in Christ by faith, shall never cease bearing fruit. Also, it is observable that our Lord presses them to see that He Himself did abide in them; neither of which was in their power, for the branches are passive in being grafted into the stock, the husbandman doth that, all know: so are we in our union with Christ and in regeneration. It is the good spiritual Husbandman that grafts us into the true Vine, and he that prunes us, and doth all that is necessary to be done, to make us fruitful, and to abide fruitful.

“For without me ye can do nothing,” ver. 5.

I am to my members that which a vine is to the branches; I give life, strength, and fruitfulness: the vine may be said to abide in the branches by conveying juice and nourishment, whereby they grow, flourish, and are fruitful: so Christ abideth in His saints by His Spirit and spiritual influences, upon which depend all their life, strength and fruit.

“Without me.”

1. Without union with Christ.

2. Without influences from Christ, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit.” If they had been really in Christ, they had been fruitful. But some are only in Him by appearance, and “so can do nothing;” nothing, that is, spiritually or truly good. This union is reciprocal: “Abide in me, and I in you.” The Jews were said to be in the “True olive,” else they could not have been said to be broken off, (*i.e.*) they were in and of His visible Church, but not really in Christ; and so are some in the Gospel-Church, but not in Christ,

nor Christ in them; for the union between Christ and believers is inseparable and indissoluble, like that of Christ's being in the Father, and the Father in him. Joh 17:23.

3. "Without me;" that is, without Christ's concurrence, co-habitation and cooperation, we can do nothing.

Christ is a Head of influence to the body and members: how can a branch cut off the vine bear fruit, it being dead? and so is every sinner that is not united to Christ, "dead in sins and trespasses," Eph 2:1. Christ must quicken us by a principle of life, and also excite that principle and habit of grace; there is in all natural men a privation of power to do that which is spiritually good, an absence, nay, a total privation, not an absence of radical power, and not only a suspension of acts, as may be in us when asleep; and as it is a total privation in respect of power, so it is universal (as one observes) in respect of the subject of that power. Every faculty is wholly depraved, the judgment, will, affections, memory, &c.; and not only so, but in the "carnal mind is enmity against God," Ro 8:7, they resist all good motions, they have no power, nor any will to receive power, until their hearts are changed, and their will is made willing. "Ye always resist the Holy Ghost," &c., Ac 7:51. "Ye will not come to me," your wills are rebellious.

"If ye abide in me, and my Word abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Such abide in Christ, in whom His Word abides, His promises abide in them, so as to believe them, and His precepts abide in them, so as to obey them, and the prayers of such in all things agreeable to the Will of God shall be answered.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit and so shall ye be my disciples," ver. 8.

By virtue of our union with Christ we bring forth much fruit, and that fruit which glorifies God, or is to the praise of His rich grace: were the fruit the product of man's own natural powers it would glorify the sorry creature, and be to the praise of man's freewill, and not tend to glorify God's free grace. But all spiritual fruit, being solely from

God, it tends to the glory of God, as it causeth such to shine forth in holiness and good works before men.

But this parable might seem yet dark unto the disciples, and our Lord might perceive they might fear, that though their hearts were right with God, and were truly in him, that they might cease bearing fruit, and wither, and so be cut off. He, therefore, (finally to satisfy them that none of his words should be so understood) tells them in ver. 16. “Ye are my friends;” and again saith, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain,” &c., ver. 16.

I have, as if our Lord should have said, told you of some that bring not forth fruit in me, though they seem to be in me, and are members of my visible Church; but do not you think that you are of that sort that abide not in a profession of my name, or may become withered branches, and be cast into the fire; for you are not only called, but also chosen, chosen to salvation, and not that you chose me first, and so I chose you, as being fruitful persons; no, but I have chosen you, you have not chosen me first. I loved you first, and therefore you love me, and have chosen me, and I have ordained you to be holy, as well as to be eternally happy; yea, I have ordained you to bear fruit, and that your fruit should also remain, that you might not cease bearing fruit, and so like others wither, and be cut off, and perish for ever. Do not think it is possible for you to fall finally and totally away, and be cast into hell; O, mistake not my meaning in this parable.

Indeed, my brethren, had not our Saviour added these words, and explained his sense and meaning to us, some expressions might seem to favour what the Arminians too boldly affirm from this parable; but what is said in this verse tends utterly to stop their mouths, and silence them for ever.

Now from the whole I might note these propositions following.

1. That God the Father is the prime or original Author of all spiritual blessings and privileges.

2. That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, considered as Mediator, is the Root or blessed Tree, Vine and true Olive, into whom all the elect are grafted, united, and so become fruitful.

3. That some who seem to be in Christ, and to bring forth fruit, do not bring forth fruit in him, or by virtue of a real and spiritual union with him, and so they wither and shall be cut off, or taken away, and perish eternally.

4. That all God's elect are chosen and ordained to be fruitful, and to remain fruitful all their days on earth, as well as to eternal life in heaven.

But I, having prosecuted the substance of all these truths under other parables, and wanting room, shall not speak of them here.

USE

1. Let all hypocrites, from what hath been said, tremble, or such who seem to be in Christ, but are not.

2. Let all believers who are united to the Lord Jesus, rejoice, and see what a happy and secure state they are in, though they may seem to wither, yet they shall revive again.

1. Be exhorted to admire the love of God the Father, and ascribe all glory unto him as the Author of all grace, and the First Person in all Divine operations, as well as He is the First Person in the Godhead, or of the Trinity.

2. Ascribe all glory to the Son, for as all things are from the Father, so all things are through the Son; all grace and Divine blessings were purchased for us by his blood, and we have them as the fruit of His mediation.

3. Ascribe all glory to the Holy Spirit, by whom we are renewed and helped to believe, and to apply the blood of Christ to our souls, and who by his immediate influences hath made us fruitful, and shall be helped to abide so unto eternal life.

And now to close all, let "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such that are in the sea, and that all that are in them, say, blessing, honour and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever," Re 5:13. Amen.